

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**Commonalities in Teaching Strategies Among Middle School Band Directors for
Individuals Auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band**

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the School of Music
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Music Education

By

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Lynchburg, Virginia

May 2024

Commonalities in Teaching Strategies Among Middle School Band Directors for Individuals

Auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band

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A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Music Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

May 2024

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ABSTRACT

The thesis aims to survey, observe, and interview selected Georgia middle school band directors to determine if there are commonalities in instructional strategies for student audition preparation for acceptance into the Georgia All-State Middle School Band. The survey provided directors with ten specific questions about their daily classroom rehearsal practices and strategies that could aid the students in auditioning and successfully being selected for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band. In-class observations of the director's rehearsal practices and techniques were taken and examined for commonalities among participating directors. By interviewing each participant, the answers provided from the surveys were discussed in broader detail. The instructional strategies and behaviors were reviewed with the participant for comment. The directors chosen for this study represented three middle school band programs from northern Georgia and three from southern Georgia. The minimum criteria for participating were having one or more students accepted to the Georgia All-State Middle School Band. Additional criteria included three programs that were considered rural and three programs that were deemed suburban/urban. The study's results suggested several commonalities in the instructional strategies of band directors, with students earning seats in the Georgia All-State Band.

Keywords: Georgia All-State Band, Instrumental Pedagogy, Audition Preparation

DEDICATION

I am deeply grateful to God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon me, from the gift of life to a fulfilling career and the wonderful people He has placed in my path. With appreciation, I dedicate this thesis to those who have played prominent roles in my life.

To Kaye, your love and support are indescribable, and I am blessed to call you my wife. Your encouragement and belief in my potential as a successful band director have been the driving force behind my pursuit of excellence for the sake of my students. To my step-daughter Kaley, as I know we aggravate each other, I love you more than you could imagine.

To Russell and Suzie Wooten, my in-laws, I am forever grateful for your love and faith in me and the countless ways you have supported my academic achievements. To Neil Howell, thank you for your presence in my life as a role model in high school. You are the reason I chose to be a band director. Your mentorship and guidance have inspired me to pay it forward to my students, and I am forever grateful for that. I finally thank and remember my late father, Michael W. Harper. Dad, I wish you could be at my graduation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Dr. Thomas Goddard, I wanted to express my gratitude for your unwavering support throughout my thesis. Your encouraging words and guidance were invaluable to me, especially during times when I felt overwhelmed and frustrated.

To Dr. Brian Stiffler, I am grateful for the feedback you provided during the course you taught me. Your insightful comments inspired me to become a better student and teacher to my students.

To Dr. Larry Blocher, I still remember the words you said to me after my Master's presentation. Your encouragement and belief in me have stayed with me all these years, and I am forever grateful for your inspiration to pursue this degree.

To Deborah Bradley, I want to thank you for being a constant source of inspiration and for always pushing me to be the best band director possible.

To DaShaun McGee, my best friend, I am forever grateful to you for hiring me for the Burke County Middle School job, where I met my wonderful wife. Thank you for your support and friendship.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

All State Band (ASB)

Census Designated Places (CDP)

Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)

Collegiate National Association for Music Education (CNAfME)

District Honor Band (DHB)

Doctor of Music Education (D.M.E.)

Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Many students choose to participate in their school's instrumental music program. The Yamaha Musical Instrument Company estimates that 92 percent of all students maintain access to music education during the school day.¹ Of that percentage, 49 percent of all students participate in music education during the school day.² Music fundamentals and practices are often introduced and refined in this setting. During a student's musical career in the public school, some will decide to advance their musical experiences beyond the band rehearsal hall. Many of these students will choose to audition for a position in an organized all-state band near their residence.

The all-state auditioning process, practices and procedures are often topics for debate and discussion among directors, students, and parents.³ The rigors of the audition process require that the musicians, many of whom are middle-school-aged, spend many disciplined hours to obtain a satisfactory level of performance presence.⁴ Each state chooses its own method of auditioning for their all-state band.

Background

A common misconception is that the more affluent areas of Atlanta have more educational resources, access to private lessons, and more performing enrichment opportunities.

¹ Yamaha Staff, "Status of Music Education in Public Schools," *Yamaha Music*, last modified November 29, 2022, accessed March 9, 2023, <https://hub.yamaha.com/music-educators/prog-health/advocacy/status-of-music-education-in-public-schools/>.

² Ibid.

³ Charles A. Elliot, "All-State Band Practices and Procedures: A Nation-Wide Survey," *Journal of Band Research* 30, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 87, www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/all-State-band-practice-nation-wid/303721008/se-2.

⁴ Joelle L. Lien and Jere T. Humphreys, "Relationships among Selected Variables in the South Dakota All-State Band Auditions," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 49, no. 2 (July): 148.

As a result, those schools place more students into the Georgia All-State Band versus their counterparts in rural areas. Many of the state's rural areas have fewer educational opportunities for young musicians due to a significantly lower population density.

Different economic, natural resources, income levels, demographics, and cultural dynamics shape rural areas. These factors combine to create a unique feature that attracts people who live there.⁵ According to the 2021 Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) Payment and Access Commission brief Medicaid and Rural Health, rural residents have lower incomes than urban counterparts, and rural areas have overall higher poverty rates, especially among rural racial and ethnic minority populations.⁶ Statistics from the United States Census Bureau indicate that one in five Americans, or about 60 million people reside in areas considered rural.⁷ To provide a clearer perspective, 97% of the country's population is considered rural. There are nearly 14,000 school districts in the United States and the vast majority of over 7,000 of them are considered rural.⁸

Having fewer opportunities often includes difficulties, such as enrolling in private lessons. Many times, the inability to enroll in private lessons may be due to needing a qualified instructor in the area, or if there is an instructor, financial hardships of the parents might prevent

⁵ Heather B. Tomlinson, "Count Us In: Advancing Equity in Rural Schools and Communities," Report of the Exploring Equity Issues Series, Center for Education Equity at MAEC, September (2020): 1, <https://maec.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CountUsIn-RuralEquityIssues-MAEC.pdf>

⁶ "Rural Health Information Hub," *Rural Health Disparities Overview*, accessed March 9, 2023, <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/rural-health-disparities#:~:text=Agencies%20topic%20guide-,socioeconomic%20Status,racial%20and%20ethnic%20minority%20populations.>

⁷ Tomlinson, "Count Us In," 1.

⁸ Vincent C. Bates, "Thinking Critically about Rural Music Education," *Visions of Research in Music Education* 32, no. 1 (2018): 3, https://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/v32n1/visions/Bates_Thinking_Critically_About_Music_Education.pdf.

such studies for the middle school students. The average cost of private music lessons ranges from \$15-\$50 per half hour, varying depending on the teacher's location and expertise. Private lessons can easily amount to over \$1,000 yearly.⁹ Due to these high private instruction costs, many students rely on the instruction of their band director for audition preparation. This study aims to survey, observe, and interview selected Georgia Middle School Band Directors to determine if there are commonalities in instructional strategies for student audition preparation for acceptance into the Georgia All-State Middle School Band.

Statement of the Problem

In the State of Georgia, there are 219 public school systems divided into the following distinctions: city systems (21), county systems (159), state and commission charter schools (29), and state schools (3).¹⁰ Of those systems, there are 1,489 schools designated as middle schools.¹¹ When examining the list of middle schools with students chosen for the 2023 all-state band, there were only 83 schools represented.¹² If all the participating middle schools that placed students in the all-state band were represented on a map of Georgia, 62 schools can be located within a fifty-mile radius from the center of downtown Atlanta. Conversely, there are 34 schools located outside of the fifty-mile radius. Of the 62 schools, 175 students earned a seat in the all-state

⁹ Houston Family, "Are Music Lessons Worth the Cost?" *Houston Family Magazine*, Last modified September 11, 2023. Accessed March 7, 2024. <https://houstonfamilymagazine.com/education/are-music-lessons-worth-the-cost/>.

¹⁰ Georgia Department of Education, "Quick-Facts-on-Georgia-Education," *Communications*, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/communications/Pages/Quick-Facts-on-Georgia-Education.aspx>.

¹¹ Greatschools, "Georgia Schools," *2023 Georgia Schools | Public, Charter, & Private School Ratings*, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.greatschools.org/georgia/#:~:text=1%2C489,Middle%20Schools>.

¹² Georgia Music Educators Association, "2023 All-State Band and Orchestra Program," *Issuu*, accessed September 23, 2023, https://issuu.com/georgiamusicnews/docs/asbo_finale.

band. The number of kids who were able to gain a spot in the all-state band was disproportionately low, with only 52 students living beyond the radius.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of the study was to examine and provide supportive evidence that middle school band directors who had students audition and accepted into the Georgia Middle School All-State Band use common instructional practices within their daily ensemble rehearsals. In addition, the study sought to survey these band directors' provision for additional musical instruction or private lessons. Furthermore, the study's purpose was also to dismiss the premise that geographical locations throughout Georgia, specifically the more affluent areas around Atlanta compared to the rural areas that are not as populous or have a high frequency of affluence, are contributing factors that determine a student's acceptance into the all-state band.

Theoretical Framework

The method of phenomenology guides the research study in helping to understand and analyze the actions that middle school band directors possess in guiding their students toward a successful audition for the all-state band. A qualitative methodology relies on text and image data, has unique steps in data analysis, and has diverse designs.¹³ Qualitative research is very important in educational research as it addresses the “how” and “why” research questions and enabling a deeper understanding of experiences, phenomena, and context.¹⁴ Qualitative research allows an individual to ask questions that cannot be easily put into numbers to understand human

¹³ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2023), 179.

¹⁴ Ibid.

experience.¹⁵ The participants include band directors representing three middle school band programs within a fifty-mile radius from the center point of Atlanta (more populous) and three from outside the fifty-mile radius (less populous). Specific criteria for band directors to be included in the study required a minimum of one or more students accepted to the Georgia All-State Middle School Band for the 2022-2023 school year. The methodology needed for completing the study included surveys inquiring about specific materials used in rehearsals, such as long tones, major scales, chorales, sightreading, and rehearsal practices promoting student engagement and learning. The methodology also included in-person observations of eighth-grade band students and the formation of a focus group presenting the study findings to the participants, allowing feedback and further inquiry. The intended participants were contacted via email with the researcher's name, background, purpose of the study, deadline for survey submission, scheduling of observations, and the option to withdraw from the study at any time.

The core concept of this study was finding and examining commonalities in the teaching strategies used by middle school band directors that better prepare their students for the auditions for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band. The fundamental element of the study focuses on similarities in the daily band warmup, such as learning and playing major scales, and if there is any emphasis on the four major scales required for the audition. An additional inquiry included examining the amount and frequency of sight-reading the band director implements into their instructional curriculum. Lastly, there was an in-depth examination into what additional instruction the students auditioning for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band receive

¹⁵ Jennifer Anne Cleland, "The Qualitative Orientation in Medical Education Research," *Korean Journal of Medical Education*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, June 2017, Last modified June 2017, Accessed March 9, 2023. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5465434/#:~:text=Qualitative%20research%20is%20very%20important,numbers%20to%20understand%20human%20experience.>

outside of the school day and if the supplemental instruction was provided by the band director or by a private teacher.

Epoche

To prevent any bias or preconceived ideas, it is necessary to remove any personal experiences the researcher may have experienced prior to the study. Throughout the twenty-three years as a middle and high school band director, the researcher has successfully aided students with the audition material to make the district honor band but has never accomplished the goal of having a student selected for the all-state band. The researcher developed questions for the participants that prevented leading or suggestive language that could have unintentional influence. Collectively, the process ensured that the research study was fair, objective, and unbiased.

Significance of the Study

This study is essential for middle school directors who have had students pass the district-level auditions but have yet to be able to have students successfully pass the state-level audition for acceptance into the Georgia Middle School All-State Band. From the collection of data from surveys from selected middle school band directors in the Atlanta area and selected middle school band directors in rural areas who have placed one or more students in the 2023 all-state band, directors can better understand common instructional strategies that have successfully placed students into the all-state band. The study's research shows that middle school band directors can redesign or augment their current curriculum and instructional strategies to more efficiently and more successfully prepare their students for rigorous auditions.

Research Questions and Sub Question

Structured middle school band rehearsals are vital in helping students develop their skills and boost confidence in learning to play music, especially as beginners. Having a clear plan for each rehearsal and communicating it to the students is crucial. In addition, it is essential to keep parents informed of their child's instrumental needs along with any afterschool rehearsals and performances.

Middle school band directors all have common goals for their students, but some may emphasize one over another. Generally, the director will engage the students in long tones on their instruments. Breathing exercises may also be used to teach air sustenance to support and produce a characteristic sound on the students' instruments. Utilizing a band method book that teaches fundamental skills on a progressive plan that aims to have specific skill sets introduced, refined, and to some degree mastered is essential to guide instruction. Often, middle school band directors have supplemental materials presented to the students. These might be in the form of major scales, chromatic scales, additional drum rudiments not found in the beginning parts of the method book, and simple sightreading examples that incorporate augmentation of the material already introduced in the method book. Middle school band directors are subjected to many difficulties in and out of the band room. One problem is behavioral issues of students who may not desire to participate in the band program but have insistence from a parent. Secondly, time allotment might be a factor. Schools on a rotating A/B block schedule may not see their students daily, whereas a daily 90-minute allotment for exploratory classes, such as band, can be divided into 45-minute increments. By consistent face-to-face instruction, more material and fundamental skills can be reinforced as a scaffolding mechanism to introduce more advanced skills quicker than not meeting for instruction daily. Some students receive encouragement by

their band director or have an intrinsic desire to perform as a member of the all-state band. The director may have accelerated students who may be attracted to and pursue an opportunity for outside performance engagements. To be selected for the all-state band, a student must pass two separate auditions within a specific scoring range, and those students are then ranked by score from highest to lowest. Each section in the all-state band has a certain number of seats for proper balance and necessary instrumentation for the preparation and performance of the ensemble.

According to academic publications, it is unknown if anyone has questioned how middle school band directors prepare students for all-state auditions in their regular rehearsals. Due to this gap in the literature, a formalized research study on how directors may prepare students for such an audition is warranted. This study reflects on responses to two main research questions.

Research Question One: What are common teaching strategies of band directors who have students preparing for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Research Question Two: What additional instruction outside of the school day do the students auditioning for All-State Middle School Band receive?

A sub-set question of Research Question Two: Who provides pertinent instruction for students who plan to audition for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Hypotheses

The study intends to suggest the validity of the hypotheses to the two research questions.

Research Question One: What are common teaching strategies of band directors who have students preparing for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Hypothesis One: Common teaching strategies that exist between middle school band directors whose students are accepted into the Georgia All-State Middle School Band include

composing etudes for the ensemble emphasizing major scales and selecting sightreading literature that is similar to the All-State audition requirements.

Research Question Two: What extracurricular instruction can students receive who plan to audition for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

A sub-set question of Research Question Two: Who provides pertinent instruction for students who plan to audition for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Hypothesis Two and Sub-set: Receiving private instruction outside of the school day can enhance the skills of the auditionee, but the lack of resources such as geographic location or funds prevent such study, and the auditionee must rely on afterschool time with the band director when feasible.

Definition of Terms

All-State Band (ASB): The highest-ranking musicians judged at the area competitions qualify to perform in one of the All-State Bands, Orchestras, and Choirs. These All-State ensembles rehearse for multiple days and are often directed by nationally renowned directors. After the rehearsals, on the final day, there is a live performance for the public.¹⁶

Audition: An interview or performance for a particular role or job as a singer, actor, dancer, or a musician, consisting of a practical demonstration of the candidate's suitability and skill.¹⁷

Bracketing/Epoche: Suspending judgment to focus on an analysis of expertise.¹⁸

¹⁶ Allen Zhou, *What Does It Take to Qualify for the All-State Band?*, accessed October 21, 2023, <https://verdantleaf.org/interview/2018/09/26/what-does-it-take-to-make-all-state.html>.

¹⁷ "Audition Definition & Meaning." n.d. Dictionary.com. Accessed September 9, 2023. <https://dictionary.com/browse/audition>.

¹⁸ Katarzyna Peoples, essay, in *How to Write a Phenomenological Dissertation a Step-by-Step Guide* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2021), 31.

Collegiate National Association for Music Education (CNAfME): Organization that provides college students interested in music education with professional development opportunities, teaching resources, and music education conferences at the state and national levels.¹⁹

District Honor Band (DHB): A select ensemble from a district or region where the students have been chosen by audition or selected by their band directors.²⁰

Distant: Census-defined rural territory that is more than five miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area.²¹

Fringe: Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to five miles from an urbanized area.²²

Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA): The primary organization that assists and promotes the advancement of music education in Georgia through events, programs, advocacy, and continuing education activities for music teachers and students.²³

Horizon: Present experience, which cannot be bracketed; nothing is fully seen in its entirety as none of us are omniscient.²⁴

¹⁹ “Nafme Collegiate,” *College of Music at the University of Colorado-Boulder*, accessed November 19, 2023, <https://www.colorado.edu/music/academics/departments/music-education/information-current-students/nafme-nafme-collegiate>.

²⁰ Steve Graves, “The Honor Band Experience,” *Yamaha Music*, last modified November 29, 2022, accessed March 9, 2023, <https://hub.yamaha.com/music-educators/prof-dev/teaching-tips/honor-band/#:~:text=For%20this%20article%2C%20%E2%80%9Chonor%20band,selected%20by%20their%20band%20directors>.

²¹ “Chapter 12 the Urban and Rural Classifications - Census.gov,” accessed March 10, 2023, <https://www.2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/GARM/Ch12GARM.pdf>.

²² Ibid.

²³ “Georgia Music Educators Association Inc,” *Georgia Music Educators Association Inc - GuideStar Profile*, accessed March 9, 2023, <https://www.guidestar.org/profile/58-0904110>.

²⁴ Peoples, *How to Write*, 31.

Institutional Review Board (IRB): An administrative body established to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects recruited to participate in research activities conducted under the auspices of the institution with which it is affiliated.²⁵

Intentionality: Fundamental property of consciousness and principal theme of phenomenology; our awareness in a sense.²⁶

Qualitative Research: Research that involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences.²⁷

Music Education: A field of study associated with the teaching and learning of music and musical concepts. Music Education focuses on all domains of learning, including the development of skills (psychomotor domain), the acquisition of knowledge (cognitive domain), and significant ways of (affective domain) the learner's willingness to receive, internalize and share what is learned, including music appreciation and sensitivity.²⁸

Noema: Meaning that becomes clear after contemplation.²⁹

Noesis: Thinking about or interpreting.³⁰

²⁵ "What Is the Institutional Review Board (IRB)?," *Research Office*, last modified October 12, 2022, accessed March 9, 2023, <https://research.oregonstate.edu/irb/what-institutional-review-board-irb>.

²⁶ Peoples, *How to Write*, 32.

²⁷ Saul McCloud, "Qualitative vs Quantitative Research Methods & Data Analysis," *Simply Psychology*, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html#:~:text=Qualitative%20research%20is%20the%20process%20of%20collecting%2C%20analyzing%2C,such%20as%20text%2C%20video%2C%20photographs%2C%20or%20audio%>

²⁸ G.C. Abiogu, I.N. Mbaji, and A.O. Adeogun, "Music Education and Youth Empowerment: A Conceptual Clarification," *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 5, (2015):118.

²⁹ Peoples, *How to Write*, 32.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

Phenomenological reduction: Intentional consciousness using the process of bracketing or epoche (suspending judgments to focus on an analysis of experience).³¹

Private Lessons: Private instruction that takes place outside of normal school learning, usually one-on-one between the teacher and student, and involves instructor compensation.³²

Remote: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area.³³

Rural: Territory, population, and housing units that the Census Bureau does not classify as urban are classified as rural. For example, a rural place is any incorporated place or Census Designated Places (CDP) with fewer than 2,500 inhabitants that is located outside of an urban area (UA) place is either entirely urban or entirely rural, except for those designated as an extended city.³⁴

Urban: An area comprised of 50,000 or more people.³⁵

Chapter Summary

Many students in band programs desire additional performance opportunities beyond the concerts already scheduled. One of them may include auditioning for and performing in an organized all-state ensemble. Students can learn and perform literature that may or may not be feasible to be performed in their home band programs and create new friendships with students throughout the state. It is common to have these students return to their programs with new ideas

³¹ Peoples, *How to Write*, 32.

³² “Private Lesson Meaning, Private Lesson Definition: English Cobuild Dictionary,” *Reverso*, accessed March 9, 2023, <https://dictionary.reverso.net/english-cobuild/private+lessons#:~:text=11%20adj%20You%20can%20use,usually%20in%20return%20for%20payment>.

³³ Census.gov, “Chapter 12.”

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

and newly acquired skills, hoping they inspire other students to take the initiative to prepare music, audition, and see if their total score is high enough to earn a seat in the all-state band.

There are inequities in Georgia of band students in urban/suburban areas compared to rural communities regarding availability for instruction after school through private lessons or additional teaching from the band director. The researcher intends to discover validity in the hypothesis supporting the research questions and identifies similarities among the teaching strategies of middle school band directors who prepare their students for the Georgia All-State Band audition.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Brief History of the Georgia Music Educators Association

In 1922, the Georgia Education Association formed a Department of Public School Music.¹ This department, later known as the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA), was founded in 1938 by Max Noah on the campus of Georgia State College for Women.² Present day, the location is known as Georgia College and State University. The mission of GMEA is to promote the advancement of music education in the school curriculum and provide resource training for classroom teachers.³ GMEA sponsors regional and state-level music competitions, six All-State bands, three all-state orchestras, and six all-state choruses.⁴ Georgia is divided into fourteen districts responsible for organizing events within a small timeframe prescribed by GMEA. Currently, there are more than 2,500 active professional members in the GMEA. The number, including retired and Collegiate National Association for Music Education (CMAME) is over 3,300 members. As of November 2023, there are 1,174 members list “band” as their primary area.⁵

Audition Process for Winds

GMEA maintains specific guidelines for the selection process for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band. Preliminary rounds are administered at the district level on the first

¹ James Thomas McRaney, “A History of the Georgia Music Educators Association, 1922-1993” (EdD diss., University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, 1993), 8, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/304057967?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>.

² “Georgia Music Educators Association Records - KB.GCSU.EDU,” *Georgia Music Educators Association Records - Georgia College & State University*, accessed October 30, 2023, https://kb.gcsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=finding_aids.

³ McRaney, “A History of the GMEA,” 19.

⁴ GMEA, “Georgia Music Educators Association Records.”

⁵ To Alan Fowler, *GMEA Information Request*, November 15, 2023.

Saturday in December, while the final round for participant selection is facilitated at one location in Georgia on the first Saturday in January. Examining the middle school (grades six through eight) on the district level, auditionees must perform four major scales (Concert F, B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat) by memory with a specific articulation pattern. Ascending pitches of the major scale must be tongued and descending pitches must be slurred. The performance style requirement of the arpeggio is the same as the articulation of the major scales. A metronomic marking of quarter equals 120 is the intended tempo for each of the scales performed.

A consistent scoring method has been developed and utilized for all wind players. Each octave of a major scale is worth one point. If a scale is only one octave, then the scale's total possible score is two points (one point ascending, one point descending). Many instruments have scales with an additional octave, which would reflect a total point value of four points. The arpeggio, however, is scored as one point regardless of the amount of octaves. If a mistake occurs at any place in the arpeggio, the performer will receive no points.

Additionally, each student must perform their chromatic scale, demonstrating the practical playing range of the instrument. The chromatic scale has a maximum point value of ten. Students must also prepare a pre-selected lyrical etude chosen by the All-State Committee. The lyrical etude has specific criteria in half-point increments with a maximum of five points. The lyrical etude, with a maximum thirty-point value, incorporates six elements: Tone Quality, Technique, Rhythmic Accuracy, Articulation and Style, Dynamics and Phrasing, and Interpretation and Tempo. This prepared work does not need to be memorized. The final component at the district level is a sightreading excerpt. This excerpt is designed to challenge the reading skills of young musicians by incorporating unfamiliar time signatures and less common key signatures at a moderato tempo. The sightreading component has the same criteria and point

value as the lyrical etude. To have equity and consistency for each instrument, knowing that not every instrument has the same amount of octaves as others, an adjustment factor is utilized. If the students achieve an established minimum score, they are recommended to advance to the final auditions at the state level. The minimum passing scores for the district vary from instrument to instrument.

Table 1.1 Minimum Score Required For Recommendation To Second Round Audition

Instrument	Minimum Passing Score	Instrument	Minimum Passing Score
Flute	85	Tenor Saxophone	80
Oboe	80	Baritone Saxophone	80
Bassoon	70	Trumpet	80
Clarinet	85	French Horn	70
Bass Clarinet	70	Trombone	70
Contra Clarinet	70	Baritone	70
Alto Saxophone	85	Tuba	70

During the next stage in the audition process, students do not perform the major scales and chromatic scales again. Instead, they are required to perform the technical etude (sixty points) pre-selected by the All-State Committee and sightread two exercises (twenty points each). The wind and percussion students must play both a lyrical and technical etude, not by memory. To provide the highest level of integrity, students auditioning at the second-round level play to judges who are behind a barrier that inhibits seeing and recognizing students and eliminating bias towards schools. Upon completing all the student auditions, the all-state chair and committee will place students in the allotted seats in each section, beginning with the highest student score as the first chair.

Audition Process for Percussion

For percussionists, the audition process differs from the wind players' requirements.⁶ Wind players strategically focus on their primary instrument. Percussion students must show proficiency on a mallet instrument, snare drum, and timpani. The district and state levels both have audition requirements in those three areas of percussion.

At the district level for mallet percussion, students must play F, B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat scales on their choice of mallet instrument two octaves by memory. The point value for mallet scales is different than the winds. Each octave of the major scale is worth two points for a maximum score of eight. The scale's arpeggio has an entirely different standard for scoring. If a wind player misses any pitches anywhere in the arpeggio, they do not receive any points. However, on mallets, each arpeggio has a total possible value of four points, one for each octave. If a performer plays an incorrect pitch on one of the octaves, the individual will not receive any points for that segment of the arpeggio. The auditionee must also perform the chromatic scale on the same instrument as the major scales. The entire possible range of the instrument has a maximum point value of twelve. The audition does not require a prepared mallet etude but does require sightreading. The sightreading portion has a forty-point possible score that is divided into three areas: rhythmic accuracy (fifteen points), technique/tone production (fifteen points), and dynamics/expression (ten points).

The second area of adjudication is performing a prepared twenty-four-measure excerpt from the method book *Intermediate Snare Studies No. 15* by Mitchell Peters. Students are evaluated in four areas: rudiment quality (fifteen points), roll quality (fifteen points), tempo/pulse control (fifteen points), and accuracy (fifteen points) for a possible total of sixty points.

⁶ GMEA, "Georgia Music Educators Association Handbook."

Additionally, a sightreading requirement is evaluated with the same criteria and point value as the mallet area.

The third and final area for the percussionist to perform is timpani. At the middle school level, two drums are used. Before the performance, the student must tune both drums to the correct pitches of the etude. Students have thirty seconds per drum to place the correct pitches required using an acoustic tone producer. Students can use a pitch pipe to hear the pitches for tuning; however, most students use a mallet instrument to play the pitches. Electronic tuners are not allowed. The etude is nineteen measures long and is based on an excerpt from *Musical Studies from the Intermediate Timpanist* by Garwood Whaley. Sightreading is also a requirement in the area of timpani. The sightreading utilizes the same two pitches from the prepared etude.

At the state level, students are again evaluated on the xylophone, snare drum, and timpani. There are several similarities from the district level regarding prepared musical selection. The initial similarity is that each instrument has a sightreading component. The first round required four major scales on the student's choice of mallet instrument. For the second round, the performance of major scales is substituted with a nineteen-measure etude on the marimba. The selection is based on an excerpt from *Sonata for Violin* by Arcangelo Corelli. The snare drum requirement is the same prepared etude played on the district level, except the requirement is to perform the additional twelve measures of the written work. The timpani etude is also performed again on the state level. When analyzing the major differences, it becomes apparent that a more substantial point value on sightreading is presented on the state level.

There are two middle school All-State Bands that are formed from the highest scores from the auditions. For the 2023 Georgia All-State Middle School Bands, each band comprised the following instrumentation: eleven flutes, four oboes, four bassoons, twenty-six clarinets, four

bass clarinets, one contra clarinet, eight alto saxophones, four tenor saxophones, two baritone saxophones, fifteen trumpets, eight French horns, ten trombones, five baritones, seven tubas, and eight percussionists.

Not all state music education associations hold in-person auditions. There are some states, such as Michigan, that require student-recorded auditions. The auditionees each submit 10-minute recorded auditions consisting of a specific etude, perform various scales, and demonstrate sight-reading skills. Every auditionee is known solely with an identifying number and without any mention of the student or school. An adjudicator assesses the auditions and arranges them in a specific sequence according to the final score.⁷

Alan Klaus, Professor of High Brass at Memorial University in Newfoundland, offered his insight into recording a successful audition. Klaus believes that when approaching with a realistic mindset, preparing an audition tape offers a superb opportunity for the auditionees to enhance their skills. To optimize the learning experience, the student must record themselves several times to utilize what they hear from the recording to shape their practice sessions throughout multiple recording sessions.⁸ An attainable objective may involve recording no less than one month before the final date. Following that, students must attentively evaluate the outcome of the initial recording session and concentrate on a few aspects that need to be resolved in the upcoming week before beginning another recording session.⁹ Iterating this procedure several times may significantly enhance the result and improve the student's feeling of achievement.

⁷ "Events," Michigan High School Band and Orchestra Association, 2024, <https://www.msboa.org/Events/All-State.aspx>.

⁸ Alan Klaus, "Honour Bands: Why and How," *Canadian Winds: The Journal of the Canadian Band Association* 11, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 41–43.

⁹ Ibid.

Klaus emphasizes that one must not underestimate the significance of the quality of the audio recording for determining the overall impression a musician makes on the adjudication process.¹⁰ Adjudicators lack the means to assess the potential improvement in a musician's tone quality with superior recording equipment. Consequently, they must evaluate the audition tape only based on its actual sound.¹¹

Reasons Students Do Not Audition

There are plausible reasons why students may not desire to audition for the all-state band. Some of the reasons may include:

- **Perceived Lack of Skill:** Many students may not prepare an audition for honor bands because they do not think they are skilled enough to learn the music or lack confidence in their abilities. Students may be nervous about auditioning because they cannot perform to the standards of other students.¹²
- **Fear of Rejection:** Some students cannot take constructive criticism of their playing. The fear of rejection cripples many students from any desire to audition for an honor band. Students who have auditioned before and did not make the band are more likely not to pursue an audition again.¹³
- **Logistical Barriers:** Students may be unable to audition for honor bands because of problems with their personal and school schedules, transportation, or financial

¹⁰ Klaus, "Honour Bands," 41-43.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Christopher Michael Carr, "High School Band Students' Motivation Profiles and Perceptions of a Competitive Honor Band Audition" (EdD diss., University of Georgia, Athens, 2023), 22, <https://esploro.libs.uga.edu/esploro/outputs/doctoral/HIGH-SCHOOL-BAND-STUDENTS-MOTIVATION-PROFILES/9949558727802929>.

¹³ Ibid., 81.

hardships.¹⁴ The all-state audition in Georgia is held at a middle school approximately thirty miles south of Atlanta, and transportation to the audition site may take up to five hours and 350 miles for those in the southern coastal area of the state.

- Past Experiences: Students may not want to try to audition again if they have had less than desirable experiences with audition preparation, the audition itself, the actual participation in the all-state band, negative attitudes from band directors or private lesson instructors, especially if they have been treated unfairly or not supported enough.¹⁵

Audition Performance Anxiety

Performance anxiety is the psychological, physiological, and behavioral response to stressful circumstances such as public performances.¹⁶ Approximately 80% of people get nervous whenever they go somewhere where many people are watching.¹⁷ Perfectionism and competition can be stressful for musicians but are common triggers for performance anxiety. In a recent study of arts students, 27% had seen a psychologist or psychiatric counselor in the past five years, while only 10% of regular academic students had done the same.¹⁸ A study conducted by the International Conference of Symphony Orchestra Musicians (ICSOM) in 1988 found that 24% of the 2,212 people who answered the survey admitted to suffering from severe stage fright.

¹⁴ Carr, "High School Band Students."

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Bonnie Robson, Joy Davidson, and Elizabeth Snell, "'But I'm Not Ready, Yet' Overcoming Audition Anxiety in the Young Musician," *Medical Problems of Performing Artists* 10, no. 1 (March 1995): 32–37, <https://jstor.org/stable/45440515>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

The poll also revealed that performance anxiety was the most frequent medical symptom, more common than any physical complaint.¹⁹

In Richard J. Dispenziere's Master's thesis, "Middle and High School Honor Band Auditions: Preparation Strategies and Techniques," he investigates psychological conditions such as performance anxiety and memorization-related challenges.²⁰ Previous research in 2011 from Jacqueline McAllister and Canadian music educator Nancy Mitchell examine empirical evidence on the various factors that contribute to and consequences of performance anxiety. Another aspect that contributes to performance anxiety is the task of performing from memory. Students frequently need to execute scales from memory during honor band auditions.²¹ Dispenziere found that the fear of forgetting something can lead to worry and anxiousness, which can significantly impact a student's academic performance. Utilizing memorizing techniques can enhance performance confidence and boost achievement levels during auditions.²²

Dispenziere's research examined other variables, including instrument type, distance traveled, gender, and school enrollment. This study's findings provide significant insights into what students and teachers should consider while arranging an honor band audition. However, he believes these results need to investigate the preparation approaches employed by the students who achieved higher scores. Students' access to resources may be constrained based on their socio-economic status. Those hailing from affluent school districts possess advantages over those from disadvantaged districts. Wealthy students would have access to superior equipment and

¹⁹ Robson, Davidson, and Snell, "But I'm Not Ready."

²⁰ Richard J. Dispenziere, "Middle and High School Honor Band Auditions: Preparation Strategies and Techniques" (Master's thesis, William Paterson University, Wayne, 2013), 2, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

facilities, as well as exclusive possibilities for private lessons.²³ From his research, he deduced that variations in socio-economic status must be considered while examining audition preparation and outcomes.

Nancy Mitchell conducted a study exploring characteristics of situations that sometimes influence performance anxiety. Although anxiety is prevalent across all disciplines, the inherent susceptibility associated with an artistic performance can rapidly escalate stress levels.²⁴ Performance anxiety is the psychological, physiological, and behavioral response to stressful circumstances such as public performances. When it comes to studying music, several events, such as music juries, ensemble placements, and other performances, have both a public and evaluative component, which makes them highly anxiety-provoking.²⁵ Aside from the inherent pressure students may experience to achieve a favorable outcome, there is the added external pressure of being observed by an audience who will be aware of the student's success or failure. Unlike a written test, which allows students to think about and revise their answers if needed carefully, a music performance only permits students to showcase their abilities once.²⁶ An effective performance must encompass accuracy, ingenuity, sentiment, and good communication. The ability to express oneself becomes challenging when feeling heightened levels of worry.

²³ Dispenziere, "Middle and High School Honor Band," 15.

²⁴ Nancy Mitchell, "Evaluation and Performance Anxiety in Music Study," *The Canadian Music Educator* 53, no. 1 (Fall, 2011): 32-4, <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/evaluation-performance-anxiety-music-study/docview/917953178/se-2>.

²⁵ Dispenziere, "Middle and High School Honor Band," 18.

²⁶ Ibid.

Rationale for All-State Band

Researchers have investigated the experiences of students in a variety of situations involving honor bands. In 2018, Richard Anthony Perez’s dissertation revealed that “Students who participated in an honor band loved and profited from both musical educational opportunities and social interactions.”²⁷ Mitchell Robinson conducted a survey in 1995 with the students who took part in an honor band at a junior high school. Robinson noticed many of the students had a positive reaction to the conductor, the music, and the event as a whole.²⁸ Music Educators Matthew Williams and Kenneth Goff also conducted a survey in which they asked college students about the rewards and motivations that led them to participate in honor bands when they were younger and how they remembered them.²⁹ Most of the benefits the students recalled from their experience were musical, but an overall interest in enjoyment was also frequently highlighted. Both Williams and Goff stated, “It is essential to take into account the perspective of the student in order for therapists and coordinators to organize honor bands in such a way that students can profit from these ensembles on both a social and an academic level.”³⁰

²⁷ Richard Anthony Perez, “A Crafted Intergenerational District Band: A Bounded Case Study of Participant Experiences” (DMA diss., University of Southern California, Los Angeles, 2018), p.9, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.25549/usctheses-c89-24951>.

²⁸ Mitchell Robinson, “Student Evaluation of Select Ensemble Festivals and Guest Conductors,” *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 14, no.1 (1995): 16–19, <https://doi.org/10.1177/8755123395011400104>.

²⁹ Matthew Williams and Kenneth Goff, *Undergraduate Musicians’ Remembered Benefits and Motives for Participating in Honor Ensembles*, accessed November 5, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26724261>.

³⁰ Ibid.

Many administrators and parents hold expectations for students to participate in honor band activities despite having rigorous rehearsal schedules.³¹ This is due to the emphasis placed on the participants in the honor band by state music organizations and their band directors. According to the findings of several studies, students often choose to pursue honor bands because of their interest in music. Participation in honor bands can also give the students a more significant opportunity to learn about their interests, which can strongly influence future decisions regarding potential college enrollment and career paths.³²

The most talented young musicians are invited to participate in various honor groups where they gain valuable performance experience. Students who are already enrolled in various instrumental music programs and play in a band or orchestra may have their parents and their music teachers encourage them to try out for honors ensembles in hopes of joining those performance opportunities.³³ Many music educators are enticed to improve honors ensembles on the belief that doing so will make them more appealing to the students who participate.³⁴ This goal is shared by the students who join honor ensembles. Music educators have to continue encouraging their students to participate in these competitive auditions. This competition is necessary to ensure that honors ensembles are regarded as significant events for the participating members.³⁵ Educator Barbara Payne states, “Since the early part of this century, school bands

³¹ Victoria Warnet, “The Experiences of First-Time Honor Band Clinicians: A Multiple Case Study,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 230 (2021): 47, <https://doi.org/10.5406/21627223.230.03>.

³² Williams and Goff, *Undergraduate*.

³³ Guy W. Forbes, “Evaluative Music Festivals and Contests—Are They Fair?,” *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 12, no. 2 (1994): 16–20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/875512339401200203>.

³⁴ Robinson, “Student Evaluation,” 16–19.

³⁵ Barbara Payne, “A Review of Research on Band Competition,” *Journal of Band Research* 33, no. 1 (1997). <https://www.proquest.com/openview/ce82f627f76cf2830033c7a10556b661/1.pdf?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=1817277>.

have participated in various organized performance opportunities where extrinsic motivation is provided in the form of one or more competitive elements.”³⁶

According to the late W. Francis McBeth, two components developed the concept of the all-state band. The first purpose included getting the best players together and playing the music that most schools could not play, and the other concept involved “assembl[ing] large, massed bands.”³⁷ The rigors of the audition process require that the musicians, many of whom are middle-school-aged, spend many disciplined hours to obtain a satisfactory level of performance presence.³⁸ McBeth once stated, “The honor band experience is a vital part of our instrumental pedagogy. In fact, it may be one of the most important and deserves our best preparation. It is with this love for the participants that I have written this manual. We have the finest young performers to be found anywhere, and they deserve our best.”³⁹

The students’ experience in the honor band must be distinctive from their routine practices at school. They will be surrounded by musicians who are equally brilliant and dedicated to their craft, and as a result, they should see faster progress with their ensemble music. It is possible that for some people, this will be the largest or most complete ensemble they have ever performed among. After participating in a successful honor band experience, students

³⁶ Payne, “A Review of Research on Band Competition,” 1

³⁷ Keith Y. Preston, “William Francis McBeth (b. 1933): Composer, Conductor, Music Educator” (DMA Diss., UMI, Los Angeles, 2006), <https://www.proquest.com/pqdtglobal/docview/305354508/8AB6FC73EA1A4EECFPQ/6?accountid=12085&sourcetype=Dissertations%20&%20Theses>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ W. Francis McBeth, *The Complete Honor Band Manual: A Guide for the Preparation and Organization of Honor Band Clinics* (San Antonio, TX: Southern Music Company, 1996). 53

should return to their home institutions with fresh musical ideas, skills, or expectations for superior performance.⁴⁰

Influence on Preparation with Private Lessons

The importance of students enrolling in private lessons is the focus of much discussion by educators Cornelia Yarbrough (University of Louisiana), Steven J. Morrison (University of Washington), and Brant Karrick (University of Toledo). The authors suggest that students who participate in private lessons demonstrate better skills in correcting faulty intonation and are more advanced performers on their instruments than students who do not participate in private lessons.⁴¹ Additionally, the authors believe it is also possible that students who participate in private instruction do so because of prior successes in their instrumental performance experience and desire to continue building upon foundational skills.⁴² Private lessons should provide students with challenges that could improve their daily band experience. Some private teachers might focus on teaching aspects of musical form, rhythmic precision, and harmonic structures with their students compared to simply focusing on playing melodies.⁴³ Regardless, a substantial amount of time must be spent preparing the audition material.

Technology as a Teaching Aid

Many students who desire to prepare and audition for all-state may not have access to private instruction either due to financial circumstances or inability for distance traveling. Through the advancement in technology, especially the internet, websites have been created

⁴⁰ Preston, "McBeth," 13.

⁴¹ Cornelia Yarbrough, Steven J. Morrison, and Brant Karrick, *The Effect of Experience, Private Instruction, and Knowledge of ...* - JSTOR, accessed November 5, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40318878>.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

offering instrumental music instruction either for the beginner musician or someone who is more advanced and desires to further their skills beyond the instruction of the ensemble director. One source, YouTube, has approximately 122 million daily active users from all over the world, and a projection is that the number of users will increase to 232.5 million by 2029.⁴⁴

Given that instrumental teachers often have to instruct students on unfamiliar instruments, these videos can be a valuable supplement to their teaching. This is particularly useful in cases where geographical or socioeconomic limitations make it challenging to find a suitable instructor.⁴⁵ Students auditioning for honor bands can search YouTube for videos of a teacher performing the lyrical and technical etudes required for the auditions.

In addition to instructional videos, there are online companies whose instructional focus is on improving the sightreading skills of musicians. One company, Sight Reading Factory, is a cloud-based service that allows students and music educators to customize and create unlimited sight reading examples. On their webpage, the description of the service reads, “Custom sight reading exercises to your students’ specific needs with selecting exact rhythms, ranges, accidentals, dynamics, articulations, time and key signatures.”⁴⁶ Current price is based on a \$35.00 yearly membership, with special educator pricing for band programs that allow students to be arranged into classes and record director-set assignments.

⁴⁴ Jakob Degenhard, “Global: YouTube Users 2020-2029,” Statista, January 30, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1144088/youtube-users-in-the-world>.

⁴⁵ Thomas E. Rudolph and James Frankel, *YouTube in Music Education* (New York: Hal Leonard Books, 2009).

⁴⁶ “Sightreadingfactory.com,” *Sightreadingfactory.com*, 2024, accessed February 23, 2024, <https://sightreadingfactory.com/>.

Option for Areas with Limited Internet Capabilities

There is a potential barrier that might prevent students from utilizing online resources such as YouTube and Sight Reading Factory. Many areas of the United States do not have access to reliable internet. In Georgia, a study by the company Metro Atlanta CEO states 10% of residents rely on cellular data to access the internet, while 12.3% have no internet access at all.⁴⁷ Fannin County is in mountainous Georgia, on the border with North Carolina and Tennessee. It is home to about 24,000 people, and many of them do not have access to reliable internet. The terrain of the area makes it hard to get good cell phone signals. As a result of this, tens of thousands of people have trouble getting reliable broadband service at home.⁴⁸

Before the internet became commonplace, retired Georgia band director Larry McClure realized over thirty years ago that sightreading was critical in the all-state audition process. He began collecting sightreading examples after state-level auditions concluded and compiled them into bound books for each instrument. Having this available resource aids in building young musicians' sightreading skills where online access is limited or non-existent.⁴⁹

Clinician Experience

One of the most significant aspects that determine the level of student participation in honor bands involves the presence of guest clinicians. The honor band clinician has the most influence on the musical development of the students and their overall experience during the

⁴⁷ "10.6% of Georgia Households Rely on Cell Data for Internet Access," *Metro Atlanta CEO*, accessed February 23, 2024, <https://metroatlantaceo.com/news/2022/02/106-georgia-households-rely-cell-data-internet-access/#:~:text=Researchers%20also%20calculated%20the%20percentage,no%20internet%20access%20at%20all>.

⁴⁸ Aaron Cox, "Revolutionary Map Expanding Statewide Internet Access," *UGA Today*, accessed February 23, 2024, <https://news.uga.edu/map-expanding-statewide-internet-access/#:~:text=Located%20at%20the%20Georgia%20border,connection%20speeds%20are%20often%20slow>.

⁴⁹ Larry McClure, "All State Sight Reading," *Allstatesightreading*, accessed February 23, 2024, <http://www.allstatesightreading.com/>.

event.⁵⁰ The clinician desires to teach and refine skills by programming selections that have educational value to the student and entertainment value to the audience.

Steven P. Katzenmoyer wrote an article in *The Instrumentalist Magazine* titled “Finding the Right Guest Conductor.” He developed a practical guideline for selecting a guest conductor, who should ideally possess qualities that align with at least one, if not both, of two areas.⁵¹ Katzenmoyer recommends that the guest conductor should currently instruct kids whose ages are within a three-year range of the students in the honor band. Secondly, the guest conductor should have taught students of similar ages to those at the event within the past three years. The guest conductor should ideally meet both of these qualities.⁵²

When evaluating potential candidates to lead a middle school honor orchestra, Katzenmoyer believes it might be prudent to examine individuals who have already held leadership positions in internationally acclaimed orchestras.⁵³ Nevertheless, the expectations could be impractical if the candidate lacks experience instructing middle school orchestra students or has been away from teaching for over three years. Children are indifferent to the groups that a guest conductor has directed or the amount of music they have composed. They prioritize the attainment of a positive experience within their group.⁵⁴

Dr. Victoria Warnet, a faculty member from the Schwob School of Music at Columbus

⁵⁰ David Wayne Greenlee, “A Study of the Indiana State Choral Festival Association and Its Contribution to Secondary Choral Music Programs,” 1982.

⁵¹ Steven P. Katzenmoyer, “Finding the Right Guest Conductor,” *The Instrumentalist*, September 27, 2018, <https://theinstrumentalist.com/october-2018/finding-the-right-guest-conductor/>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Katzenmoyer, “Finding the Right Guest Conductor.”

State University in Georgia, presented a research case study about first-time honor band clinicians and their experiences. Dr. Warnet discovered when music teachers begin their first experience with honor bands, their previous experiences may have influenced the decisions they make as honor band clinicians. For example, a music teacher may reminisce of playing in an honor band when they were in middle or high school, observe other honor band clinicians, reflect upon classroom teaching experiences, or adjudicate the performances of colleagues' ensembles.⁵⁵ The instructional timeline for an honor band clinician is far shorter than that of a classroom music teacher. This condensed timetable provides a higher level of intensity when combined with the expectations of a public performance because many of the musical skills required of an honor band clinician are comparable to classroom music teaching. Overall, the honor band experience can vary greatly depending on the planning by the host committee. It can be very difficult to become an experienced honor band clinician when different organizations desire specific musical experiences for the students.⁵⁶

Furthermore, Dr. Warnet found that becoming an honor band clinician does not necessitate completing formal training, meeting specific requirements or qualifications, or obtaining any certification.⁵⁷ Because there are no set criteria for organizing an honor band, the experience of participating in an honor band can be very different for the students and the clinician, depending on the specifics of each community. Due to a lack of preparation and variations in local expectations, the constantly shifting nature of these conditions makes it challenging for an individual to acquire knowledge.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Warnet, "Experiences," 47.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Warnet, "Experiences," 50.

In most cases, candidates for the role of guest conductor for an honor group are suggested for consideration by district directors or the governing board of the host association. Once the availability of the conductor has been verified, the sponsoring organization (which could be a school district, a state or local music educators' association, or another similar organization) often determines the rehearsal calendar, including the days, times, and locations.⁵⁹ The sponsor is responsible for conducting auditions or selecting participants and should maintain communication with the director regarding the students' proficiency levels. The conductor can enhance the experience for students by tailoring it to their needs, which is facilitated by the provision of specific information.⁶⁰

Dr. Michael D. Worthy, from the University of Mississippi, conducted a study in which he examined the amount of time that a conductor in a high school honor band and a college honor band used, and he discovered that there are disparities in the amount of conductor talk and the pace that each ensemble employed. The tempo of an honor band rehearsal is one of the numerous ways conducting an honor band differs from instructing a typical band lesson. It may be difficult for the clinician to know what to expect when they arrive at the event because they are likely not the ones coordinating the rehearsals.⁶¹ The ability to adjust, the capacity for communication, and the level of awareness of the environment required of an honor band clinician are all increased when students are from a variety of musical backgrounds and experiences.⁶²

⁵⁹ Warnet, "Experiences," 51.

⁶⁰ Graves, "Honor Band."

⁶¹ Michael D. Worthy, *Rehearsal Frame Analysis of an Expert Wind Conductor in High School vs. College Band Rehearsals*, accessed November 5, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40319170>.

⁶² Ibid.

Dr. Patrick Freer from Georgia State University states, “Researchers have looked into students’ experiences and the motivations behind their participation in honor groups, but they have yet to investigate the musicians’ perspectives.”⁶³ If a music instructor receives an invitation to serve as a clinician for an honor band or honor choir, it is a notion that they receive positive accolades from other music educators.⁶⁴ Given that honor band competitions are already a standard component of instrumental music instruction, the honor band clinician experience deserves additional investigation. Suppose instrumental music educators were to investigate the honor band experiences of clinicians participating in the event for the first time. In that case, they might gain a better understanding of the requirements necessary to ensure the success of these gatherings for the clinician as well as the students.⁶⁵

An honor ensemble, such as the Georgia Middle School All-State Band, can be viewed in several ways based on whose perspective is being taken into consideration at any given time. It is possible that a teacher would view it as a step in the ongoing musical development of a student. A student might think of it as a sequence of separate activities, starting with an audition and culminating with a celebration that is richly merited after the performance.⁶⁶ A member of the crowd might concentrate on the concluding concert itself. When imagining the roles that a conductor plays in an honor ensemble, it is vital to keep each of these three aspects in mind: the repertoire to be performed, the educational tactics to be utilized, and the logistics.⁶⁷ In the end,

⁶³ Patrick K. Freer, “Guidelines for Guest Conductors of Honor Choirs,” *Music Educators Journal* 94, no. 1 (2007): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002743210709400107>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Graves, “Honor Band.”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

the job of the honor ensemble conductor is fairly straightforward in that he or she needs to make sure that everybody is proud of and content with his or her involvement in an event that was successful.

Repertoire

Allowing the conductor to select the musical material is beneficial. Conductors typically come prepared with a few older selections or new pieces that they are quite familiar with and know would work well for the ensemble.⁶⁸ It is common practice to pick more selections of varying difficulty levels than planned for the performance. After the literature has been chosen, it is the conductor's responsibility to analyze the scores and ensure that all instrumentation will be sufficient to practice each work.⁶⁹

In a 2000 publication, H. Robert Reynolds emphasized that, despite his extensive expertise in the field of band performance, he considers selecting repertoire challenging and crucial.⁷⁰ Selecting a repertoire commences with a series of inquiries that necessitate responses.⁷¹ According to Reynolds, the considerations should encompass the finest recently published repertoire and an examination of the established repertoire.⁷² Directors can also use the state list for a contest or festival to help choose what to play. Reynolds also mentioned the MENC website (now NAFME) as a place to find repertoire lists. The website lists literature for band, orchestra,

⁶⁸ Graves, "Honor Band."

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ H. Robert Reynolds, "Repertoire Is the Curriculum," *Music Educators Journal* 87, no. 1 (July 2000): 33, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3399675>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 34.

and chorus and past All-State repertoire.⁷³ It is also helpful to keep track of the pieces that the group has played in the past. This lets the director know when the standard repertoire was last played and shows how the programming choices are balanced. Reynolds emphasized the significance of taking into account the rehearsal time required to prepare the work and the particular strengths and weaknesses of the ensemble's instrumentation.⁷⁴ The selected repertoire must also exhibit a harmonious combination of style and musical aesthetics. In addition, Reynolds believes quality music possesses a well-proportioned blend of surprise and anticipation.⁷⁵

The selection of literature may be influenced by the association's decision regarding the group's instrumentation. Sometimes, but not always, the association suggests pieces that may suit the strengths and weaknesses of certain ensemble sections.⁷⁶ The conductor often requests several selections of varying levels and styles to see what pieces can produce the most musical emotion. It is also helpful to keep track of the pieces that the group has played in the past. This lets the director know when the standard repertoire was last played and shows how balanced the programming choices are.⁷⁷ Reynolds states that in a school band, the piece should be well within its technical limits so that the group can explore its most musical parts. Reynolds concluded that great, deep, and substantial music will be most helpful to students because it will give them the best chances to grow as musicians.⁷⁸

⁷³ Reynolds, "Repertoire *Is* the Curriculum." 34.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 35.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Reynolds, "Repertoire," 35.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Researcher John M. Denis discovered when choosing material for an ensemble, directors should initially evaluate technical factors by looking at the students themselves. The process entails recognizing the positive attributes and the areas for improvement within the ensemble and among individual performers.⁷⁹ For instance, individuals in a younger group, such as a middle school-level musical group, may possess a solid rhythmic ability. However, they may be deficient in their ability to harmonize or blend within the section effectively. Individually, a student can possess exceptional proficiency in interpreting musical notations yet face constraints in terms of vocal or instrumental range. Directors can assess specific instrument technique difficulties and more expansive group notions by employing many approaches, including fundamental drills, rehearsal audio recordings, and conversations with mentors.⁸⁰ The clinician can also benefit from viewing ensemble programs of past concerts to choose suitable literature.

Event Planning

After the selection of music, it is customary for the association to furnish the conductor with all the parts of the potentially programmed music. The most important factor in producing a successful performance is making the most of the time spent rehearsing. The rehearsal timetable for an honor group can look very different from one group to the next, ranging anywhere from a single day of practice to two days of rehearsal plus a performance day. The conductor is responsible for being informed of the schedule and making proper preparations.⁸¹

The following is an example of how a rehearsal schedule for a three-day honor group

⁷⁹ John M. Denis, "Choosing Band Literature for Success: A Structural Approach to Literature Selection," https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/vrme/vol34/iss1/6/?utm_source=opencommons.uconn.edu%2Fvrme%2Fvol34%2Fiss1%2F6&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Graves, "Honor Band."

might be designed:

Day one: The primary objective is to familiarize the ensemble members with one another and facilitate their acclimation to the conductor. Typically, this constitutes a component of the warm-up procedure. Employ a tutti part from one of the intermediate-level compositions in order to construct a harmonious and well-balanced ensemble. The students should engage in a comprehensive practice session for each musical composition, focusing on reinforcing rhythmic ideas, adapting to tempo changes, assigning percussion instruments appropriately, and identifying and annotating essential musical aspects.⁸²

Day two: Substantial progress is typically made. This represents the final opportunity to identify and meticulously address the most arduous segments within each composition. This period necessitates the rectification of balance and intonation concerns, as well as the consolidation of rhythmic stability across all musical compositions.⁸³

Day three: The last preparations for the concert are undertaken. This is a period for refining musical aspects such as tempo changes, reiterating specific styles and dynamics, practicing performer etiquette, and running the performance program from beginning to end.⁸⁴

Adjudication of Auditionees

The Georgia Music Educators Association has designated the first Saturday in December as the official statewide audition day for middle school bands. The high school bands have their audition date on the second Saturday in December. Each school, whether middle or high, has students auditioning, and the director of those students must be in attendance to serve as a judge

⁸² Graves, "Honor Band."

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

on an instrument panel. It is assumed that the evaluation will be more accurate if done by someone who performs on the instrument and who has personal experience with its performance characteristics.⁸⁵ This assumption does not necessarily hold true in Georgia. One district may have multiple directors with the same primary instrument or no directors for a specific instrument. From this, the situation of audication placement of directors becomes more difficult. The only requirement to serve as an adjudicator is that the director must be an active or retired member of GMEA.

Joelle L. Lien and Jere T. Humphreys, both from Arizona State University, presented research on different facets of how students are chosen for the South Dakota All-State Band. In South Dakota, students auditioning for the all-state band perform their chromatic scale, the G Major Scale, E melodic minor scale, and two etudes of contrasting styles. In addition to performing, students must also demonstrate knowledge of common musical terms and key and time signatures.⁸⁶

Lien and Humphreys further expanded their study to see how other states operated their all-state auditions. Their research discovered that twenty states utilize a multilevel audition and also found that thirty states select their students for the all-state band from a single audition.⁸⁷ Additionally, some states had a panel of five adjudicators scoring in an Olympic format. The Olympic format drops the highest and lowest scores, and the final score would be the average of the remaining three scores.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Howells, Bradford P. "The Effect of Primary Performing Instruments on Peer Evaluation," Master's Thesis Michigan State University, East Lansing, 2009. <https://doi.org/doi:10.25335/M5445HK88>. 7.

⁸⁶ Lien and Humphreys, "Relationships among Selected Variables," 148.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

GMEA follows a different format for all-state auditions. Instead, each instrument panel is comprised of two adjudicators for the district-level auditions. Both judges are visible to the students auditioning. For the state-level auditions, both adjudicators are behind a barrier where neither they nor the student can see who is in the room. The premise for this is to eliminate the potential for bias. Many instrument panels utilize two rooms: One room for the major scales, the chromatic scale, and the lyrical etude. To keep each audition panel on schedule, a facilitator collects the score sheet from the first room of judges and takes the score sheet to the next room, where the sightreading is performed.

Difficulties in Adjudication

There are several factors that can make a student's adjudication more difficult. One hurdle is the placement of the director and the panel. The director may be serving on a panel where they are less familiar with the instrument than they would be with their primary instrument. The second obstacle may include the years of teaching experience and their effectiveness for adequate scoring of the auditionee. Younger band directors may not be as familiar with the particular nuances or challenges of the instrument as older, more experienced directors would possess. The third factor that makes serving as an adjudicator challenging may involve the mental exhaustion from the frequency of students auditioning. Cecil Adderley III, from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, conducted research entitled "Does the Hour of the Day Affect Student Selection for Instrumental Honors Ensembles." From this study, Adderley found the largest percentage of students selected for the 1998-1999 Central Jersey Music Educators Association Honor Wind Ensemble auditioned within the first hour of the start of auditions. Adderley concluded that the relationship between the time and the frequency of

selection could have been the result of judging patterns from the adjudicators or the preparation level of the students.⁸⁹

Chapter Summary

One of the purposes of an honor band is to motivate, encourage, and reward talented student musicians and provide them with social and musical opportunities that they would not necessarily receive at their schools.⁹⁰ For an honor band experience such as the Georgia All-State Band to be a memorable learning experience, there are challenges for students who desire to participate in the ensemble. One of the challenges for the students is performance anxiety. Many young musicians have had a less-than-desirable experience and choose not to audition again because they fear failure or being unprepared. Some states do not require a live audition only a recorded video or audio tape. For many, the ability to record several times before a submission diminishes anxiety, and the auditionee can record without fear of failure. Secondly, it can be difficult for honor band coordinators to find reputable, experienced conductors that promote the student's success and not of themselves. If a student lives in an area where private lessons are not feasible due to travel distance or cost, online sources such as YouTube can be an option for student guidance. There is a prohibitive factor in using the internet as a resource. According to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, one in five households in the United States do not have access to reliable internet service.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Cecil L Adderley, "Does the Hour of the Day Affect Student Selection for Instrumental Honors Ensembles," *Contributions to Music Education* 28, no. 1 (2001): 107.

⁹⁰ Jason M Silveira, "Students' Social and Musical Reasons for Participating in Honor Music Ensembles," *Research Perspectives in Music Education* 15, no. 1 (May 2013): 21–29.

⁹¹ Michelle Cao and Rafi Goldberg, "Switched off: Why Are One in Five U.S. Households Not Online?," *Switched Off: Why Are One in Five U.S. Households Not Online?* | National Telecommunications and Information Administration, accessed February 4, 2024, <https://www.ntia.gov/blog/2022/switched-why-are-one-five-us-households-switched-why-are-one-five-us-households-not-online>.

The GMEA score sheets are weighted where a deficiency in one area can inhibit passing with the minimum required score. Furthermore, it is challenging for a student with deficiencies in performing the lyrical etude to satisfy critical components such as tone quality or lyrical phrasing. Due to not having formal training as an adjudicator, either for the district or state level, critiquing a student's sightreading ability is basic to what the teacher emphasizes to their students, thus becoming a subjective opinion. A more experienced veteran band director might have a more assertive judging demeanor than a less experienced younger director.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter offered a more detailed insight into the research methods used for this qualitative, phenomenological study regarding the commonalities in teaching strategies among middle school band directors for individuals auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band. In the case of this thesis, it was essential to include information such as the setting for the study, the participants, the method of data collection, the management and analysis procedures from the presented data, the consideration of ethical constraints as approved by the IRB, and a systematic approach to be able to discern the information without interference from preconceived notions or personal bias.

Research Design

The research plan comprises several components that must be completed before additional chapters can be written. An exhaustive search and examination of existing literature must be executed to find gaps where a study such as this area of music education needs to be present. Approval must be granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) due to the study using volunteer participants. The chief purpose of the IRB is the protection of those participating in the study, particularly around ethical issues such as informed consent, protection from harm, and confidentiality.”¹ The Executive Director of the Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) has agreed to aid in supplying information on all the middle schools, the names of the directors, and how many of their students were placed into the 2022-2023 Georgia All-State Middle School Band. Having this person as a resource greatly aids in the initial planning and development of the study.

¹ Office of the Commissioner, “IRB-Faqs,” *U.S. Food and Drug Administration*, FDA, n.d, Accessed November 19, 2023. <https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/institutional-review-boards-frequently-asked-questions#:~:text=The=%20purpose%20of%20IRB%20review,as%20subjects%20in%20the%20research.>

Upon receipt of the information from GMEA's Executive Director, a narrowing of schools will commence satisfying the required research criteria. The researcher intends to develop surveys to give to the directors who agree to participate in the study, schedule and observe the directors' rehearsals to find probable commonalities in their teaching and lead to a focus group where the researcher will share the findings with each participant and seek their opinions on the information presented to establish validity to the research questions.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses guided this study:

Research Question One: What are common teaching strategies of band directors who have students preparing for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Hypothesis One: Common teaching strategies that exist between middle school band directors whose students are accepted into the Georgia All-State Middle School Band include composing etudes for the ensemble emphasizing major scales and selecting sightreading literature that is similar to the All-State audition requirements.

Research Question Two: What extracurricular instruction can students receive who plan to audition for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

A sub-set question of Research Question Two: Who provides pertinent instruction for students who plan to audition for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Hypothesis Two and Sub-set: Receiving private instruction outside of the school day can enhance the skills of the auditionee, but the lack of resources such as geographic location or funds prevent such study, and the auditionee must rely on afterschool time with the band director when feasible.

Participants

The participants in the study were six middle school band directors from various locations in Georgia. The researcher was able to recruit three middle school directors within a 50-mile radius from the center of Atlanta and three areas not in the 50-mile radius. The years of experience varied throughout the group, from one with ten years of experience to one director with 51 years of experience. Each participant holds certification in Music Education P-12 from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. For purposes of confidentiality for the study, each participant was given an identity of P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6.

- P1: This participant has 51 years of experience teaching instrumental music. They have been teaching at their school for two years. Their educational background consists of a Bachelor's in Music Education, Master's in Music Education, and a Doctor of Theology.
- P2: This participant has 20 years of experience teaching instrumental music. They have been teaching at their school for 20 years. Their educational background consists of a Bachelor's in Music Education, and a Master's in Wind Band Conducting.
- P3: This participant has 12 years of experience teaching instrumental music. They have been teaching at their school for 12 years. Their educational background consists of a Bachelor's in Music Education, a Master's in Music Education and an Education Specialist in Music Education.
- P4: This participant has 23 years of experience teaching instrumental music. They have been teaching at their school for 14 years. Their educational background consists of a Bachelor's in Music Education and a Master's in Music Composition.
- P5: This participant has 22 years of experience teaching instrumental music. They have been teaching at their school for 16 years. Their educational background consists of a Bachelor's in Music Education and a Master's in Wind Band Conducting.

- P6: This participant has 24 years of experience teaching instrumental music. They have been teaching at their school for 24 years. Their educational background consists of a Bachelor's in Music Education, a Master's in Music Education.

Setting

Every middle school program observed was within a school of diverse demographics, socioeconomic status, and variance of numbers enrolled in both the band program and overall school enrollment. To ensure confidentiality of the study, each school was given an S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, and S6 identity. The numbers correlate to the participants (P) with the school (S).

- S1: The school contains grades sixth through eighth with an enrollment of 1,767 students. The demographic breakdown includes 42.5% White, 29.8% Black, 0.85% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 21.8% Hispanic/Latino, 0.34% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 4.6% of students are of two or more races. Additionally, 49% of students are female, and 51% are male. The enrollment of the entire band program is 238 students. The eighth-grade class observed had 53 students present.
- S2: The school contains grades sixth through eighth with an enrollment of 882 students. The demographic breakdown consists of 46.5% White, 28.2% Black, 1.6% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 19.4% Hispanic/Latino, 0.45% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 3.73% of students are of two or more races. Additionally, 48% of students are female, and 52% are male. The enrollment of the entire band program is 122 students. The eighth-grade class observed had 30 students present.
- S3: The school contains grades sixth through eighth with an enrollment of 775 students. The demographic breakdown is 52.3% White, 23% Black, 0.39% Asian or Asian/Pacific

Islander, 20.4% Hispanic/Latino, 0.0% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 4% of students are of two or more races. Additionally, 47% of students are female, and 53% are male. The enrollment of the entire band program is 118 students. The eighth-grade class observed had 48 students present.

- S4: The school contains grades sixth through eighth with an enrollment of 506 students. The demographic breakdown consists of 42.5% White, 4% Black, 3% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 47.4% Hispanic/Latino, 0.2% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 3% of students are of two or more races. Additionally, 50% of students are female, and 50% are male. The enrollment of the entire band program is 122 students. The eighth-grade class observed had 29 students present.
- S5: The school contains grades sixth through eighth with an enrollment of 785 students. The demographic breakdown is 64.3% White, 15.2% Black, 4.2% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 8.3% Hispanic/Latino, 0.1% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. In addition, 7.9% of students are of two or more races. Additionally, 51% of students are female, and 49% are male. The enrollment of the entire band program is 230 students. The eighth-grade class observed had 40 students present.
- S6: The school contains grades fifth through eighth with an enrollment of 1805 students. The demographic breakdown represents 52% White, 35% Black, 1% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 8% Hispanic/Latino, 0.4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 0.0% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. In addition, 3.9% of students are of two or more races. Additionally, 48% of students are female, and 52% are male. The

enrollment of the entire band program is 315 students. The eighth-grade class observed had 52 students present.

Instrumentation

Data collection came from the surveys, observations, interviews, and the focus group of middle school band directors who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The questions from the survey developed from the researcher's curiosity about how middle school band students throughout Georgia were earning a seat in the all-state band. Prior to the study, the researcher speculated there were common instructional practices that band directors implement in their class instruction during or after school. The researcher constructed the questions based on the three main areas of the audition: major scales, etudes, and sightreading. The survey was simplistic in form and contained ten questions for a non-percussionist band director and two additional questions if their primary instrument was percussion. The observations were non-intrusive to the class's functionality or the director's teaching. There were no conversations with the students or director during the observation time. The researcher held pre- and post-observation interviews with the director to inquire about enrollment numbers of the band program, the number of students observed, and the educational background and years of experience they possessed.

Procedures

Per the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researcher first had to obtain approval from each school's principal before any study could commence. After receiving approval from the principal and the IRB, the participant received a consent form via email detailing all aspects, responsibilities, and ethical considerations of the research study. The IRB requires that participation is completely voluntary and that a participant can discontinue their participation at

any time. If the participant agreed to all the terms on the consent form, an electronic signature was needed to proceed with the study. After securing the signature, the researcher sent an email to the participant with a link to a Google Form containing the survey to be completed.

With the participant's input, the researcher determined the best time and date to conduct the observation. After agreeing on a date that would not have disruptions, such as picture day, club day, or academic pull-out remediation, the researcher suggested to the participant that a minimum arrival time of twenty-five minutes before the start of class would be necessary to arrive at the school, provide credentials to the front office, walk to the band room, exchange pleasantries with the participant, and secure an inconspicuous location in the band room where field notes were taken. Taking many detailed field notes was necessary as the study did not involve audio or video recordings of the rehearsal. The researcher intended to document practices and strategies observed in the eighth-grade band classes. Specifically, the main focus of the study was the beginning of the band class, where basic warmup elements occurred.

Researcher Positionality

A personal interest in the topic came from 23 years of experience teaching instrumental music at the middle and high school levels in different geographical locations in Georgia. Throughout the researcher's career, they have witnessed band programs from large populations in the school to small programs in rural areas, placing one or more students in the Georgia Middle and High School All-State Bands. The researcher focused their attention on the middle school level with less experienced musicians versus high school students with varying instrumental experiences and instruction and more ensemble choices to which they can audition and earn a seat in that group. Middle school students need more instructional experience and primarily rely on their director for direct instruction, motivation to pursue and prepare for the

audition, and possibly private lessons. By examining teaching practices and materials, the researcher can reflect on the teaching methods and materials used in their rehearsals and influence the students to audition for the all-state band.

Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis for the study was to ensure that all participant surveys were received. The researcher sent six surveys via a Google Form to the participants and received all responses within one day. The survey did not ask for the participants' names or the schools where they taught. The researcher holds professional relationships with the participants, and from those relationships, the researcher wanted to eliminate the possibility of bias when reviewing the raw data. To facilitate the process of analyzing the information collected from the field notes, it is necessary to separate the information into categories:

- Information about the director and the band program.
- Usage of long tones, scales, chorales, sightreading, or other elements.
- Any pulling out of a student or section by another director/music teacher for additional music instruction or remediation.

Chapter Summary

Before a study could commence, there were several requirements to find participants who fit the criteria set forth by the researcher. Those requirements included holding a position as a band director on the middle school level, holding a teaching certificate from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, and having one or more students accepted into the Georgia Middle School All-State Band for the 2023 event. After identifying and securing participants for the study, it was apparent that every middle school program observed was within a school of diverse demographics, socioeconomic status, and variance of numbers enrolled in both the band program and overall school enrollment.

The survey given to the participants inquired about the instructional practices they incorporate into the daily warmups and other supplemental instruction outside the school day. The survey would offer insight into what might be observable in the on-site visits. Furthermore, the survey results provide a basis for the possible topics for the focus group. The researcher needed to use only the study instruments and prevent any previous knowledge of the instructional practices of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The primary objective of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine the personal experiences of middle school band directors who taught students in grades sixth through eighth in various school districts throughout Georgia. The research aims to comprehend behaviors formulated by the interview queries to find credible answers to the research questions. Directors who agreed to participate were invited to complete a survey, allow on-site observations, and contribute dialogue in a focus group. The results of the survey responses guided the observations. The participants were provided with an informed consent form and assured that their identities and any other personal identifying identifiers would remain confidential. Each participant was given a number and letter system to safeguard their identity and keep the study confidential.

Participant Observations

Observation S1

The school holds grades sixth through eighth, with 238 students in the band program. Two identical band rooms can facilitate instruction for the whole ensemble, small ensemble, pull-out lessons, or remediation. Both band rooms have enough chairs, stands, percussion equipment, and larger school-owned instruments for the instruction of the students in either room.

The band program has three full-time educators who have designated roles within the program. One educator is responsible for all instruction for the sixth-grade band and is a facilitator of instruction for the seventh-grade band. The second educator is the teacher of record for the seventh-grade band and is a facilitator of instruction for the eighth-grade band. The third educator is responsible solely for the eighth-grade band and is an intervention facilitator for the

sixth and seventh-grade bands. This person also teaches any student who did not begin band in the sixth or seventh grade, moved from another band program, and exhibits musical skill deficiencies. All the band directors aim not to avoid having any student fall behind for whatever circumstance to prevent discipline issues or general frustrations leading to the desire to quit the band program. A whiteboard with the agenda for the class rehearsal can be placed strategically in the view of all the band students in the room. The agenda includes any upcoming events the band students must participate in or perform.

The director begins with a warmup of long tones from the *Habits for a Successful Middle School Musician* by Scott Rush.¹ This first exercise in the method book uses primarily half notes beginning on concert F, down a half-step, back to concert F, down a whole step, and the sequence terminates with the concert Bb. When the ensemble concludes the exercise, the director asks, “Who do I need to hear more of?” Without hesitation, several students identified that the tuba and lower voices would be necessary for the ensemble’s sound. One student stated, “We cannot tune or have good pitch without a tuba.” The director had the ensemble play the next exercise in the book, applying the knowledge directed in the previous exercise.

Scales are the next item on the rehearsal schedule, accompanied by a metronome on the Yamaha Harmony Director. The director incorporates the four required major scales into the daily warmup. The students performed each scale as prescribed by GMEA with specific ranges and articulations. The director cut off the ensemble on one of the scales and asked, “Someone tell me why I stopped?” Several students replied, “We did not play with good air.” The director demonstrated the importance of air with a trumpet beside the podium. The example, played by the director, was a concert F with a duration of eight counts and a weak airstream. It was

¹ Scott Rush, Rich Moon, and Marguerite Wilder, *Habits of a Successful Musician* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2021).

noticeable to the students that the director's pitch was substandard and the tone quality unattractive to the ears. The director then took in a substantial amount of air and played the same pitch again. The air sustenance was supportive enough to hear the characteristic sound on the instrument. The ensemble played the scale again with more air, and the director complimented the group on their improved tone quality.

The end of the warmup sequence was a check for understanding of the march style. The exercise consisted of two commonly found rhythms in a concert march. One rhythm was syncopation of an eighth note followed by a quarter with an eighth note concluding the figure. The second was a series of four quarter notes. The director utilized a unison concert F for the ensemble to practice the two rhythms with the goal of a building to transfer education approach to the actual concert march. The entire warmup was approximately fifteen minutes out of the allotted forty-minute period.

Observation S2

The school has grades sixth through eighth, and 122 students are in the band program. One band room has ample storage space for personal and school-owned instruments. Around the front perimeter of the room, the director has posters of every instrument and corresponding fingering charts. These posters are large and visible enough for the students to review fingerings on their instrument if a specific pitch is in question.

There is one full-time director who has yet to have an assistant director. Any additional instruction is supported by the high school band director and by advanced high school members. The educator has spent their entire career of 20 years with students consistently earning seats in the district honor band and all-state. Additionally, the director has flexibility in scheduling students in the eighth-grade band. The first section has winds and percussion, and the second is a

jazz ensemble class. Many of the first section's musicians are also enrolled in the jazz band. The director utilizes a modest fifty-five-inch touchscreen television whose primary function is to display the specific warmups and concert music that will be rehearsed during the class period.

Additionally, the screen serves as a display for playing assignments assigned by the director in Google Classroom. The director believes that formative assessments can be assigned to students to record themselves playing specific music sections and then uploaded for the director to review. By the students preparing musical selections at home, the director is allowed full ensemble rehearsal time versus hearing students individually, which would typically take more than one class period. The ensemble begins the warmups with long tones, beginning with whole notes, then gradually lessening the note duration as the exercise continues. The warmup exercises are found in the "*Habits*" book by Scott Rush.² After several exercises are played, the director discusses the importance of air sustenance, reminding the students that the "tag" syllable must be utilized for the vertical alignment of instruments to play together. The students had an exercise that required legato and staccato articulations. After the first attempt, the director asked the students why the line of music did not begin together. Collectively, several students answered that the ensemble did not breathe together. The director affirmed the answer and repeated the exercise with more precision. After the ensemble played the exercise again, the director asked if they could place more space between the notes to produce a sound characteristic of a staccato articulation. The director had the ensemble play the selection again, praising the ensemble's articulation correction.

The warmup continued with the ensemble playing four major scales with arpeggios. The students performed the scales as prescribed by GMEA, with the articulation of tonguing each

² Rush, Moon, Wilder, "Habits."

pitch ascending and slurring each pitch of the scale descending. The students performed the scales as if they were in an actual audition situation, with the scales all memorized. The director posed a question to the students about which scale is represented in the concert march. Several, in unison, provided the correct answer, which was the segue into the music rehearsal.

The director reminded the ensemble about the staccato exercises used in warmup and stated that those articulations, with some refinement, were a reasonable basis for the march style. The ensemble played the first five measures of the concert march, and the director immediately asked for an assessment. One student responded that the style played was too heavy and should be crisp and light. The director concurred, and the ensemble again played the opening five measures with more precise articulation. The next task was playing the first eight measures after the introduction to check for understanding the typical rhythmic figure of an eighth note, followed by an accented quarter note and ending with an eighth note. The ensemble did not have a vertical alignment of the rhythmic figure. This led the director to have the students count and clap the figure, placing a harder clap sound reflective of what the characteristic sound would require. The ensemble performed the style to the director's satisfaction through three attempts. The ensemble then played the introduction and the first eight measures for the director to make a formative assessment, in which the only suggestion was breathing together to begin the first pitch of the first measure.

The director spoke to the ensemble during the last 15 minutes of the class regarding the need to expand the sixth-grade band's instrumentation. Currently, the students are learning the core instruments such as flute, oboe, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, and trombone. There were several instruments that the director was soliciting for possible interest of the students. The instruments included tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, French horn, euphonium, and tuba.

The director asked for an eighth-grade band representative of each instrument needing to be filled. The director exhibited a student-centered learning environment and stated the time and day the sixth graders would try out the instruments.

Observation S3

The school houses grades sixth through eighth, with approximately 180 enrolled in the band program. There is only one band room that can hold around 60 students, with a sufficient amount of room for the director to move and interact with the students during instruction. To minimize the footprint of large tuba and baritone cases, the director elected to construct brackets on the wall that will allow the instruments to be suspended and not haphazardly on the floor. By this method of not having instrument cases, the instruments are hung high enough to prevent damage, eliminates the amount of time for a student to enter the instrument storage room, unlatch the case, remove the instrument from the case, secure the latches to keep the case shut, and the difficulty of maneuvering around chairs and stands already placed by the director.

The band program has one full-time director and a full-time assistant who divides their teaching responsibilities between the middle and high schools. The educator's primary role is teaching the percussion students at both schools. Having an educator who is a percussion specialist dramatically aids in developing and refining skills necessary for the students preparing for the all-state audition. The instructor does have access to a small room that allows individual and small-group instruction. There are two eighth-grade band classes, one having thirty-five students and the other class containing twelve. There are irresolvable scheduling conflicts for the gifted students, and because of the difficulty, no placement in the first section is possible.

As the students enter the band room, the sixty-inch interactive touch flatscreen television can view all announcements, objectives and goals, and a class rehearsal order list. This allows

the director to spend more time engaged in instruction than reading announcements aloud. The director has a countdown timer on a small corner of the screen that helps motivate students to get all materials necessary for the rehearsal to avoid delays for students who may lack the urgency to prepare for the director's announcements.

According to the order of the class rehearsal, this day emphasized sightreading. Before the director can teach the students how sightreading works, they begin the warmup with commonly found rhymes in concert marches and lower-level band literature. All brass players remove their mouthpieces from the receiver of the lead pipe and await the director to play a rhythm for the students to hear and repeat. The woodwind players responded on a chosen concert pitch. The metronome from the Yamaha Harmony Director is utilized to reinforce the skill of keeping a steady rhythmic pulse. After successfully repeating rhythms to the director, the brass place their mouthpieces back into the receiver, awaiting the next element of the warmup. A series of long tone flexibilities are played using various note values and half-step progressions.

The director segues into the process of successful sightreading at Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE), beginning with how to enter the room, quickly and quietly secure a chair and stand, place any brought-in music under their chair, and await for the adjudicator to introduce themselves and explain the expectations of sightreading with emphasis that the director has six minutes of study time with the ensemble, and during that time, the students can clap rhythms, airstream music, but cannot produce a tone on the instrument, nor can any student engage in conversation with another member of the ensemble.

The director has the letters "S.T.A.R.S" on the flatscreen. The director explains to the student that each letter corresponds with a critical musical element that each musician must observe. The first letter, "S," observes both time and key signatures. The second letter, "T,"

designates the tempi the piece may have written. “A,” the third letter, stands for articulation. Articulation may include, but is not limited to, slurs, staccato, legato, and mercato. The following letter is “R,” represents the rhythms within the piece of music. The director explains to the students that the more complex rhythms should be isolated and counted during the study period, whether by standard counting syllables or hand clapping. The last letter of the acronym is “S” for signs. The director explains that signs may include but are not limited to repeats, first and second endings, accidentals, or specific sticking for percussion parts.

The director was very deliberate and specific about potential errors that could occur during the sightreading, instructing the student not to stop playing. The sightreading example was a level I in difficulty, and the students had never seen the piece of music prior to the class day. The director announced to the ensemble as if they were the judge that the six-minute time for the study had begun.

The director instructed each student to airstream their parts as the piece was conducted. The director would announce specific rehearsal letters or numbers as the students concentrated on correct rhythms, note duration, and artistic expression. The purpose of the prompt was to give students a guide where they would affirm the correct place in the music or realize they needed to be correct in their progression through the music. The director announced that the six-minute time had elapsed, and it was now time to play the piece of music with sounds. Upon the conclusion of the sightreading exercise, the director debriefed the students on what was executed well or needed further practice.

Observation S4

After entering the front of the school, one must walk down a long corridor to reach the band room. This school, constructed in 1995, has an antiquated band room with very little

instrument storage, minimal technology, and size acceptable for a band of that era. In 2024, the band has substantially grown, and many items, such as the music library, have been moved into the director's office to free up floor space.

The director does not have an interactive television in the band room; instead, a whiteboard is utilized with standards posted along with the day's agenda and the rhythm of the day. After an opening of pleasantries welcoming the students to class, the director already has them seated with their music and ready to play. The director walks over to the Yamaha Harmony Director, sounds the pitches of F and B flat, and instructs the students to match either pitch. This function is to have the students play long tones to warm up the instrument and activate the muscles in the lips to prepare for the rehearsal period. The director believes that long tones are fundamental to playing any instrument. After doing this process for approximately two minutes, the director guides the ensemble through a series of breathing exercises of different duration. The director has the students pull out a scale module containing the concert B flat major scale. He asked the students to play the values as whole notes up and down the scale. The Harmony Director provided the beat on the metronome, and the director pressed the root, third, fifth, and octave of the scale with the sustained button on the Harmony Director. It is the goal that as students are working their way through the major scale, they find the root, third, fifth, and octave and try to match the pitch to be in tune. The director models the sound that he wants from the ensemble several times. For example, when discussing the tone quality of playing the major scales, the director plays an instrument demonstrating the note values, the characteristic tone quality, and how notes can be played in and out of tune. The band then went to another scale module on the next page. The director asked them to play in the all-state style. They were reminded of the style of the tongue up slow down on the major scale and tongue up slow down

on the arpeggio. The director had the mallets and woodwinds play to check for accuracy. Once satisfied with the accuracy and intonation, the director had the mallets and the brass play together. Once satisfied, the director moved on to a timing exercise on the B flat scale.

The idea of the timing exercise is to start with scale degree one, the rest of the measure arrests, the second measure, adding one and then resting through the rest of the measure. The third measure has one and two. Each measure adds one more pitch and one less value to the rest of the students' toys to a decent level of satisfaction, as stated by the director. The director mentioned the idea of consistency of tonguing. "Is it law lee lay, or is it tall two too?" Some students responded with an answer even though a question was not necessarily stated, but all agreed that the "tah" syllable was most necessary. The director reiterated that it takes a skill of mental focus to eliminate counting errors. This timing exercise was repeated twice, then mallets and woodwinds were employed, and then mallets and brass were isolated and played. The director makes a consistent point about fast air streams. The director said that the term air sustenance was used several times throughout the rehearsal, focusing on clarity of the tongue, which also had to be adjusted. As the tempo gets faster, the tongue has to adjust.

The director moves on to another scale, concert E flat, and utilizes only the first five pitches of the scale. The first five pitches were played several times up and down. The first time they were played as whole notes; the second time as half notes; the third as quarter notes; the fourth as eighth notes; and the last as sixteenths. All of the note values would change per pitch. The director had a strong foundation, believing that if you can play a rhythm as a group, then that rhythm should be able to transfer back into the music with a lesser degree of difficulty or exposure to error. The rhythm of the day consisted of a dotted eighth-sixteenth, two eighths, and two-quarter notes. The director asked about this rhythmic figure and where it was found and

many replied that it was found in the concert march. The director also asked why we utilized the concert E flat scale for the warmup. The student said that the concert flat scale is the march's opening key. The students on a concert B flat or a concert F, their choice, played the rhythm on the board at a moderate tempo.

The director pointed out articulation errors, specifically where the tongue was getting in the way of the note value or running into the next rhythmic beat. The director had them air streaming or tizzling; some refer to it as the rhythm without the instrument sounding an actual pitch. From this method, the director can hear the airstreams and adjust the tongue placement for clarity. The rhythmic figure was then sped up to the tempo of the concert march, which is a quarter equals 120. As the band played the introductory section of the march, the director reminded the students that articulations on a march should be light but still separate. The director utilized the term bop for each of the notes. Utilizing the syllable bop makes the notes bounce more as the style requires. As the director reminded the students of the necessary adjustments, the band could make the corrections. The director then grabbed the instrument again, demonstrated the opening section of the concert march, and told the ensemble that they should emulate that sound. The director does something exciting that the researcher had never seen. The director took specific selections and excerpts from their music and created parts for the entire ensemble. For example, some rhythmic passages from the march were placed on staff paper and scored for all instruments. Even if the instrument did not play that specific rhythm, it would still learn that rhythm and articulation. The director placed several excerpts from the music on this sheet.

Several times while playing the concert march, the director stopped the ensemble and had them refer back to the excerpt sheet and play the rhythm in unison to correct any mistakes that

were heard during the piece. After a sense of satisfaction, the director allows the students to continue the lesson. It is apparent to the researcher that the director has an excellent rapport with the students, and there were times when there was laughter, but most of the time, the laughter was just fixing a mistake. The director always corrected a student in their playing verbally in a positive manner or with the instrument to be a performance model.

Observation S5

Upon entering the band room, you are immediately confronted by two fifty-five inch television screens mounted above the whiteboard. There is another television screen on a mobile cart that can be moved throughout the room. The band room has little room to maneuver, and there is no office for the band director, nor is there much of a music library. Instead, the band director fits all their equipment and instruments close to the whiteboard. On the screens, they have an agenda and musical facts that will be used in the rehearsal. The first class is brass and percussion, and the second class is the woodwinds. The students quickly come to the classroom, grab the instruments, get the music, have a seat, and await the director's instructions. The warm-up begins with a lyrical chorale; "Salvation is Created" arranged by the band director. The director asks the ensemble to perform the chorale with different tonalities. One is in a minor key, and the other is in B Flat Major. Through the differences in styles, the director defined the specific articulations that should be used for the chorales. Following performing the chorales with the different styles, the students shifted their focus to scale manipulation. This manipulation played the scales based on thirds. The method was called stair stepping, which proved to be a method that challenged the endurance, range, and air quality to maintain pitch accuracy. The director announced that there would be a scale test in three weeks, and from that announcement, the director asked the ensemble to perform six major scales played in the required all-state

manner, tongue up, slurred down. The scales were not the scales found on the middle school requirement; these were the scales required for the ninth and tenth grade auditionees. The difference between the middle school and high school 9-10 scales is the ranges, many of which add a second or even a third octave to the scale. When the students had difficulty on one of the scales, the director became a performance model and demonstrated on an instrument the sound articulation in the air that it took to play the entirety of the scale. The director then had the ensemble perform the scale again, as the director replied and had more accuracy and clarity of tone. The director concluded the warm-ups and then asked the ensemble to pull up the concert march.

The director asked the ensemble if anyone could define what march style was. The students provided several answers, one of which was an accepted amount of space between the notes that is light and has a bop feel. The director commended the student and the others who offered answers and affirmed that that was the description to correctly perform the musical style. While the director was rehearsing the march, they reiterated that dynamics and articulations are fundamental to successfully playing this type of music. They further stated that once the correct rhythms and pitches can be played, then the shaping can begin. The director spent time talking about the over exaggeration of dynamics for a contrast. The director specifically mentions if a line goes somewhere, crescendo if it is marked piano, perhaps start softer and the crescendo has some place to go so it is a noticeable crescendo of sound. The director makes several comments to the students, asking them to take their pencils and mark certain items of interest in the music. All the students immediately grabbed a pencil and marked the applicable information on the score. The director made some alterations on the lyrical song and said that slight alterations can make more music. To make the statement clearer, the director became a performance model once

again and played a melodic line found in one of the ensemble's pieces. The director said to the ensemble, "Glorious notes are never still." The director, being well versed in skill and ability of different instruments, without hesitation, would grab a trumpet, a flute, a clarinet, or a trombone to demonstrate a specific sound or articulation desired by the composer. Through diligent work by the students, the director suggested a quick brain break, which aids in eliminating cognitive conflict that would happen in the third piece due to the ensemble's anxiousness and tiredness at the end of the day.

The director's deportment towards the students was commendable. During the observation, it was evident that the students and the director had mutual respect. The director always compliments well-played music. If something needs to be corrected, the director smiles and moves on. At some appropriate point in the music, the director stops and asks the ensemble what the mistake was and how it could be corrected. The director ended the rehearsal with a discussion of high school band recruitment.

Observation S6

The school houses grades five through eight, with approximately 315 students enrolled in the band program. Upon entering the fine arts hallway, there are two large rooms at this school where one is designated as the actual main band room, and the other is used as a secondary rehearsal space. The secondary space is where individuals, sections, or small ensembles such as percussion or chamber rehearse when the actual band room is large enough to hold over 100 reasonably. Additionally, the smaller room has excellent sound-dampening materials that lower the decibel levels to reduce hearing loss. Since the room is well sound-treated, many students utilize the area to make recordings for honor band submissions.

The band program has two full-time educators and one who is a part-time middle school and high school floater. There are several advantages of having multiple directors. One rationale is that one can be responsible for a grade-level band and have the other director pull students or sections to the secondary room for remedial or advanced skill instruction. Another factor contributing to the success is the ability to co-teach the beginning students. Keeping a large group of students on task at a reasonable learning pace and constantly checking for understanding is difficult for one person.

As the students enter the band room, the seventy-five-inch interactive touch flatscreen television displays all announcements, objectives and goals, and a class rehearsal list. This allows the director to spend more time engaged in instruction than reading announcements aloud. Approximately five minutes elapsed from entering the band room to the beginning of the warmup.

The director begins with a warmup of long tones from the Daily Routine and Fundamentals³ book with the first exercise of concert F and B-flat pitches. This exercise primarily uses whole notes, where the ensemble plays the pitch from the low voices in the back of the room to the higher voices nearer the front. The pitch-matching exercise helps students learn where the pitch is on their instrument. The director monitors this process by walking around the room, adjusting slides for the trombones, adjusting hand positions, and checking for posture. There is then a shift from concert F to concert B flat, where the process is repeated, and the conductor cuts off the ensemble and asks, “What can we do to get a better sound?” A student

³ Steve Hedrick, *Band Fundamentals Books*, Accessed March 7, 2024. <https://bandfundamentals.com/>.

responds, “I think we need more air.” The director responds to the student with affirmation while looking at the class and saying, “Air is the key to success being a musician.”

One of the exercises in the book contains the stylistic elements of legato, tenuto, and staccato. The students began playing the exercise, and the director quickly cut them off, suggesting different articulations for each instrument with a collective goal to achieve a unified ensemble sound. The director praised the students as they performed with a better sound than the previous attempt. The method book has several musical concepts with exercises for developing a more characteristic sound and appropriate distinction of different articulations.

Further in the book was the chromatic scale. The director needed a uniform method for the students to play together due to the different playing ranges of the instruments and range capabilities of the students. Instead, the director gave them approximately one minute to play the chromatic scale as a group minus any uniformity of unison pitch. As the students were all playing at the same time, the director was able to move around through the sections, correcting mistakes such as incorrect trombone slide positions or woodwind players with incorrect fingerings.

The director then segued into the next section of the warmup, where the students were required to play a sequence of scales. The sequence utilized the four major scales required for the all-state auditions at the district level. Additionally, the director had the students play at the prescribed tempo and appropriate articulations, and they were performed from memory. The director reminded the students that the goal of the following week was to add four more major scales and, after spring break, to add the last four scales. The director told the students that scales become more challenging with more flats and sharps added, which meant some instruments may have complex fingerings.

Sightreading was the next component of the rehearsal agenda. The director used the “Sightreading Factory”⁴ for the ensemble to practice reading music they had not seen. The Sightreading Factory lends aid to the director by randomly creating a segment of material where the key and time signatures can be chosen. The director also has the option to choose specific rhythmic patterns found in some of their concert festival folders. Once the program creates the music segment, the director places the score on the large screen where everyone in the ensemble can participate by finding their appropriate transposition.

GMEA requires that students have thirty seconds to study the sightreading before performing for the adjudicators. The director gave them precisely thirty seconds and reminded them to try their best to play, considering the elements of correct rhythms and pitches, articulations, and dynamics. The director quickly asked the students, “What is the key you are performing in?” He pointed to one member in each section and asked each student who responded if they were sure of their answers, which each student was correct. Before the ensemble played the sightreading example, the director had them “tizzle” their parts as a group. Tizzling, or what some people call air streaming, is the technique where articulations and air airstreams are sent through the instrument without sounding an actual tone. Through this process, the director can check for understanding and hearing the articulations of the rhythmic patterns or the air sustenance of note values. The director reiterated the desire for no one to stop playing and to hear if the students can start and stop together. Once the director was satisfied with the air streaming task, he told them it was time to play. After the count, the students began and could play four out of eight measures recognizably. Once again, the director said, “When you stop playing, the judge will notice.” Without hesitation, the director gave an additional study time of

⁴ “Sightreadingfactory.com,” *Sightreadingfactory.com*, 2024, accessed February 23, 2024, <https://sightreadingfactory.com/>.

thirty seconds, trying to see if confidence increased as well as an improvement in pitches and rhythms. The students played the sight reading example again with the director, achieving the desired satisfaction.

The director asked the ensemble to find the “March Cheat-Sheet.” The March Cheat-Sheet is a compilation created by the band director, of the concert march’s most common rhythmic figures and accents. This hand-scribed piece of staff paper was scored for the ensemble. Whether an instrument had or did not have a specific rhythm, the individual learned just as everyone who had the passage. At the bottom of the paper was an explanation of the different articulations in the concert march. The brief description visually represented the articulation paired with an example found in the unison parts. The students could discern the differences between staccato, tenuto, slur, long and short accents, and marcato accents. The warmup period was thirty minutes in length.

Survey Results

Six surveys were sent to the participants, all of whom responded with all applicable questions answered.

Question 1: How many students did you have participate in the 2023 Georgia Middle School All-State Band? The student numbers for the 2022-2023 school year may include the following:

Table 2.1. Survey Responses for the Number of Students Participate in the All-State Band

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
1 and 1 alternate	2	1	1	1	4

Results: A commonality among all directors having one or more students chosen for the all-state band exists from the survey responses.

Question 2: How many students took private lessons outside the school day to aid in the audition preparation rather than your direct instruction? The number of completed lessons does not matter.

Table 2.2. Survey Responses for the Number of Students who took Private Lessons

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
Clinics with graduate students	1	1	0	0	5

Results: A commonality among all directors cannot be found from the survey responses.

Question 3: Did you incorporate the four required major scales into your warmup between the first day of school and audition day?

Table 2.3. Survey Responses for Incorporation of Four Major Scales in Warmups

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Results: A commonality among all directors is incorporating the four required major scales into the warmup.

Question 4: Do you continue incorporating scales in your warmup?

Table 2.4. Survey Responses for Continued Incorporation of Major Scales in Warmups

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Results: A commonality among all directors of continuing the four required major scales in the warmup exists from the survey responses.

Question 5: Both the district and final round of all-state auditions require sightreading. How often did you incorporate sightreading in your class instruction? Consider the months of September through November.

Table 2.5. Survey Responses for the Frequency of Sightreading in Class Instruction

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
3 or more	2 or less	2 or less	3 or more	3 or more	2 or less

Results: A commonality among all directors is incorporating sightreading in the warmup.

Question 6: Did you have an assistant or someone on staff who dedicated any amount of class time to pull out individuals for all-state audition preparation?

Table 2.6. Survey Responses if Students Received Pull-Out Instruction During Class

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

Results: A commonality among all directors cannot be found from the survey responses.

Question 7: The auditions are always on the first Saturday in December. Consider the timespan of November to the day of the auditions; on average, how many days per week did you help after school for students who needed more detailed instruction?

Table 2.7. Survey Responses for the Average Frequency of Afterschool Instruction

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
4	1	1	1	1	3

Results: A commonality among all directors having one or more days afterschool instruction exists from the survey responses.

Question 8: Did you take one or more of the required instrumental lyrical etudes and arrange them for the entire ensemble at any point prior to the audition?

Table 2.8. Survey Responses for Arranging and Implementing Etudes for Class Instruction

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
No	No	No	No	No	Yes

Results: A commonality almost exists among all directors of *not* arranging etudes for the classes can be found from the survey responses. One response yielded the answer “Yes.”

Question 9: Did you take any sightreading from previous auditions and arrange it for the entire ensemble?

Table 2.9. Survey responses for Arranging Previous All-State Sight Reading for Class Instruction

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
No	No	No	No	No	Yes

Results: A commonality almost exists among all directors of *not* arranging etudes for the classes can be found from the survey responses. One response yielded the answer “Yes.”

Question 10: Is your primary instrument percussion?

Table 2.10. Survey Responses Inquiring if Participants’ Primary Instrument is Percussion

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

Results: A commonality among all directors cannot be found from the survey responses. The responses showed a 50% divide of percussionists and wind players.

Question 11: Were any of your students who made all-state a percussionist?

Table 2.11. Survey Responses of Participants Who Had Percussion Students Make All-State

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
No	No	No	Yes	No	No

Results: A commonality among all directors cannot be found from the survey responses.

Question 12: If you answered yes to the previous question, how many students were percussionists?

Table 2.12. Survey Responses of How Many Students Were Percussionists

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
NA	NA	NA	1	NA	NA

Results: A commonality among all directors cannot be found from the survey responses. Not every participant surveyed had a percussionist make all-state.

Question 13: Did you have specific days or times when you solely worked with the percussion auditionees and not the wind auditionees?

Table 2.13. Survey Responses for Specific Days or Times When Percussion Students Received Different Structured Instruction

Response 1	Response 2	Response 3	Response 4	Response 5	Response 6
NA	NA	NA	No	No	NA

Results: A commonality could not be determined due to four answers of “non-applicable.”

Focus Group

A *focus group* is a research method in which a moderator asks a small group to answer questions in a pre-selected setting. The group is chosen based on specific criteria, usually after observations or individual interviews, and questions designed to create a dialogue on a topic of interest.⁵ Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth

⁵ Tegan George, “What Is a Focus Group?: Step-by-Step Guide & Examples,” *Scribbr*, accessed February 13, 2024, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/focus-group/>.

understanding of specific topics.⁶ The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population.⁷

A typical focus group involves six to ten respondents brought together with a trained moderator to participate in a planned discussion. During the focus group, participants are asked a series of predetermined questions to discover their thoughts and feelings about a particular topic, product, or area of interest. This results in an open-ended, free-flowing discussion that will help further the researcher's study.⁸

Focus groups are unique because they combine participant observations, interviews, and group interaction. They are essential when the researcher wants to investigate people's thoughts because the interaction between participants can reveal data and ideas that might not be uncovered in one-on-one questioning. For a researcher to optimize the data obtained from focus groups, careful attention must be paid to the composition and number of groups, the moderator's training and selection, and the question route's development.⁹

The main difference between one-to-one interviews and focus-group discussions is that the focus-groups are far more appropriate for generating new ideas formed within a social setting. In contrast, one-to-one interviews should probe individual experiences, encouraging self-

⁶ Tobias O. Nyumba et al., "The Use of Focus Group Discussion Methodology: Insights from Two ...," *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, January 11, 2018, accessed February 13, 2024, <https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/2041-210X.12860>.

⁷ Lisa Boughton, *What Is a Focus Group and What Are the Benefits of Focus Groups?*, accessed February 13, 2024, <https://info.angelfishfieldwork.com/market-research-fieldwork-blog/what-is-a-focus-group-and-how-can-it-benefit-your-market-research#:~:text=Focus%20groups%20are%20one%20of,true%20customer%20attitudes%20and%20opinions>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Prudence Plummer, "Focus Group Methodology. Part 1: Design Considerations," *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation* 24, no. 7 (July 2, 2017): 297–301, <https://doi.org/10.12968/ijtr.2017.24.7.297>.

reflection on issues that could be skewed if social pressure were placed on the individual. Research questions for which one-to-one interviews are appropriate might include: “What motivates students to learn in different disciplines?” Here, individuals’ interpretations of what counted for a significant experience that impacted their decisions to study particular disciplines are required to explain the phenomenon under full investigation.¹⁰

Triangulation

Triangulation examines how evidence fits together by using more than one way to collect data, more than one source, or more than one person to study the same thing. Triangulation lets the researcher get different kinds of data at different times or look at and combine results from different sources simultaneously to understand the research situation better.¹¹ Triangulation also allows checking whether the results agree, disagree, or are inconsistent. Researchers usually choose how to collect data based on which method best fits their study questions. If only one of the two ways is used to collect data, some eligible people might not be included. This could narrow the results by only giving a partial picture of the studied phenomenon. By using different types of information, like interviews, focus groups, and observations, lets the researcher answer the study question and identify possible anomalies.¹²

There are several benefits of using triangulation in research. The first benefit of triangulation is that it helps ensure that study results are correct. Results are confirmed when a researcher uses several methods, such as quantitative and qualitative, and the results from all of

¹⁰ Neringa Kalpokas, “Performing Automatic Focus Group with Atlas.Ti Desktop,” *ATLAS.Ti*, accessed February 13, 2024, <https://atlasti.com/research-hub/how-to-perform-automatic-focus-group-coding-using-atlas-ti>.

¹¹ Pritha Bhandari, “Triangulation in Research: Guide, Types, Examples,” *Scribbr*, accessed February 16, 2024, <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/triangulation/#:~:text=Triangulation%20in%20research%20means%20research%20means%20using,research%20biases%20in%20your%20work>.

¹² Bhandari, “Triangulation.”

these methods point in the same direction.¹³ This proves that the work was done correctly.

However, it is essential to note that just because triangulation is used to confirm study results does not mean the data collected cannot be questioned. To move the study forward and improve what we already have, we should always question the data we collect. When the triangulation is well planned and done by experts who know exactly what they are looking for, the quantitative data collected during the triangulation can support the qualitative data.¹⁴ It is important to understand the purpose of using methods is meant to ensure the data is reliable. However, small sample sizes may lead the researcher to make overgeneralizations. Furthermore, the overgeneralization could skew the results in favor of the researcher's hypothesis.

Using quantitative and qualitative methods simultaneously in a study, also known as "mixed methods," makes it possible for the researcher to confirm findings from qualitative data, look into relationships, and present findings statistically. At the same time, the researcher can easily understand the context of findings and solve problems resulting from quantitative data results. In most situations, quantitative and qualitative study methods often work better together.

Having three points of view is better than just two, as it provides additional knowledge data that aids the expert in presenting a more comprehensive explanation of the results. Researchers have the option to utilize three or more theories to help explain their findings. This is referred to as theoretical triangulation. These aid the researcher in gaining insight by facilitating comparisons between the acquired facts and various theories. Theoretical triangulation can be complex to comprehend, requiring researchers to possess a deep

¹³ María Mercedes Arias Valencia, "Principles, Scope, and Limitations of the Methodological Triangulation," *Principles, Scope, and Limitations of the Methodological Triangulation*, June 2022, accessed February 16, 2024, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9714985/>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

understanding of the concepts they are utilizing and their application. Triangulation can be performed using many methods. Researchers should utilize multiple sources for the best strategy. Triangulation makes it easy to find and eliminate data that does not match up. This does not mean that a researcher can choose not to include some data in a study; that would be unethical and could change the study results. Investigator triangulation, on the other hand, uses more than one researcher, interviewer, or data analysis. This makes it easy to find data that does not match up and eliminate it, so it does not keep the study's results the same. Mistakes are easy to spot and can be fixed or totally removed.

Triangulation helps to make the study more reliable and accurate. Using more than one data source lowers research biases in sampling, procedure, and researcher biases, making the study more accurate and trustworthy. Even if there are different results after triangulation, the researcher can more readily explain why the results are different. Triangulation is a way to improve the credibility and validity of a study, which boosts the faith of the researchers.

Coding

In qualitative research, a code is usually a word or short phrase that represents a language-based characteristic that is summarizing, important, capturing the essence, or suggestive.¹⁵ It is the researcher's interpretation that gives each piece of data a meaning so that patterns can be found, categories can be made, themes can be found, claims or propositions about growth can be made, theories can be built, or other analytical tasks can be carried out.¹⁶ Coding is an important part of the analysis process, and it is how qualitative experts break down their

¹⁵ Maria Lungu, "The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers," *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, May 13, 2022, accessed February 16, 2024, <https://www.ajqr.org/article/the-coding-manual-for-qualitative-researchers-12085>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

data to find new things. When researchers code qualitative text data, they take it apart to see what can be learned from it before putting it back together in a meaningful way. Coding gives a researcher a broader view of different types of data that helps them make sense of it all in terms of their research questions. When researchers code and name pieces of data, they do so in different ways. Some researchers may use transcripts to mark the meaning units to find codes or tables, or use programs designed to analyze qualitative data on a computer.¹⁷

Q1: What are common teaching strategies of band directors who have students preparing for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Table 2.14. Question One

Raw Data and Sources	Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
(Observation) The director was very deliberate and specific about potential errors that could occur during the sightreading, instructing the student not to stop playing. (Focus Group) You teach sightreading daily when you teach your classes. (Observation) The director gave them precisely thirty seconds and reminded them to try their best to play, considering the elements of correct rhythms and pitches, articulations, and dynamics.	Class Sight Reading		
(Observation) Following performing the chorales with the different styles, the students shifted their focus to scale manipulation.	Chorales		
(Observation) The director begins with a warmup of long tones from the Habits for a Successful Middle School Musician by Scott Rush. (Observation) The director believes that long tones are fundamental to playing any instrument.	Long Tones	Warmups	
(Focus Group) This theme centers on the preparation of middle school students for high school band programs, particularly focusing on	Scales		Fundamental Skills

¹⁷ Maria Lungu, "The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers," *American Journal of Qualitative Research*, May 13, 2022, accessed February 16, 2024, <https://www.ajqr.org/article/the-coding-manual-for-qualitative-researchers-12085>.

<p>scale proficiency and musical abilities.</p> <p>(Focus Group) If we're playing a piece, it's scale or key that's different from the guides given four or the next four. We learn that scale.</p> <p>(Observation) The sequence utilized the four major scales required for the all-state auditions at the district level.</p>			
<p>(Focus Group) Sometimes, I'll send him all the woodwinds, and he'll work with them during that time, and I can focus on the brass stuff.</p>	Practice		
<p>(Focus Group) "It's a daily effort for all the kids in the class to learn scales, rhythms, and sight reading.</p> <p>(Focus Group) It really comes down to what's on that rubric and how we teach it in class.</p> <p>(Observation) Before the director can teach the students how sightreading works, they begin the warmup with commonly found rhymes in concert marches and lower-level band literature.</p> <p>(Observation) The students perform the scales as if they were in an actual audition situation, with the scales all memorized.</p>	Rhythms	Techniques	

Q2: What extracurricular instruction can students receive who plan to audition for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Table 2.15. Question Two

Raw Data and Sources	Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
<p>(Focus Group) I put Allstate on realistic terms for them and only encourage the kids taking private lessons to jump out there.</p> <p>(Focus Group) If private lessons were available, and the distance and money were not a factor, say, the instructors came to your school, the boosters or the school system paid the instructors.</p> <p>(Focus Group) With the availability of private teachers other than the five band directors we have, everybody's working hard and pushing, but there is competition for time.</p>	Factors		
<p>(Focus Group) I mean, the kids feel like they have a shot at making a district or district seat the way the Allstate program's set up unless you're following the protocol of private lessons and really are into it.</p>	Protocol	Private Lessons	Individualized Instruction

<p>(Focus Group) I'm fortunate to have teachers on every instrument, multiple teachers on every instrument, and high school directors from two high schools who come to my school at least twice a week.</p> <p>(Focus Group) For my school, I practiced with my brass and percussion on Monday after school.</p>	Extra Practice	Afterschool	
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Q3: Who provides pertinent instruction for students who plan to audition for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Table 2.16. Question Three

Raw Data and Sources	Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
<p>(Focus Group) You know, it’s our job to explain what this is.</p> <p>(Focus Group) We’ve already set the expectation that trying out for at least district honor band is what’s expected.</p> <p>(Observation) He asked the students to play the values as whole notes up and down the scale.</p> <p>(Focus Group) We know where to lead our kids, scale-wise, attitude-wise, and rhythm-wise.</p>	Direction	Director as Leader	Guidance Toward Skill Mastery
<p>(Focus Group) As opposed to, you know, two as in the past, that was trickier to prepare my kids for, you know, trying to relate it more to how we would site read a concert piece that we do try to do a ton of, and that you’re going to have a technical section, you’re going to have a lyrical section that might even have a key change in a style.</p>	Differentiated Instruction		
<p>(Focus Group) For example, when discussing the tone quality of playing the major scales, the director plays an instrument demonstrating the note values, the characteristic tone quality, and how notes can be played in and out of tune.</p>	Characteristics	Performance Model	
<p>(Focus Group) The director models the sound that he wants from the ensemble several times.</p> <p>(Focus Group) The director models the sound that he wants from the ensemble several times.</p>	Models		

Narrative

The setting primarily occurs within the band room, where the director works closely with the students. Instruction may include other staff, advanced older students, and outside private instruction. Teachers bring their musical backgrounds, educational experiences, and goals to the learning environment. During the preparation for the audition, the student may face challenges such as mastering difficult passages, refining musical interpretation, and managing performance anxiety. A situated narrative can find the intricacies and complexity of the educational experience by concentrating on the similarities across band directors preparing their students for the all-state band auditions.

Band directors often serve as mentors to their students, offering advice on how and when to practice, create goals, and develop and refine performance skills, which builds self-confidence for auditions. Recognizing that different students need various techniques to succeed in auditions, directors use differentiated instructional methods to meet the needs and abilities of each student. For both students and directors, establishing a balance between the rigors of audition preparation and knowing the all-state ensemble's reputation of musical excellence can be difficult. In addition to other students supporting each other and cooperating to achieve mutual goals, preparing for auditions frequently strengthens the student-director bond. Students often participate in the band to express themselves and find their identities, giving them a feeling of purpose and contributing musically to the ensemble. Directors and students are encouraged to reflect on their progress and identify areas for improvement for future audition preparation.

Credibility

Credibility is the demonstration of belief in the validity of the study's findings.¹⁸ The researcher's credibility is strengthened when they describe their study experiences and verify the research findings with participants, such as member checking. A qualitative study is also considered credible if people who have had the same event instantly understand the descriptions of human experience. To increase trust while conducting a qualitative study, the researcher displayed participation, observation methodologies, and audit trails.¹⁹ Furthermore, the researcher employed triangulation, which involved using three different types of evidence to support or refute the topic's interpretation and evaluation throughout the investigation (observations, interviews, and focus groups).²⁰

Dependability

Dependability is refers to the reliability or consistency of the research conducted. Dependability is obtained when another researcher agrees on the decision taken at each level of the study process. In a qualitative study, the researcher's process and descriptions are considered reliable if the study findings are duplicated with similar participants under similar settings.²¹ Following survey data collection, peer debriefers or coworkers were given raw data and instructed to play the "devil's advocate" role.²² Furthermore, peer debriefers provide their

¹⁸ Diane G. Cope, "Methods and Meanings: Credibility and Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research," *Oncology Nursing Forum* 41, no. 1 (December 24, 2013): 90, <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.onf>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 91.

²¹ Ibid.

²² LaiYee H, "What Is Peer Debriefing in Qualitative Research?," *Delve*, August 22, 2023, accessed March 13, 2024, <https://delvetool.com/blog/peerdebriefing>.

perspective or explanation.²³ Furthermore, an audit allows an experienced outsider to observe the study's interview and dispute its procedure or findings.²⁴ Data collected from all observations, interviews, and focus groups was safely stored, coded, and associated with the study's parameters, progressing from the phenomenon to recommendations and consequences. As a result, an audit trail keeps track of all files that detail how working hypotheses were formed from raw data and then modified and tested, the study's findings, and other aspects of the research process.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data reflects the participants' responses rather than the researcher's prejudices or perspectives. Confirmability is proved by demonstrating how conclusions and interpretations were reached and showing that the findings were taken directly from the data.²⁵ The study's participants determine the degree of study neutrality rather than the author's prejudice, impulse, or personal interest. Triangulation, a peer debriefer, and an audit trail demonstrate that the researcher searched for disconfirming evidence or negative cases. Furthermore, a reflexive journal can be utilized to self-reflect and deliberately search out biases throughout data analysis.²⁶

Chapter Summary

This chapter included the results of the participants' surveys and detailed descriptions of the observations of the participants' eighth-grade band classes. From this, it allowed data

²³ H, "What Is Peer Debriefing in Qualitative Research?"

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cope, "Methods and Meanings."

²⁶ H, "What Is Peer Debriefing in Qualitative Research?"

analysis that provided the foundation of discussion questions in the focus group. The idea of theoretical triangulation aids in processing collected data to lower research biases in sampling, procedure, and researcher biases, making the study more accurate and trustworthy. Using the three methods- surveys, observations, and participation in focus groups- the researcher can substantiate the conclusions from those research collection facets.

The information acquired from all sources provided the information for the study to create codes to which answers were found, and the outcome offered support for the research questions. The study was conducted with six middle school band directors who represented different areas in Georgia, and each gave consent to participate. No complications were encountered in acquiring school demographic data, scheduling the on-site observations, or participating in the focus group. All participants were familiar with each other and respectfully provided dialogue that was useful for the progression of the research study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Summary of Study

The study *Commonalities in Teaching Strategies Among Middle School Band Directors for Individuals Auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band* was an area the researcher often questioned throughout their 23 years in education. The researcher desired to find out how middle school students successfully placed seats in the Georgia Middle School All-State Band. One of the fundamental objectives was to debunk the idea that most of the students chosen for the Georgia Middle School All-State band were in the northern part of Georgia. The participants did include band directors representing three middle school band programs within a fifty-mile radius from the center point of Atlanta and three from outside the fifty-mile radius from the established center point. From the data collected through the distribution and completion of surveys, on-site observations, and the participants' interaction and dialogue in the focus group, the researcher's hypotheses were supported except for one facet of hypothesis number one.

Hypothesis One: Common teaching strategies between middle school band directors whose students are accepted into the Georgia All-State Middle School Band include composing etudes for the ensemble emphasizing major scales and selecting sightreading literature similar to the all-state audition requirements.

The study found through the answers to the question, "Did you take one or more of the required instrumental, lyrical etudes and arrange them for the entire ensemble at any point prior to the audition?" a conclusive no was established. None of the participants took any instrument's lyrical or technical etudes to incorporate into their instruction. The researcher deduces that the time required to arrange the music for each instrument was not advantageous to the low number of students interested in auditioning for the all-state band. This claim can be substantiated from

the information presented in the literature review. This information includes topics such as performance anxiety, fear of failure, or a less-than-desirable experience with the all-state conductor, their personality, and of choice of musical selections.

Summary of Findings

The researcher had two research questions, a sub-question, and a hypothesis with the purpose of the “what and how” the band directors place students into the all-state band.

Research Question One Summary of Findings

Research Question One: What are common teaching strategies of band directors who have students preparing for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

Hypothesis One: Common teaching strategies that exist between middle school band directors whose students are accepted into the Georgia All-State Middle School Band include composing etudes for the ensemble emphasizing major scales and selecting sightreading literature that is similar to the All-State audition requirements.

According to the surveys submitted, observations of an eighth-grade class, and dialogue within the focus group, all participants had commonalities in their warmups. One of the common elements was the ensemble playing long tones. Long tones are pitches that are held out in different durations. The durations include whole notes, half notes, and students holding a pitch indefinitely to develop a pitch center to train intonation tendencies on a student’s instrument. When asked about technique, one focus group member stated that they believe that long tones are fundamental to playing any instrument.

Learning to play major scales is a fundamental skill that begins in the early instruction of young beginning musicians. For the all-state audition, scales are not a requirement but a prerequisite demonstrated during the district-level auditions. The surveys, on-site observations,

and discussions in the focus group provided information that all the participants were teaching at least the first four major scales as required by the district-level auditions. At a minimum, all participants played the scales and arpeggios as written per GMEA guidelines of tongue up and slur down each pitch. Two directors emphasized learning and playing major scales more as they gave their students the grade 9-10 high school scales instead of the designated middle school scales. The difference between the middle school's (6-8) and high school's (9-10) scales is that some scales added an octave. Though not every student could successfully play the higher octave ranges, they were utilized for the more advanced students to challenge them to further their skills, which would better prepare them for the high school auditions the following year.

Sight reading is a facet of music performance where an ensemble or individual is asked to play a selection of music they have never seen before. Sight reading by an ensemble indicates the musical reading skill level of the group, measurable by playing correct rhythms, correct pitches, ability to understand key and time signatures, and musical effects such as dynamics, articulations, and the ability to understand repeats, first and second endings, and other signage that guides the musicians from the beginning of the piece to the end of the piece. In one of the schools observed, the director was using the program *The Sightreading Factory*. The director gave the students precisely thirty seconds and reminded them to "Try your best to play, and consider the elements of correct rhythms and pitches, articulations, and dynamics."

Research Question Two Summary of Findings

Research Question Two: What additional instruction outside the school day do the students auditioning for the All-State Middle School Band receive?

Hypothesis Two and Sub-Set: Receiving private instruction outside of the school day can enhance the skills of the auditionee, but the lack of resources such as geographic location or

funds prevent such study, and the auditionee must rely on afterschool time with the band director.

The researcher found evidence with all participants that additional instruction beyond the school day is common. Every band director stated through the survey or during the focus group that they all provide instruction after school to aid students in preparing the all-state material. The additional instruction was not part of the participant's compensation; it was done out of a desire to provide more one-on-one instruction that cannot be provided during regular class times. According to the findings from the survey, students from the schools in the study receiving private lessons needed to be more consistent across the group. There were explanations from the focus group where the participants reported "no" for private lessons. Due to the difficulty of their students traveling for instruction off campus and financial complications, the directors could bring in instructors from the community, such as the high school band director or instrumentalists from the area.

Sub-Set Question and Summary of Finding

Sub-Set Question of Research Question Two: Who provides pertinent instruction for students who plan to audition for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band?

The study finds that the band director and the assistant director, if applicable, are the individuals who provide pertinent instruction. During the focus group, one of the participants stated, "We know where to lead our kids, scale-wise, attitude-wise, and rhythm-wise." Through a combination of degree study and teaching experience, a band director is the content expert. When paired with another director who is a specialist in an instrument family different from the other director, the depth of knowledge can reach more students. An example would be one of the schools observed, which has two directors; one is a specialist in brasswinds, and the other is a

specialist in woodwinds. According to information shared in the focus group, the idea is to take a specific time per week to isolate woodwinds in one band room and brass in the other. There is, however, one section that would not receive specific instruction: the percussion. Another school observed had three band directors, each whose instruction reached all the instrument families, specifically brasswinds, woodwinds, and percussion.

The band directors observed that all showcased enthusiasm in their teaching and dialogue with their students. One director shared with the researcher during the site observation that even when their personal lives conflict, it does not permeate the students. They further stated, “The students should be innocent when the director has issues that could alter the climate of the room and the desire to learn by the students.”

Prior Research

Through an exhaustive search of journals, books, and online sites, the researcher found limited literature on auditioning for all-state bands, and pertinent information was placed in the literature review section of the doctoral thesis. The researcher found no studies on commonalities in the pedagogy of band directors in Georgia for students auditioning for the Georgia Middle School All-State Band. Due to the absence of a study from a music educator in Georgia, the researcher believed a research study had relevance as triangulated information could aid middle school band directors who might have curiosity in the future if they question why they have little to no students audition and placed in the all-state band. Additionally, this research could be a resource for educators interested in expanding their teaching strategies to encourage and support more students to audition for all-state.

Limitations

The study focused on six middle school band directors who had placed one or more students in the Georgia Middle School All-State Band for the 2022-2023 school year. The research intended to find commonalities in teaching strategies that aided students in earning a seat in the band. Much focus was placed on warmups, direct and indirect instruction from the director, and other external factors, such as receiving additional instruction through private lessons. However, several factors were placed differently in the execution of the research study. One factor was the need for acknowledgment from the directors, who received emailed letters inviting them to participate. Of the twenty-five directors who satisfied the requirements of the study, only ten expressed the desire to be a participant. The emails were personalized to the recipient with clear and concise information about the study. Additionally, a more significant factor that the researcher would not consider an obstacle in the study is school security and confidentiality. Of the ten responses that showed interest in potential participants, four directors openly told the researcher that their school would only allow people involved with the school or school system to conduct research. One director, who strongly desired to participate, stated that their principal did not allow other teachers within the school to observe fellow teachers.

One school system, which was not included in the study, had principal approval but was immediately overridden by an individual at the board level. The person stated that their Teaching and Learning Department must approve potential research studies. This department handled all ethics involved, including any employee, staff member, or student in the school system. The schools that approved their band director's participation in the research study approved without hesitation. Three of the schools in the study expressed gratitude that one of their schools would be included in a doctoral thesis.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study showed that the researcher's hypotheses were mostly valid. There are recommendations suggested by the researcher if the study was to be reviewed and updated. The less-than-desired amount of interest in participation was unexpected when the concept of the study was proposed as a topic of music educational study. One idea for furthering the study would be a narrower focus on one of the GMEA districts and the schools that met the requirements of the study and not conduct an additional study that included only a sample of schools throughout Georgia. Neighboring school systems might be more willing to allow observations of their schools versus the researcher requesting an on-site visit to a school several hours away.

The study could also be redirected from examining the middle school level to focus a new study on the high school level. With the more refined musical skills at a higher level than middle school, the study could also change the criteria to be more than one student earning a seat in the Georgia High School All-State Band.

Implications for Practice

The research results suggest that the middle school band directors who participated in the survey all possessed certain commonalities in their teaching for students' preparation for the all-state band audition. The researcher believes the two main concepts that showed evidence were found in warmups and instruction during the day and after school by either the band director or someone of competence familiar with the instrument and audition material. Through the collection and processing of data, the researcher believes the results can be found in schools throughout the state with no attention to demographics, socioeconomic, or geographic location. Instrumental music teachers who are curious about the placement of students in the all-state band

and have not had students representing their program might examine their teaching and see if there are elements discovered in the study that might aid in their student's success in achieving a position in the all-state band that are not already incorporated in their daily rehearsals.

Conclusion

This thesis study examined, compared, and contrasted the methods six middle school band directors in Georgia used to prepare their students for the all-state band audition using similar teaching methods and materials. The large amount of information in this thesis could be beneficial for middle school band directors. Using the results in their classes, teachers can change how they teach to better prepare their students for the difficult all-state band audition process. The literature review, which went into great depth about preparing for an audition, what is required for different instruments, the difficulties of judging numerous students in one time span, and the overall student experience, whether positive or lackluster, is an excellent resource for directors who want to learn more about the audition process. The literature review included information about South Dakota and how their audition process is very contrasting to what students are required to do at the Georgia auditions. South Dakota challenges students' knowledge of common musical terms as well as being able to identify time and key signatures. The study did not specify the number of music terms or key and time signatures required of the auditionee.

The possibility that the study could be expanded to other regions of Georgia or configured so that it can be used in other states shows how useful and relevant it is in music education. This study aims to improve middle school band programs in various settings by sharing best practices and ideas from experienced band directors who have placed students in the all-state band. The supportive and positive attitudes of the directors, as shown through focus

group discussions, is an essential finding throughout this study. The importance of guidance and encouragement in developing the skills of younger students and creating a positive learning environment is supported by the positive encouragement of the director. The researcher's primary goal, which was to collect data on the strategies and resources that successful band directors use to get their students into the all-state band, has been met. Using what this study found as guidance, directors who have never placed students in the all-state band might have new ideas to refine or augment their teaching. However, some directors may not succeed in placing a student in the all-state band. All students, regardless of whether they are auditioning for all-state or nothing at all, should always have the support and encouragement from their directors to be the best musicians they can be.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: 2023 List of Participating Middle Schools and Number of Students Selected for the 2023 Georgia Middle School All-State Band

Participating School	Accepted by Audition	Participating School	Accepted by Audition
Alton C. Crews Middle School	1	Little Mill Middle School	1
Appling County Middle School	1	Mabry Middle School	2
Atlanta International School	1	Malcom Bridge Middle School	6
Augusta Christian School	1	McClure Middle School	3
Autrey Mill Middle School	5	Mill Creek Middle School	1
Beacon Middle School	1	Model Middle School	1
Bethune Middle School	1	Morgan County Middle School	2
Blake Bass Middle School	2	Mt. Zion Middle School	1
Bonaire Middle School	1	North Forsyth Middle School	1
Brantely County Middle School	2	North Gwinnett Middle School	4
Buford Middle School	10	Northwestern Middle School	3
Cartersville Middle School	1	Notre Dame Academy	1
Cass Middle School	1	Oconee County Middle School	4
Central Middle School	1	Ola Middle School	1
Chamblee Middle School	1	Osborne Middle School	4
Chattanooga Valley Middle School	1	Otwell Middle School	2
Clear Creek Middle School	1	Palmer Middle School	1
Coffee Middle School	1	Peachtree Middle School	1
Community Christian School	1	Perry Middle School	1
Cooper Middle School	1	Pinckneyville Middle School	4
Creekland Middle School	1	Piney Grove Middle School	1
Dawson County Middle School	1	Red Bud Middle School	1
Dean Rusk Middle School	2	Ringgold Middle School	1
Desana Middle School	4	River Trail Middle School	9
Dickerson Middle School	2	Riverside Middle School	2
Dodgen Middle School	6	Riverwatch Middle School	37
Duluth Middle School	1	Savannah Christian Middle School	1
Durham Middle School	1	Simpson Middle School	2
East Cobb Middle School	1	South Effingham Middle School	1
East Laurens Middle School	1	South Forsyth Middle School	15
Eastbrook Middle School	1	Stallings Island Middle School	2

Ebenezer Middle School	1	Sugar Hill Christian Academy	1
Esther F. Garrison School for the Arts	1	Swainsboro Middle School	1
Feagin Middle School	1	Teasley Middle School	1
George Walton Academy	1	Temple Middle School	1
Glenn C. Jones Middle School	2	The Lovett School	1
Glynn Middle School	1	The Westminster School	3
Gray Station Middle School	1	Thomas County Middle School	1
Greater Atlanta Christian School	1	Trickum Middle School	1
Greenbrier Middle School	2	Twin Rivers Middle School	1
Heard County Middle School	1	Webb Bridge Middle School	3
Heritage Middle School	4	Wesleyan Middle School	2
Hightower Trail Middle School	2	West Hall Middle School	1
Holy Innocents Episcopal School	2	West Jackson Middle School	2
HOME SCHOOLED	2	Whitefield Academy	1
Hopewell Middle School	1	Whitewater Middle School	1
Hull Middle School	3	Woodstock Middle School	1
Jefferson Middle School	2	Woodwood North Middle School	1
Lakeside Cumming Middle School	6		

Appendix B: List of Middle School All-State Conductors

Year	Conductor	Conductor
2009	Dr. Les Hicken	Steve Smith
2010	Robert Sheldon	Nola Jones
2011	Freddy Martin	Robert W. Smith
2012	Mike Eagan	Erik Morales
2013	Brian Balmages	Sean O'Loughlin
2014	Linda J. Gammon	Michael Sweeney
2015	Sam Hazo	Robert Herrings III
2016	Cheryl Floyd	Todd Stalter
2017	Chip DeStefano	Cynthia Lansford
2018	Dr. Mary Land	Robert Sheldon
2019	Kim Bain	David Puckett
2020	Thomas L. Dvorak	Linda J. Gammon
2021	Virtual	Virtual
2022	Robert Herrings III	Darcy Vogt Williams
2023	Erin Cole Steel	Corey L. Graves

Appendix C: Sample of District Level Audition Wind Scoresheet



All State Middle School Band (Grades 6-8)

Wind Instrument District Audition Form

Student:	School:	Date:
Grade:	Instrument: Flute Panel:	Audition Time:

SCORING INSTRUCTIONS FOR MAJOR SCALES

Award one point for each octave played correctly ascending, one point for each octave played correctly descending, and one point for each arpeggio played correctly. For example:

- A 1-octave scale performed with no mistakes will receive a total of 3 pts: **1 pt ascending, 1 pt descending, and 1 pt for arpeggio**
- A 2-octave scale performed with no mistakes will receive a total of 5 pts: **2 pts ascending, 2 pts descending, and 1 pt for arpeggio**
- A 3-octave scale performed with no mistakes will receive a total of 7 pts: **3 pts ascending, 3 pts descending, and 1 pt for arpeggio**

*Scales must be performed from memory and according to the published GMEA scale sheet requirements.

• Major Scales and Arpeggios:

Scale	Ascending Score	Descending Score	Arpeggio Score	Total Score
F				
Bb				
Eb				
Ab				

Total Raw Score:

Adjustment Factor: x 1.8750

Major Scale Total:**Chromatic Scale Total:** /10**Lyrical Etude Total:** /30**• Chromatic Scale:**

(10 points maximum)

• Lyrical Etude:

(30 points maximum)

Tone Quality	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Technique	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Rhythmic Accuracy	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Articulation/Style	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Dynamics/Phrasing	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Interpretation/Tempo	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5

• Sight Reading Exercise:

(30 points maximum)

Sight Reading Total: /30

Tone Quality	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Technique	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Rhythmic Accuracy	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Articulation/Style	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Dynamics/Phrasing	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5
Interpretation/Tempo	0 . . . 0.5 . . . 1 . . . 1.5 . . . 2 . . . 2.5 . . . 3 . . . 3.5 . . . 4 . . . 4.5 . . . 5

Adjudicator Signatures:

AUDITION TOTAL

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Min. total score needed for state-level
audition recommendation: 85.0000

Appendix D: Sample of District Level Audition Percussion Scoresheet



All State Middle School Band (Grades 6-8)

Percussion District Audition Form

Student:	School:	Date:
Grade:	Instrument: Percussion Panel:	Audition Time:

Snare Drum (100 points maximum)

• **Etude Performance:** (15 points maximum each category)

Rudiment Quality: /15 Roll Quality: /15 Tempo/Pulse Control: /15 Accuracy: /15

Etude Subtotal: /60

• **Sight Reading** (40 points maximum)

Rhythmic Accuracy: /20 Technique/Tone Production: /10 Dynamics/Expression: /10

Sight Reading Subtotal: /40

TOTAL SNARE DRUM SCORE: /100

Mallets (100 points maximum)

• **Major Scales:** (48 points maximum)

The Major Scales and Tonic Arpeggios are to be performed in the order listed below from memory two octaves each. The tempo and rhythm requirements are the same as the woodwind/brass scales for Middle School (QN=120). Each scale may be awarded up to 8 points and each arpeggio up to 4 points for a total of 12 points maximum per scale.

F:	Bb:	Eb:	Ab:
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Major Scale Total: /48

• **Chromatic Scale:** (12 points maximum)

Chromatic Scale Total: /12

• **Sight Reading:** (40 points maximum)

Rhythmic Accuracy: /15 Technique/Tone Production: /15 Dynamics/Expression: /10

Sight Reading Total: /40

TOTAL MALLET SCORE: /100

Timpani (100 points maximum)

• **Etude Performance:** (60 points maximum)

Tuning Accuracy: /15 Roll Quality: /15 Tempo/Pulse Control: /15 Accuracy: /15

Etude Subtotal: /60

• **Sight Reading:** (40 points maximum)

Rhythmic Accuracy: /20 Technique/Tone Production: /10 Dynamics/Expression: /10

Sight Reading Total: /40

TOTAL TIMPANI SCORE: /100

Adjudicator Signatures:

AUDITION TOTAL

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Appendix E: Sample of State Level Audition Wind Scoresheet



All State Middle School Band (Grades 6-8)

Wind Instrument State Audition Form

Student:	Instrument: Flute	Panel:	Date: Audition Time:
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Prepared Selection

(60 points max)

Tone Quality	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . 10
Technique	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . 10
Rhythmic Accuracy	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . 10
Articulation/Style	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . 10
Dynamics/Phrasing	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . 10
Interpretation/Tempo	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5 . . . 6 . . . 7 . . . 8 . . . 9 . . . 10

Prepared Selection Total: /60**Sight Reading #1**

(20 points max)

Rhythmic Accuracy	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5
Tone Quality	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5
Technique	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5
Interpretation/Tempo	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5

Sight Reading #1 Total: /20**Sight Reading #2**

(20 points max)

Rhythmic Accuracy	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5
Tone Quality	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5
Technique	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5
Interpretation/Tempo	0 . . . 1 . . . 2 . . . 3 . . . 4 . . . 5

Sight Reading #2 Total: /20**Total Audition Score:** /100_____
Adjudicator Signature_____
Adjudicator Signature_____
Adjudicator Signature_____
Adjudicator Signature**Instructions for Adjudicators:**

1. Circle the number beside each descriptor in each category. Fractional scores should be marked in the approximate spot on the score line.
2. All adjudicators must sign at the bottom of the form.

Appendix F: Sample of State Level Audition Percussion Scoresheet



All State Middle School Band (Grades 6-8)

Percussion State Audition Form

Student: _____	Instrument: Percussion	Panel: _____	Date: _____ Audition Time: _____
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Snare Drum (100 points max)

Etude Total: /60

Sight Reading Total: /40

Snare Drum Total: **/100**

Xylophone (100 points max)

Etude Total: /60

Sight Reading Total: /40

Xylophone Total: **/100**

Timpani (100 points max)

Etude Total: /50

Sight Reading Total: /30

Tuning Total: /20

Timpani Total: **/100**

Total Percussion Score: **/300**

Adjudicator Signature

Adjudicator Signature

Adjudicator Signature

Adjudicator Signature

Adjudicator Signature

Adjudicator Signature

Appendix G: 2023 GMEA Middle School All-State Band 1 Program

ALL-STATE BAND MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND CONDUCTOR - ERIN COLE STEELE ORGANIZER - WENDY WILSON | PERCUSSION ORGANIZER - TODD WILLSON



Erin Cole Steele has had a very successful career as a middle school band director for the past 22 years. She served as the band director at Tapp Middle School in Cobb County, Georgia from 1995-2017. Under her leadership, the Tapp Band honors included being selected to perform at the 58th annual Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, Illinois in December of 2004. The band has been a featured performing group at the University of Georgia Middle School Band Festival in 2015, 2008, 2003, and 1999. Additionally, the Flute and Percussion Ensemble have performed at the Georgia Music Educators Conference in Savannah, Georgia. The Tapp Band was also selected for the National Adjudicators Invitational Dixie Classic Festival in 2006 where they received all superior ratings. The Tapp Band continually receives superior ratings each year at the District 12 large group performance evaluation.

Mrs. Cole Steele has commissioned four pieces of music for the Tapp Band in the past 12 years. In 1999, Robert W. Smith wrote "The Great Locomotive Chase", in 2002, Frank Ticheli wrote "Simple Gifts - Four Shaker Songs", and in 2004, Samuel R. Hazo composed "Ascend" for the Tapp M.S. Symphonic Band's performance at The Midwest Clinic. Most recently, Mrs. Cole Steele and the Tapp Middle School Band was part of a consortium of directors to commission the Eric Whitacre piece "The Seal Lullaby".

Erin Cole Steele earned her bachelor's degree in music education from the University of Georgia in 1995. While at the University of Georgia, she played the cello, flute, and piccolo in the University Symphony Orchestra, chamber groups, Symphonic, and Concert Bands, and the

Redcoat Marching Band. She has studied cello with Christopher Rex, David Starkweather, and Alice Williams and has studied flute with Ronald Waln and Martha Lynn Volman. Ms. Cole Steele's professional affiliations include Phi Beta Mu, Sigma Alpha Iota, National Band Association, and the Georgia Music Educators Association.

Erin has written articles for The Instrumentalist magazine and has been a contributing editor for the publication. She has also served as a clinician for the Music for All Summer Symposium and is currently on the teaching faculty at The Conn Selmer Institute. She has presented several sessions at the Midwest Clinic and many state conventions. In 2007, 2010, and 2014 Erin has written chapters for the popular GIA publication series Teaching Music Through Performance. Mrs. Cole Steele is also currently a contributing editor for Hal Leonard's Essential Elements method book and interactive website team.

Mrs. Cole Steele now works as an educational clinician and consultant for Conn-Selmer and the Hal Leonard Corporation. She has been a guest conductor for numerous honor and all-state bands, has taught several years at the "Encore" Music Camp and was the founder and administrator of the Cobb County Summer Band Camp. She was awarded the National Band Association's Citation of Excellence in 2015, 2008 and 2003. She was the middle school band conductor for the Conn-Selmer Youth Band of Atlanta from 2011 - 2017. Erin currently resides in Scottsdale, Arizona with her husband.

Program

Verity March	Laura Estes
Skyward	Katahj Copley
Fragile	Randall D. Standridge
Choose Joy	Randall D. Standridge
Bamboo Warrior	Christina Huss

Image used with permission by Alan Fowler, GMEA Executive Director

Appendix H: 2023 GMEA Middle School All-State Band 2 Program

ALL-STATE BAND MIDDLE SCHOOL BAND CONDUCTOR - COREY L. GRAVES ORGANIZER - LANAE DICKSTEIN | PERCUSSION ORGANIZER - NICK TUCKER



Corey L. Graves is starting his fourteenth year as an educator and is opening Tony A. Jackson Middle School in Forney ISD as it's new head director in the Fall of 2021. Prior to this appointment, he served as the head director of Roma Middle School for eleven years. He received his Bachelor of Music Education degree as a summa cum laude graduate from Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) in 2007 and his Master of Music in Euphonium Performance from The Ohio State University (OSU), as a graduate fellow, in 2008.

Corey L. Graves is starting his fourteenth year as an educator and is opening Tony A. Jackson Middle School in Forney ISD as it's new head director in the Fall of 2021. Prior to this appointment, he served as the head director of Roma Middle School for eleven years. He received his Bachelor of Music Education degree as a summa cum laude graduate from Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU) in 2007 and his Master of Music in Euphonium Performance from The Ohio State University (OSU), as a graduate fellow, in 2008.

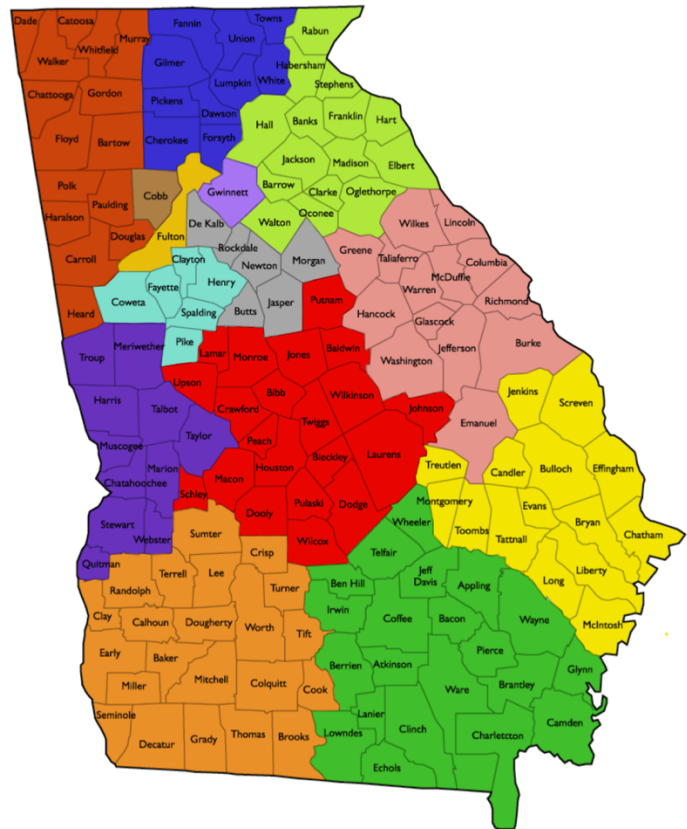
Mr. Graves credits his passion for music to his mother, Brenda M. Moore (who is affectionately known as "Mama Graves" by his students), his drive for success to his grandmother, Mrs. Vergie Graves, and his love of education to an incredible list of music educators across the country.

Program

Thrills and Trills!	Scott Watson
Tripwire	JaRod Hall
The Cave You Fear	Michael Markowski
Home Awaits	Anthony Susi
Hopak!	William Owens
Gadget	Randall D. Standridge

Image used with permission by Alan Fowler, GMEA Executive Director

DISTRICT MAP



Appendix J: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



January 31, 2024

Michael Harper
[REDACTED]

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-699 Commonalities in Teaching Strategies Among Middle School Band Directors for Individuals Auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band

Dear Michael Harper, [REDACTED],

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.(iii). 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 can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

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 [REDACTED].

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix K: Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear Middle School Band Director:

As a graduate student in the School of Music at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to find commonalities in teaching strategies among middle school band directors for students auditioning and being selected for the Georgia All-State Middle School Band. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be middle school band directors in Georgia, have successfully had one or more students auditioning, and accepted into the 2023 Georgia All-State Middle School Band. If willing, participants will be asked to complete a brief ten-question survey via email regarding instructional practices, allow a thirty-minute in-person observation of an eighth-grade band class, and participate in a twenty-five minute focus group meeting via Zoom to discuss the study's findings. Your name and other identifying information will be requested for this study, but the information will remain confidential.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form and choose to participate, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to participate in the survey.

Sincerely,

Michael (Chris) Harper
Doctoral Student, Liberty University

Appendix L: School Administration Letter

Month, Day, Year

Name

Principal

Name of Middle School

Mailing Address

Dear _____,

As a graduate student in the School of Music at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree. The title of my research project is

“Commonalities in Teaching Strategies Among Middle School Band Directors for Individuals Auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band” and the purpose of my research is to examine teaching commonalities and practices of middle school band directors who have successfully placed one or more students into the Georgia Middle School All-State Band.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research with an eighth-grade band class at your school.

Upon receiving permission, (the school band director) will be asked to contact me for a convenient date and time for observing an eighth-grade band class. There will be no audio or video recording. Participating in this study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead or an email confirming your approval and give either item to your band director, who will forward it to me.

Sincerely,

Michael (Chris) Harper
Liberty University Doctoral Student

Appendix M: Participant Consent

Consent

Title of the Project: Commonalities in Teaching Strategies Among Middle School Band

Directors for Individuals Auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band

Principal Investigator: Michael Harper, Doctoral Candidate, School of Music, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a certificated middle school band director (grades 6-8) in Georgia who had one or more students prepare, audition, and be accepted into the 2023 Georgia Middle School All-State Band. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The study aims to see if there are commonalities in teaching strategies that aid the preparation of middle school students auditioning for the all-state band.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Complete an online survey regarding standard daily rehearsal practices that might aid in student preparation for the all-state auditions. This will take ten or less minutes.
2. Allow for a single thirty-minute site visit to observe your rehearsal techniques/practices for the eighth-grade ensemble. Your rehearsal will not be recorded or photographed.
3. Participation in a focus group with the other directors to share findings of commonalities in instructional strategies designed to aid student preparation for the all-state audition. This will take approximately twenty-five minutes and will be audio-recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect from participating in this study are potential ideas to augment current teaching strategies or implementation of ideas shared from the focus group. Middle school band directors can examine this study's results and draw references from their own teaching and instructional strategies with the potential for augmentation of current practices. From this study, further investigation into more instructional practices reaching beyond the middle school level is possible.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and/or shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then deleted. During that time, the researcher and members of his doctoral committee will have access to these recordings and data.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data

collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Michael (Chris) Harper. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Thomas Goddard, at [REDACTED].

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

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

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio and/or video-record me as part of my participation in the focus group of this study.

Digital Signature

Please type your name in the box below

--

Appendix N: Survey Questions

Survey for "Commonalities in Teaching Strategies Among Middle School Band Directors for Individuals Auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band."

1. How many students did you have participate in the 2023 Georgia Middle School All-State Band? These would be for the 2022-2023 school year. Please use the drop down tool to choose your answer.
2. How many students took private lessons outside the school day to aid in the audition preparation rather than your direct instruction? The number of lessons taken does not matter. Please use the drop down tool to choose your answer.
3. Did you incorporate the four required major scales into your warmup between the first day of school and audition day?
4. Do you continue incorporating scales in your warmup?
5. Both the district and final round of all-state auditions require sightreading. How often did you incorporate sightreading in your class instruction? Consider the months of September through November.
6. Did you have an assistant or someone on staff who dedicated any amount of class time to pull out individuals for all-state audition preparation?
7. The auditions are always on the first Saturday in December. Consider the timespan of November to the day of the auditions; on average, how many days per week did you help after school for students who needed more detailed instruction? Please use the dropdown tool to choose your answer.
8. Did you take one or more of the required instrumental lyrical etudes and arrange them for the entire ensemble at any point prior to the audition?

9. Did you take any sightreading from previous auditions and arrange it for the entire ensemble?
10. Is your primary instrument percussion?
11. Were any of your students who made all-state a percussionist?
12. If you answered yes to the previous question, how many students were percussionists?

Appendix O: Focus Group Transcription

Topic: All-State Auditioning

Moderator

“So, Why do you think students do not want to audition for the District Honor Band or All-State?”

Speaker 3:

“For one, middle school, so many of my kids don’t know what it is. You know, it’s our job to explain what this is. You see, I always put things in sports terms. So, I tell my kids it’s like all stars, you know, like rec all-stars, uh, you know, making state for your rec department or something. But then again, my boy who made it on Tuba was the first one in 13 years from [REDACTED], from [REDACTED] Middle School, to make it so.”

Speaker 3:

“It’s not known like kids. They don’t see it enough to know, like, Hey, this is something I can strive for. So if it’s on me to encourage them, Okay. And to, uh, try it. So, as far as kids not wanting to, or not trying out, I, they’re just not used to it. In my band room and my community, it’s, uh, they don’t see it very often.”

Speaker 2:

“We have the kids today, more than any other time since I’ve been teaching; this is year 51 for me, so I’ve got a few years, but there’s so much more competition for the kids’. Time, justifying time for them to practice after school. You compete with soccer, basketball, and sports; if you cut that off, your program numbers drop. You know, there’s a balance there. The kids aren’t disinterested. They just are overly stimulated and challenged by what’s available.”

Speaker 2:

“Yep. And of course, here we are talking on cell phones, but I think there’s so much challenge for their time, and you get that kid who’s made that commitment that they want to be in district all-state, wherever we nurture it the best we can, and hopefully, they make it, and a lot of them do.”

Speaker 2:

“It’s a competition.”

Speaker 4:

“Well, in [REDACTED] County, we’ve already set the expectation that trying out for at least district honor band is what’s expected, especially for our advanced bands or seventh- and eighth-grade advanced bands. So it’s pretty much the ones that don’t want to do it, uh, that don’t do it. Uh, the vast majority of our, so we had, this year, like 70, 75 audition for district honor, honor band. 15 to 20 actually did the all-state audition.”

Speaker 4:

“Okay. And we kinda, you know, encourage the ones that really have a shot at doing that instead of spending the 25 bucks; if they don’t have a shot now, they insist, and they want to audition for all-state, then by all means. But we do assist them financially as well. Okay. Uh, with the

registration costs. Okay. And it's always, well, well, for us, especially on the district level, uh, it's more hit and miss, uh, from year to year on the all-state. Uh, but like last year, we had one tuba make it, another, uh, first alternate super make it, and about every other year, the year before, we had a bass clarinet make it."

Speaker 4:

"So, it's like setting the culture of what we want in that area. Once you've set that, and we've been doing this for as long as I've been there, which is 18 years, it's just expected, and the community expects it as well."

Speaker 5:

"I put all-state on realistic terms for them and only encourage the kids taking private lessons to jump out there. Especially the seventh graders, you know, usually the eighth graders that didn't listen to me in seventh grade, they realized most of them got in over their head if they're not taking lessons. Or on the flip side, some of them took that as motivation and, you know, started jumping in and taking private lessons and, you know, getting more success, getting to the second round. And, you know, a handful making it every year."

Speaker 5:

"As far as the district band, it's the same thing. Seventh graders are just scared. They need to find out there's a long time between when you must register and how much teaching and learning happens before that."

Speaker 6:

"From my side of things, from what we've done in the past, our district goes well into Northern Metro Atlanta. And so when I was in District Nine before they split off the 14, we would be up against like River Watch middle school that would have 84 kids make it the district Honor band. Yep. And from what my middle school band director over Banks County told me, between Dove Creek, which is the new Deconee County Middle School and Jefferson, it made up 90% of the honor band."

Speaker 6:

"So it's not even. The deck is stacked against you. I once had a saxophone player who made a 93 on a district audition, and I was like, yes, he's going to make it. Everybody from River Watch was on there. They made 90 sevens and above. Right."

Topic: Discouragement Due to Schools Filling up District Honor Bands/All-State Bands
Moderator

"So, do you think the students see these honor bands just loaded up with a specific school and think they don't have a shot?"

Speaker 6:

"Well, I'll continue. But we have a very strong soccer program in Habersham County. And so, like, even my best clarinet player tonight, she's like, well, I'm not going to be able to make the pre-LGPE concert because I got a soccer game that night. And then I've got FFA, of course; I know down in South Georgia, too, that's always a heavy lift because you have children showing

something. And then, uh, it depends on the time of year. Softball, volleyball, et cetera, et cetera. and some even on the swim team, their parents have them going hop keto and jiu-jitsu practice and stuff like that.”

Speaker 6:

“So they’ve, I know it sounds wacky, but that’s what they’ve done in our area to overload them with things to do. So the band is just one more thing, but I’ll be honest with you, having no band three years ago with the Covid pandemic and having to build from zero, we finally have started getting the, the idea back again of, oh, this is what we should be doing. Because they need to be there to tell them what to do.”

Speaker 2:

“With the availability of private teachers other than the five band directors we have, everybody’s working hard and pushing, but there is competition for time. And then when you look at, we, I heard somebody say, we, we pay for the cost of the kids to try out district all-state, the, the whole ball of wax.”

Speaker 2:

“And if they complete the tryout, we’re good. Whether they make it or not, if they quit before they try out, they got to pay us the money back. But that only happens sometimes. But it’s for a seventh grader; it’s a real eye-popping experience. Eighth graders are more confident. But it’s what we do, man. We have a few make it every year. And we’re happy for them. We push them forward and make them heroes in the community.”

Speaker 2:

“We have a few more, but we have soccer players, basketball players, FFA, and other things. I don’t even know what they are.”

Topic: Private Lessons/Additional Instruction

Moderator

“So, let me go in this direction. If private lessons were available, and the distance and money were not a factor, say, the instructors came to your school, the boosters or the school system paid the instructors. Would private lessons at the school motivate the kids to try out for honor bands? Or does it just have no effect? They’re either going to do it or not, [REDACTED].”

Speaker 2:

“It’d be a huge, huge advantage.”

Speaker 3:

“Yeah, it would certainly be an advantage. I don’t know that my kids would do it. They would not appreciate it as much as I hope they would understand. But part of that is still educating the parents and the students about the gravity of trying out for the district and all-state. For my school, I practiced with my brass and percussion on Monday after school.”

Speaker 3:

"I practiced with my woodwinds on Tuesday after school for several weeks before the first round. And I would do my best to bring in, like there was a, a, a girl from [Hazelhurst] I would bring for flute, for clarinet. You need help finding a clarinet teacher within 75 or a hundred miles of [Hempstead]. And so just be careful."

Speaker 3:

"So, if it was provided, it would be a considerable advantage, especially if it was consistent. But again, I hope my kid will appreciate it and still practice at home following those lessons."

Moderator

"Okay. [Hempstead], I'm throwing it to you. There's a lot of money in many affluent regions in your area. Everything that is in [Augusta] is where people are going. If the money and distance weren't there, would the kids take on the opportunity for private lessons? Or do we still need to be pulled too thin?"

Speaker 5:

"It is a hit-and-miss. It's a. I have a good mix of everything that I hear. I've got a great group of kids taking private lessons. I'm fortunate to have teachers on every instrument, multiple teachers on every instrument, and high school directors from two high schools who come to my school at least twice a week. So I see four different helpers between head directors and assistant directors. So my kids really do make a competition out of it."

Speaker 5:

"They hear the other people practicing with the high school director in the back room, and they're like, " Oh, well, I can play that faster. I can play that with better articulation. " So then, when they go in, they want to try and compete that way. And we've really set the expectation where I am at [Riverside] that we are one of those programs in our district, and District [] usually has the majority of the band there."

Speaker 5:

"As you guys have said, there are usually one or two schools in your districts that take over everything, as far as the numbers are concerned. And, and my kids, I don't know what kind of accomplishment they do in that. So I don't think it's, you know, any ego on their part. But they go to church with all the kids from the other schools and want to compete against them, too. Okay. And I think that really helps when they, in a large area where I am, multiple schools all go into different events, soccer games, church, all that, that they see their friends at other schools and they want to compete against them too."

Moderator

"Now, [Hempstead], going over to you where you are, you're in the middle of nowhere. It's a beautiful rural area up there. You know, you got the college up there, but looking at maps and doing some statistics, you guys could be better in the county. Do you find that kids have the desire to want to work harder like a competition, like [Hempstead] said? Or are they just coming to school, checking in, and being a band student?"

Speaker 6:

“Before we went to the three middle schools we used to have, it was just **North Habersham** and **South Habersham**. Those were the two high schools before they combined in 1970. So when I first got here in 2010, they were like, you, you’re at **South Habersham**. Oh, we don’t like you. Because if I’m, I live in **Clarksville**. I’m the north end of the county. And so there would be a lot of this north-south rivalry. And we opened the third middle school in the east and center part of the county. And then we’ve just had a huge inflow of people coming up from **Metro Atlanta**.”

Speaker 6:

“People are coming from other countries, Guatemala and El Salvador. I’ve got 51% Hispanic at my school, and most of them are from western Mexico, from to, uh, and, uh, and, and so it’s a whole different ball game as far as, you know when you try calling a parent, and they answer Bueno.”

Speaker 6:

“I need to figure out how to really talk to the parent about, you know, trying to get the kids involved in bands. So we, we are. It’s a weird spot because we are rural enough, 83 miles in each direction between **Atlanta** and **Greenville**. So, it is a weird spot to be in. But I’m instrumental in the college, like **Piedmont University**, but not right now. So you would think, well, maybe I could give my kids lessons, and if I could clone myself, I would be able to do that.”

Speaker 6:

“But I don’t have any more. I’ve done. I’m doing enough. So I’m giving up on that stuff. Okay. And, you know, just kind of, I’ve tried to slowly rebuild all that up, but I tried even with my eighth graders this year, but my best player said, well, I’ve got, I’ve got Irish, I’ve got Irish step dancing finals the week of district honor band auditions. So I gave up after that about trying to get kids auditioning.”

Moderator

“Okay. So **William** where you are in **Thomasville** reminds me of where **Jeffrey** is. There is some money in that area, and many deeply rooted families are there. Does the influence of parents with some influence make these kids want to try to do more than they’re doing? Or are they talking about, like **Jeffrey** said, where they make it a competition with each other?”

Speaker 4:

“How affluent would you consider **Thomas** County compared to other places around **Atlanta**? We do have, what, 1700 in the school? It’s average regarding affluence and different demographics if you will. So a lot of, I, I really don’t, you know, you get the, uh, the top five to 10 band students who, you know, the parents are pushing them to do their best, and they’re willing to, you know, invest in their kids’, uh, musical experience.”

Speaker 4:

“But most of our students were pushing them and trying to educate the parents about its importance. Hey, private lessons- they’re a good thing. But we have very few students who take private lessons at our school. We have a couple of audition clinics where we have grad students

from [redacted] come up twice in the fall on a Saturday from 10 to 2 and work with our kids, which inspires them.”

Speaker 4:

“And our double-read students, of course, get more involved in private lessons, that sort of thing. Uh, but providing a culture from the community in terms of affluence is really pushing most of our students to audition. That’s not the case.”

Topic: What Motivates Students to Audition?

Moderator

“Do we find that the kids’ auditioning is more intrinsic, or is something else pushing them?”

Speaker 3:

“I was going to say this, too: [redacted] mentioned parents and involvement. And I would be curious to hear [redacted]. Even though [redacted] town is much bigger than [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted] are similar. And, plus, I’ve taught in [redacted] County for a couple of years, too. My kids are more, well, it would be intrinsic as in the fact that they want to see themselves succeed, or they want to see their name on that list.”

Speaker 3:

“Okay. They want to hear their name called out over the intercom for making that kind of intrinsic sound.”

Speaker 3:

“Besides my all-state tuba, I can’t say that many of my kids go home to parents saying, “ Hey, did you work on your etude today? Hey, have you practiced your instrument at all this week? “ You know, yes. My all-state student. But [redacted], do you think many of your kids go home, and their parents ask them about their day in a band or anything?”

Speaker 2:

“I’ve got a percentage that definitely does, but I need more. And they love to, like with district band, and that’s our overall state. I mean, the kids feel like they have a shot at making a district or district seat the way the all-state program’s set up unless you’re following the protocol of private lessons and really are into it. You’re gifted, into it, and got the lessons. It’s a dead-end street for some kids.”

Speaker 2:

“But the district and region bands give them that almost all-state experience. They get to go home, and like you said, [redacted], they get to hear their name on the intercom, and that’s good enough for them.”

Topic: What is the Actual Honor Band Experience Providing?

Moderator

“In many district honor bands that we’ve sent kids to, we see that sometimes, at the bottom of the clarinet section, they scored low, and we had to put seats to fill. Are our students getting the actual honor band experience when we’re just trying to pack in some kids?”

Speaker 2:

“Oh, yeah. In District [redacted], the last 4, 5, 6, and 10 seats in the second band, the concert band, are pretty dismal scores. And they still got selected for a district event because they just needed some clarinets to fill out the band.”

Speaker 3:

“I don’t, [redacted]. You may have been at the concert Saturday, but there was an almost night-and-day difference between our district honor band’s A and B bands.”

Speaker 5:

“Our district and District [redacted] are deep. It’s very populated, so we typically don’t run into that issue, as there’s usually a really obvious cutoff score. Usually, there are enough kids to fill all those seats without compromising too much- unless it’s a small panel of instruments like the oboe or bassoon, in which case, there’s usually enough in [redacted] Columbia County alone on those instruments to fill those seats.”

Topic: Director Personalities Influencing Kids**Moderator**

“Do we feel our personalities may influence kids to want to audition to please us?”

Speaker 3:

“I remember being at a conference a few years back, and the guy from the South Carolina schools that did have the middle school habits was Scott Rush. Yeah. Yeah. Maybe it was Rush who said that, in sixth grade, try to get them to dig into you as the teacher. They’re primarily excited about your personality and you make the music fun.”

Speaker 3:

“And then, you know, by eighth grade, you want to turn it more towards their love of the music and their music, which drives their learning. But, I try to engage with the kids in a way that makes them want to learn. Especially like someone was saying earlier, there’s so, there’s so much grabbing for the kids’ attention if we don’t put on, you know, somewhat of a dog and pony show, if we don’t be exciting for our kids, you know, some of them will go look for some excitement elsewhere, I guess.”

Speaker 3:

“Right. But I have an aging classroom, so I need to keep their attention on one thing and keep them engaged.”

Speaker 2:

“They’re doing it to please us. If I present it positively, you could do this, and we should. Let’s see if we can get many kids in the district this year, and they will buy into it. But, uh, we start our preparation in the summer and, uh, we have a, a, a summer district band clinic, uh, where we begin to get going on the scales and all that stuff. And it pays off mostly, not as much this year.”

Speaker 2:

"I am still determining what the difference was. Last year, we had 31 in the district band, and we had 16 in the region band, but that was my COVID band. I don't know how they were; it was just a weird band. They were just terrific. But yeah. So yeah, they try and please us. And if I go back to something I heard years ago, I wish it was my original statement. We've all heard this. Kids don't care what we don't, don't care what we know. They wanna know we care."

Speaker 2:

"And if we keep that in focus, some of them will walk on calls to please us."

Speaker 6:

"Well, these, these kids were my first year back from Covid Babies. They were in sixth grade. It was the first group of kids I had for three straight years. And so they knew precisely exactly what I wanted from them. But we've established such a great rapport. As a matter of fact, I started with 34 kids in sixth grade, and I have 29, so I didn't have that many. Many kids quit. You usually have at least a third to half, something like that, with attrition and stuff."

Speaker 6:

"So, these kids are stuck by me. We always love having a fun time. And, yeah, when I've taught to kids in the past, I'll tell them that, you know, you're doing a really good job on your instrument. You're an all-star, and it would be great to do this and try out for all-state for the district band. And it really did. But it is established that great rapport with them. And, uh, they love coming in the band. It's their favorite time of the day."

Moderator

"Yeah. Uh, [William], do you find that many of the kids now want to be approached by us and say, " Hey, you know, you're a good trumpet player. You should. " Are you finding that in your teaching, your experience?"

Speaker 4:

"I mean, to a certain degree. When you see a talented kid and bring them off to the side, you think, " Hey, you got a lot of potential here. You really should, you know, give this a real shot. " In my experience, the ones who have made all-state over the years, I at some point brought it to their attention and communicated with their parents, " Hey, you got a special kid here. " That's definitely true to a certain degree."

Topic: Parental Support for Auditions**Moderator**

"Okay. [Jeffrey], [Jeffrey], and [William] just talked about the parents' thing. Uh, are the parents of your band kids very engaged and support the honor band auditions? What do you see? What do you think?"

Speaker 5:

"Again, a mix. I see, you know, probably about 20% of the parents that are highly engaged and responding to, you know, either my emails or newsletters that are saying, you know, this is what your students that are trying out should be working on right now. And they'll ask questions about

it and follow up on things like that. Then, the majority are just, you know, unsubscribe. But yeah, the ones that make the district band for me or all-state, those parents are heavily engaged.”

Speaker 5:

“They’ve had, you know, older siblings already go through this process that understands the expectations. Ever since the sixth-grade concert, they see me recognizing the seventh and eighth graders and a massive pile of bodies standing up to be recognized for those events. And they also want their kid to be recognized for that next year. So when that info comes out, the parents tend to buy in. The ones that, that, uh, are really paying attention to it, that’s probably 20%. Okay.”

Topic: Student Perception of the All-State Band

Moderator

“The big thing I’m trying to figure out is the all-state event. The ones who’ve made all-state, is it what we expect it to be, what the kids think it will be? Or is it just, Hey, I went to this honor band. Is it, is it the immense hype, uh, Jim, what do you, what are you thinking?”

Speaker 3:

“Speaking for the one tuba player that I’ve had make it, you can put this in your survey. His dad was, and his dad made all-state onto Tuba down in [redacted] County whenever he was in high school. So, his parents were very involved and proud of him when he made it. And so, from his family alone, this was a big deal for them.”

Speaker 3:

“This kid and I really enjoyed the all-state event. You know, I tried to make a big deal of it in our newspaper, and we had a night at the board office where we recognized him, but because it was, I mean, his whole family came for the entire weekend, so this was a big deal for not just him but his family, too.”

Speaker 6:

“So, I had a student make it about 10 years ago. It was the only all-state player I had. It was also a tuba player. As a matter of fact, she sat between [redacted Meyer Rodin's son] and [redacted Matt Fuller's son] and the tuba section. So between two band directors, kids that tell you anything. Yeah. And then [redacted Brian Bimas] was the guest clinician, and I’ll be honest with you, it was, it was kind of like, it was, It was [redacted more of a] I was at a trade show watching this. This is who I am, [redacted Brian Balmages], and you’re going to play my music whether you like it or not.”

Speaker 6:

“It was all [redacted Balmages]. And so I was like, it’s like that old song. Is that all there is?”

Speaker 6:

“This week, they finally reached that pinnacle, and you think they’ll have somebody great to talk to about that stuff. And, they get this composer’s basically as hocking his wares to the kids, and that stuff. So, it was a different experience for me. And, uh, we have tried to replicate the honor band experience in our county. So before the pandemic, we would bring in people and include all of our kids from our three middle schools.”

Speaker 6:

“Having just an honor band experience shapes them and gets them excited about playing in band. Also, we would go to Auburn University to their honor band, and we had a blast doing that. The kids say, Hey, let’s go out state and have fun making music. We would have activities for them like that, which would be more exciting than shooting for that all-state goal.”

Topic: Is All-State still a huge accomplishment in the modern day?**Moderator**

“Okay. [REDACTED], again, with your experience, is all-state still the event of excitement and prestige now as it was before? Or how has it changed?”

Speaker 2:

“Oh, it’s definitely not the same. I’m not going to say better or worse. Uh, of course, we all know the prices have gone up beyond, I started in 1970, and it cost \$5 to try out for all-state. And it was a lot more of an athletic, almost musical competition. But it was a very macho thing to do back through the seventies, and it changed in the eighties, especially when Boyd McAlley stepped out of GMEA, and we’d been down our many paths.”

Speaker 2:

“But it’s still the thing to do if you’re going to excel on your instruments and show out. As a student, that’s a great place to showcase the region. Bands have certainly played their part in being an almost all-state. In fact, I’ve heard a couple of the region bands that played pretty well, equal to the all-state. So, there are options out there.”

Speaker 2:

“Various clinics like Troy are places kids could go for an even better experience outside all-state.”

Topic: Student Response Post All-State Experience**Moderator**

“When a kid comes back from all-state, are the first to talk about the experience musically, or are they talking about the new friend they made?”

Speaker 4:

“They’re blown away that the kids around them are so good. They’re just like it; it completely changes their perspective of what music can be, especially at the middle school level. And for the most part, they really enjoy it. And then, you know, there’s been years they brought some music back, and they’re like, oh, look at, see all the cool music that I learned. So, it’s been a positive experience for them, a mind-blowing experience for them.”

Speaker 5:

“Yeah, just like [REDACTED] said, it really depends 100% on the clinician they’ve had. If you’ve had multiple kids make all-state but in different bands, one kid can be bored to death just sitting there. In contrast, the, you know, Brian Balamage harps his own music, or they’re just working with this one section over and over and over again. You have another clinician who’s completely

engaging and energetic. Once they get there, it depends on the clinician, their attitude, and their teaching. But as far as the prestige of getting to that point, at least in middle school, they're still excited."

Speaker 5:

"Some may have been burned by the time they got to high school. They're like, "I've gone for three years now, and I've had boring clinicians every time. "So it's a hundred percent dependent on the personality and teaching style of the clinicians."

Topic: Clinician Influence

Moderator

"That's what I was thinking as well. Now, [James], let me throw this one to you. With the kids going to the honor bands, did they come back wanting to play [Brian Bowman's] music? Or did they say, "I've had enough. I never want to play his music?" What was their attitude?"

Speaker 6:

"The young, the young lady who played that? It wasn't, I don't think it was, uh, she was excited to come back and tell everybody's stories and stuff, but it wasn't like she was like, well, we really need to play this [Brian Balmages] just piece or anything like that. As a matter of fact, [Brian Balmages] just, I was, as a composer, trying to get in with [Brian A.] a little bit, but he was really off putting and so funny story. She dropped her tube of the mouthpiece on the stage, and we lost it. I am still determining where it's at."

Speaker 6:

"It's still in Savannah, backstage at the Johnny Mercer Theater. But I went there, and [Shauna Locklin] and I had a great conversation there. I was like, man, I was. I was just happy to get to meet [Sean Locklin]. He was so great to talk to and stuff like that in the past; I've commissioned pieces from different composers and had the composers interact with the kids. And for the kids, that's the better part of it. They really enjoy getting to interact with the kids."

Speaker 6:

"But as far as what that experience was like at all-state state, it didn't bother me. She didn't really come back saying a whole bunch of things about [Brian Balmages]."

Speaker 5:

"Try to replicate that at the district level and get composers to commission projects for each grade level, every two years. So, sometime in the kids' experience between seventh and 12th grade, they will have had the opportunity at district to play for a composer. And we reach out to other folks who have had them as clinicians. We've had [Brian Balmages]. And so if anybody ever asks us, we'll say, don't do it, but, you know, we'll try and do that research as we got the same kind of attitude even at the district level from him."

Speaker 5:

"But we'll do that every two years with composers whose music we know. We've heard they have had successful experiences with honor bands."

Schedules

Moderator

“Uh, the next thing I’m thinking about is your schedule. All of you had about 40- 45 minutes in your classes, your first section and second section. If you had more time, would you focus more on the fundamentals, like scales, long tones, and technical stuff? Or what would you do if, if you say your time was, you had one hour and a total of 60 minutes? What would you add in that time, that extra time?”

Speaker 2:

“On a good day, if I had an extra 15 or 20 minutes, I’d spend it on fundamentals, and that would be it. Right now, we have to split time and do our best to cover all bases, as we all do. But if we had more time, like 90 minutes, if we had the block scheduling time, that would be a game changer.”

Speaker 2:

“But, you know, we put together what we can. We want more time. but as long as the kids have to go to the bathroom, we won’t get less time.”

Speaker 3:

“I’m, I’m 40 minutes as well, and, if I had, if I had more time, I would definitely do more in my warmup in my fundamental times that correlated with something going on in the pieces that we’re, that we’re playing. I’m starting to do that during the prep, concert prep, where we’re just figuring out how to play lyrical. And so I’ll do more corral, with some, you know, with some extra time or, you know, more of that style of playing.”

Speaker 3:

“If I had more, I would do more during my fundamentals time, which would help translate to the concert music.”

Moderator

“Okay. James, you did something really cool. You liked the rhythm of the day on your board. Would you expand more on the rhythm of the day to make more, I guess just digging in more rhythmic things, or however you wanna say it, would you spend more time on the rhythms?”

Speaker 6:

“Yeah. A long time ago, when you used to go over to the Schrock Invitational back in those old days? Yeah. I met with Michael Hutchinson from Savannah Arts Academy and I said, Michael, how do you get your kids to play rhythms? So well? He is like, man, I use some different things, but I use that rhythms and rest by Frank Erickson and the Rhythms and Rest book. When I used it at West Lawrence back in the old days, and when I got to use it finally with my students last year, I just started really incorporating it into my routine, even though I had, at the time last year, 40 minutes this year.”

Speaker 6:

“If I had that extra time, I would incorporate that treasury of scales. I know it’s old, but boy, does it work.”

Speaker 6:

“It’s just such a beautiful thing to use. And I would incorporate that within at least 15 or 20 minutes. But, like I said, my administrators and my administrators are amazed. They’re like, wow, you can do multilayered stuff within your lesson. I have to because I’m, we’re, we’re all trying to make, you know, try to kill three or four birds with one stone at this point, just trying to make that work. And so I multilayer that with doing stuff like that.”

Topic: Additional Instructional Time/ Use of Assistants**Moderator**

“**William**, You have an assistant that you work with and delegate things to. If you had more time, would you delegate something additional to that person and if you had the time. What would you do differently?”

Speaker 4:

“We’ve done all kinds of different formats. Sometimes, I’ll send him all the woodwinds, and he’ll work with them during that time, and I can focus on the brass stuff. Of course, we have a separate percussion class, but we’re pulling sections and working with them on sectionals for that particular time. Now, the day you came was what we call a long day. And so that was two of our regular classes put together. as far as time goes. So, on those particular days, I have them pull more often, even if it’s testing small groups.”

Moderator

“**Tera**, you’ve got three band directors. If you had more time, what would you try to do knowing that you have the most experience and the other two are brand new teachers? What would you do with the extra time? Would you work with them or work with the kids?”

Speaker 2:

“Always work with the kids.”

Speaker 2:

“If we have to, if we have to work something out, they’re two young teachers, but they’re, I, I tell them they’re, they’re, they’re old folks in a young body. They have an excellent feel for what they’re doing. So if we have to have any faculty meetings coming to the meeting of the mind, we do it after or in the morning before school. Uh, but we’re always with the kids.”

Topic: Consistency of Sightreading Practice Beyond Audition Prep Window**Moderator**

“So, this leads me to my next thing. **Bob**. You did some sightreading when I visited you. Are we trying to teach so much of our LGPE music that we must remember about site reading? Thoughts? Anybody?”

Speaker 4:

“I always read.”

Speaker 2:

“It's you; you teach sight reading daily when you teach your classes. And all we have to do to get close to LGPE is do the application and the process. We do that, uh, rhythms and, uh, we and everything that you guys do. And so I don't worry about site reading till about a week before. We go through the process. And, uh, they've always done pretty good on it. So, if we're doing quality teaching, like we are, all of us are on the line here.”

Speaker 2:

“We know where to lead our kids, scale-wise, attitude-wise, and rhythm-wise. It all comes together if we're careful, and the kids usually make us proud.”

Moderator

“Uh, [Villan], what are your thoughts? You know, just thinking about you. You mentioned you had that big class about sitting. What do you think?”

Speaker 4:

“Well, it depends on the time of the year. For example, we're prepping for LGPE and trying to negotiate all the after-school rehearsals. I would instead teach concepts during the class and then do more of the actual LGPE stage performance stuff after school. I could always better prepare them for sight reading by the time we get on stage at the LGPE course. I know you're studying all-state stuff.”

Speaker 4:

“Yeah. But, you know, if, if I lose time and I feel like I'm, I'm, there's a crunch trying to teach them to a particular, you know, three, three or four charts for the stage, and I'm, you know, I picked a level three or four-piece. Sometimes, I'm necessarily road teaching that piece, but I'm doing the piece instead of working on the process. Like, I could do a better job of teaching, you know, rhythms, rhythms each day out of the book or that sort of thing.”

Speaker 4:

“So that's where I am, honestly.”

Topic: Balancing Out the Strong Musicians and the Weaker Musicians**Moderator**

“So, [Villan], let me ask this. Do you sometimes cater to your better, more vital musicians, and we inadvertently lose touch with the others? Or do you try to do a fair balance without talking about it, like the time working up in the fall, learning scales, and, you know, trying to get some kids prepared? What do you do? How do you find the balance?”

Speaker 4:

“It's a daily effort for all the kids in the class to learn scales, rhythms, and sight reading. The expectation is blanket for the entire class. What usually happens is that the stronger students follow the weaker students. And it's easier to determine how much the weaker students are learning if you're digging in and assessing all the students.”

Speaker 6:

“Yeah, I would, at the beginning of the year, what I ended up doing as far as incorporating a site reading element into my, in my day is that I would use them Frank Ticheli, uh, band method, the making music matter that he and Greg Rogers put together. And so the cool part is, after, at the bottom of each lesson that you’re basically Ticheli wrote a full band arrangement. So you get 24 band arrangements by Ticheli. And so it teaches them how to listen to Ticheli’s music. That’s really helped us with our site rating skills.”

Speaker 6:

“And then, of course, we bought the old RBC, which they last used long ago.. uh, at LGPE for site rating. And we’ve, but we only do that like the last, you know, two weeks before LGPE and stuff like that. But, during the fall, I incorporated the Ticheli book, book one, with my seventh and eighth graders book two. And that’s been our sight reading element for all that.”

Topic: High School Director and Post Middle School Abilities

“So, talking about the scales, and we’re getting to the end here. Uh, are your high school directors appreciative that you have spent the time teaching at least those four scales?”

Speaker 3:

“I definitely appreciate them knowing their four scales. My eighth graders by the end of their eighth-grade year, we’ve started going over some of the nine 10-scales. So yes, he appreciates knowing those skills, you know, and then there’s always going to be those few that, when they get to high school, act like they’ve never seen a scale before.”

Speaker 5:

“Yeah, they, uh, in fact, that group you saw the eighth grade, they were playing the ninth and 10th-grade scales, you know, even if the extra four were just one octave, they’re playing the middle school scales. They’re two octave or one octave twice. So the two-octave kids can practice both octaves and then everything after F,B flat, E flat, A flat that only makes them and grades them on one octave. They’ll do eight scales by the end of seventh grade. By the end of eighth grade, they’ll do all twelve. So they’ll practice all those key signatures.”

Speaker 6:

“Yeah, same thing. In the past, like I said, pre-pandemic, we had everybody playing the all-state scales as it was, whether regardless of instrument, you know, we do the four, definitely the four scales by LGPE, and then we start expanding it from there. I only really expanded for one year; I did Jonathan Dae’s piece that was in the key of concert C. So we learned concert C and just for that piece and stuff like that. Because, you know, I like Canadian stuff, and they want to go in weird keys, but, anyway, I only do it from there like that.”

Moderator

“And I know a couple of you, uh, when you were playing the scales, you asked Hey, such and such a piece, what scale is that? or you said, Hey, we’re about to play this scale. What piece, or does this scale? With the scales, do you push different scales based on the music you’re programming?”

Speaker 2:

“If we’re playing a piece, it’s scale or key. That’s different from the guides given four or the next four. We learn that scale. So they can’t have a sense of tonality, but, uh, you know, usually we’re pretty conservative. Where we are with our programming, the country, and some kids walking slowly and talking funny.”

Topic: Desired Changes to the All-State Audition Process**Moderator**

“If you could change something about the Georgia All-State audition process, what would it be?”

Speaker 2:

“Lower the cost. We should be out of debt, but they, you know, raised the cost to get out of debt 30 years ago, and they said, well, we got caught up, we’d lower it back. But that doesn’t happen. But, make it more encouraging, and what encourages the kids? Because many kids pay their own way when they try out for all-state. Some of us directors talking tonight, we subsidize a lot of them our kids, if not all of them.”

Speaker 2:

“And, uh, so they have a chance. But there’s a lot of country folks that the kids pay that 25, 35, 45 if they’re trying out for all the various possibilities. So, lowering the cost and being more encouraging, from the state side of things, **JMEA** is not nearly what it was 35 years ago. I’m not a **JMEA** fan, and most people who know me, I’m just not. They lost; I think they lost the mark many years ago.”

Speaker 6:

“Well, I mean, we put all, we, they’re, they’re, you’re asking these kids to almost play. Like think about what you did when you went for your college audition. We’re almost at that point now, and these kids are playing at such a level. I thought about it; I didn’t even play some of it. The playing, they’re playing. I even played the things in college. Yeah. I mean, I, I just thought about that. I went to **Georgia Southern**, and we were lucky to play something like grade five, maybe a six, if we were lucky. I don’t know.”

Speaker 6:

“And we devised an idea for a north region honor band thing. It’s a similar thing. A lot of our kids get left out of the process once they make the first round, and then they don’t make the second round. And they need to be included in the process. And it’s up to us to have that honor band. The honor band concept can be a fantastic, excellent teaching tool for our kids, and I would love to be able to make it wherever I’ve been. I try to make some honor band concepts there for the kids so they get more out of what they’re learning and stuff from what they get in school. But in an honor band setting.”

Speaker 4:

“Yeah, I totally agree. The region’s honor band in **South Georgia** has been terrific in alleviating some of that. I’ll be honest with you, the competition at the all-state level is so crazy. Like the

poor judges, the trombone judges a hundred and, what was it, 170 kids, and, and you know, the minimum score is still 70. You know, that's I know the kids I've got that have a shot at all-state; it's not going to be anybody that usually scored less than 80 in the first round."

Speaker 4:

"Yeah. So what are they doing to themselves in that matter? And, to be realistic, with a competition with the [South Georgia District], two folks who get in every now and then, we must have another excellent honor band experience, like the region honor band. Uh, for our kids."

Speaker 5:

"After year 21 of judging this, it really comes down to what's on that rubric and how we teach it in class. The rubric is designed to get as many bodies through that audition in one day, but teaching a kid how to earn points on that rubric does need to be more specific. You know, you can't just say interpretation. Well, understand how you are talking about shaping phrases."

Speaker 5:

"Are you talking about interpreting articulations that aren't necessarily printed on paper? You know, and of course, judging that, it is nearly impossible to make that rubric any more intense. But how do we teach that rubric to our kids, and how do they approach it, even from a site reading standpoint?"

Speaker 3:

"I've enjoyed the public domain etudes. I appreciate that they've helped my kids learn them; it has been better for them and me. But I don't have much. I've never had to judge the second round, so I'll defer to someone else."

Speaker 4:

"What do you think about the change in the site reading requirement this year? So it's just like one site reading as opposed to..."

Speaker 5:

"As opposed to, you know, two as in the past, that was trickier to prepare my kids for, you know, trying to relate it more to how we would site read a concert piece that we do try to do a ton of, and that you're going to have a technical section, you're going to have a lyrical section that might even have a key change in a style. You know, you have to be prepared for that mentally. Where in the past the kid could sit down, I'm in a technical frame of mind, I'm articulating this way now I'm in a lyrical frame of mind. So, that was a gear shift, but from a teaching standpoint, that helped prepare my kids more for how we're sight reading in class anyway."

Speaker 5:

"Because you're going to see those things in many different types of pieces with many other styles."

Appendix P: Doctoral Thesis Defense Decision

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
Michael Christopher Harper
on the Thesis
Commonalities in Teaching Strategies Among Middle School Band Directors for Individuals
Auditioning for the Georgia All-State Band
as submitted on April 19, 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.

<div></div>	<div></div>	4/19/24
Print Name of Advisor	Signature	Date
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Print Name of Reader	Signature	Date