

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**A Qualitative Descriptive Study of Enrollment and Retention Trends in Mid-Sized
Pennsylvania Rural Band Programs**

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by

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ABSTRACT

Despite many differences across Pennsylvania's rural school districts, band programs face similar recruitment, retention, and matriculation challenges. Rural school districts in Pennsylvania account for 235 of the 499 school districts in Pennsylvania while educating less than 20 percent of the student population in the state. In addition, rural districts often lack the community infrastructure many urban and suburban school districts possess, creating a unique set of circumstances affecting all aspects of programming, including band programs. While rural communities continue to experience a decline in enrollment, many have had, or currently have, successful band programs while overcoming many obstacles that affect enrollment in these programs. Through this qualitative and descriptive research, data regarding retention and recruitment trends affecting mid-sized rural Pennsylvania high school bands will be gathered and used to develop a comprehensive understanding of what factors affect student enrollment and from middle school to high school. In addition, data will be extrapolated regarding influences on a student's decision to continue within a band program and the band director's perception of the rural program. The goal of this study will be to develop strategies to counteract any negative affects on a band programs in Pennsylvania school districts with rural demographics to aid directors in creating a culture and building a band program that will allow for success, regardless of the population size and socioeconomic makeup of the student body within the school.

DEDICATION / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My research study is dedicated to all the students who have the fortune of being part of a rural school community and, more specifically, the music programs in these rural schools.

While many of these students move on and are no longer part of a band program after high school, knowing that they have strong memories and learned a love of music through their time in band is gift enough in itself.

Thank you to the numerous educators who have shaped me into the music educator I am today. To my many colleagues in my district and surrounding districts, thank you for continuing to work day in and day out to grow and strengthen music in our rural communities.

Thank you to Dr. Karen Kuehmann, Dr. Stephen Kerr, and Dr. Kathryn Wert for your grace and guidance as I navigated through this process and tackled many challenges. Your continued support and insight through review have been helpful throughout this process.

I am forever grateful to my family, who have stood beside me through this journey. Their continuous love and support along this journey have kept my head up as I worked and is especially evident in the support of my wife, Elise, for continuing to allow me the opportunities to grow as a music educator. Without you, I would not be who I am today.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Rural school districts throughout the United States suffer from, and flourish through, the many unique challenges they face. Historically, the model of rural education was formed in the 1950s by consolidating one-room schools, which often graduated students in eighth grade into the adult workforce.¹ While consolidation of one-room schools into larger regional school districts significantly changed the rural education landscape, it created unique challenges compared to urban and suburban districts.

Often, students in rural schools come from multigenerational families, with many older family members being working-class adults. As a result, many families do not have postsecondary education experience, resulting in a familial and socioeconomic divide compared to similar families in suburban and urban environments.² While core subject educators may face many challenges in rural school settings, music educators face an even more unique challenge for the instrumental music classroom due to the unique nature of these specific educational programming opportunities. Additionally, as opportunities for students become more prevalent with the move from elementary to secondary schools, students often have to choose between maintaining enrollment in a band program and moving in a different direction based on interest and career paths.³

¹ Daryl Hobbs, "Rural Education: The Problems and Potential of Smallness," *The High School Journal* 64, no. 7 (April 1981): 292.

² Ibid, 293.

³ Ibid, 295.

As educational researcher Ted Dintersmith stated, "America's clock is ticking. Our archaic education model trains kids for a world that no longer exists."⁴ Dintersmith's statement also addressed music programs directly. As schools and society continue to evolve, band programs must stay relevant and remain an important part of the school community and an essential element in a student's life. While core material used as a basis for music education has mostly stayed the same for many years, the process by which educators provide instruction in this content must evolve to ensure adequate student participation and engagement.

Statement of Problem

Pennsylvania currently has 499 public school districts, of which 235 are classified as rural communities. While 47 percent of school districts in the state are classified as rural, only 23.8 percent of the student population in the state attend these schools. Rural communities account for only 3.4 million of the state's 12.8 million residents.⁵ Since 2010, rural schools have experienced a continued decline exceeding an average of 10 percent statewide. Through this research, a determination regarding the effect of this decline will be explored. Some of this decline may be observed via live performance, where smaller numbers of students are immediately evident to everyone in attendance.

From the consolidation of community schools in the mid-1950s through the early 1990s, schools developed few new student opportunities. Since then, opportunities for students have grown exponentially. In Pennsylvania alone, a growth of interscholastic sports and activities has continued, with the introduction of ice hockey, lacrosse, and now unified sports in partnership

⁴ Ted Dintersmith, *What Schools Could Be: Insights and Inspiration from Teachers* (Princeton University Press, 2018), 12.

⁵ "Rural Quick Facts," *Center for Rural Pennsylvania*, last modified 2014, accessed February 1, 2021, https://www.rural.palegislature.us/demographics_about_rural_pa.html.

with the Special Olympics. While these opportunities are precious for students and their successes, it becomes increasingly difficult to participate in multiple activities. As a result, students often have to choose which programs to excel in instead of struggling with many. While a common issue in many district, it may be more apparent when exploring the many rural schools with smaller populations.

In Pennsylvania, band programs have historic roots spanning the 499 school districts. Many programs have second and third-generation students in the school district, so they are often second and third-generation band students. The influence of families who were part of the program may be explored as part of the community involvement and the perception of the value of the band program. The primary sources of a program's perception are the students and, ultimately, the perception of the band director on what is or is not working within his or her specific program.⁶

Pennsylvania is a state that provides local control to the 499 school districts. While schools must adhere to state standards and many unfunded mandates, flexibility and leeway may exist within programs to allow individualized plans. Each school district may provide its own programming within the very loose framework that the state of Pennsylvania and the Department of Education offer. While each school district can operate independently, directors may desire to find common ground on items affecting multiple programs.

⁶ Jonathan G. Schaller, "The Hometown Band Director: An Autoethnographic Study on the Needs of Rural High School Instrumental Music Educators," *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (M.M., Duquesne University, 2016), 27, accessed November 9, 2020, <http://search.proquest.com/education/docview/1834583301/abstract/BAF08FFC4E46471BPQ/1>.

Statement of Purpose

The intent of this research is to provide high school band directors in rural Pennsylvania with data and recommendations to continue to build on the enrollment and retention of students in their programs so that all directors may see varying levels of success. To better define the purpose of this study and the outcome, the focus will be on mid-sized rural district in Pennsylvania. Not all school districts provide traditional ensemble offerings within a music education curriculum as defined by the National Association for Music Education. Therefore, the focus of the study will be on rural schools that offer a comprehensive band program beginning at the elementary level and continuing through high school. Although not all programs offer the same levels of rigor within the framework of a traditional band ensemble setting, directors may be faced with similar challenges and may have similar strategies.

The goal of this study will be to evaluate trends within programs and strategies to mitigate negative trends within a program based on successful rural band programs throughout Pennsylvania. Data will be collected through qualitative research, and a list of valuable tools and commonalities within successful rural programs will be assembled to provide a toolkit that directors may use to continue matriculating more significant percentages of middle school students into high school programs. The many influences affecting enrollment and retention may be vast, but may also be focused based on community and school district influences within a band program.⁷ These tools may be used to continue advocating for each band program within the school district as well as with the outside community.

⁷ Linda A. Hartley, "Influence of Starting Grade and School Organization on Enrollment and Retention in Beginning Instrumental Music," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 44, no. 4 (December 1996): 307.

Significance of the Study

Music programs in many rural districts have had significant successes historically, while some need help to continue with these trends. Educators in rural schools are often located at a greater distance from colleagues in other districts or collegiate-level programs and, as a result, are often left to work independently. As a result, some educators may need to develop a robust toolkit to ensure student success and provide as many opportunities for program retention as possible. Qualitative and descriptive data collected through this study may provide insight into rural programs throughout Pennsylvania so that directors may see that there are common challenges faced and potential solutions in similar programs.

Research Questions

Educators must have a common toolkit to develop a robust instrumental music education program. Therefore, this research is intended to find solutions to the following research questions.

1. What do high school band directors perceive as internal and external influences affecting enrollment trends within individual band programs?
2. How have the perceived internal and external influences affected enrollment and retention within high school band programs?
3. What strategies have directors used to counter the adverse effects of perceived internal and external influences on individual band programs?

The three research questions are designed to correlate the commonalities among mid-sized rural Pennsylvania high school band programs and provide perception from the band director's perspective.

Hypotheses

Band directors must recognize that many factors may be found to influence these specific questions. Therefore, in answering in these questions, it is advantageous to address each individually.

Hypothesis 1: Rural school band directors often attribute additional sports offerings, extracurricular programming, curricular demands, and the desire and need for students to maintain a job as a source of income as the most significant elements affecting the decision to continue in a band program.

As data is collected, hypothesis 1 may be explored further with detailed research into the various aspects of a rural school district's structure. For example, per-pupil spending in rural districts has historically been significantly higher to maintain the expected level of education when compared to a suburban or urban program. As ensemble offerings such as band are optional in school programs, it becomes an additional challenge for directors to ensure additional funding beyond the already higher per-pupil spending can be secured for a band program to function correctly.⁸ A school district's history and philosophy, as well as the community support of the various programs both in the music program and beyond, may be beneficial to a band program specifically and its successes.

Extracurricular offerings beyond band may positively or negatively affect enrollment in an extracurricular band program in several ways. In Pennsylvania, students are provided a wealth of athletic and non-athletic options, many of which are sanctioned through the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.⁹ Second, the school district student population affects band

⁸ Martelle L. Cushman, "The Reality of Rural Education," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 36, no. 1 (1954): 5.

⁹ "PIAA - Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association," accessed March 25, 2024, <https://www.piaa.org/>.

enrollment, and as a result, a smaller population of students can make it more difficult to support added extracurricular music offerings within a program adequately and successfully.

Additionally, the rigor of extracurricular programs should be a focus when developing a program, as a program that is too rigorous may drive away potential students who may need to be more committed to the activities.¹⁰ Finally, a director must be aware of the culture within the band program. The internal culture developed by band directors may externally affect the view of a program.¹¹

Hypothesis 2: Band programs may have experienced adverse effects caused by perceived internal and external influences affecting retention within programs.

Numerous influences may affect student retention in rural band programs including students who are enrolled in specific courses or students who need to hold jobs outside the school day to support themselves or their families. The COVID-19 pandemic may have also exacerbated these challenges but have since been countered as many communities are no longer facing COVID restrictions.

Hypothesis 3: The development of a strong culture of excellence and rapport with students in band programs may aid directors in avoiding retention challenges within a band program.

When looking at the future successes of a band program, it may be essential to look at the community and the historic nature of a program. For many directors, it may be far easier to continue to build on successes that happened in the past when compared to building a program

¹⁰ Richard Miles, "Instrumentation: A 'Sound' Priority," in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band*, vol. 9 (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2013), 98.

¹¹ John Clinton, *Administrative Leadership in Music Education* (Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc., 2015), 135.

from the ground up.¹² Many rural school districts have second and third-generation students, so this culture may significantly assist in creating additional success within a music program.¹³ Successes may take many forms, including culturally relevant ensembles and repertoire or providing appropriate community engagement opportunities. A successful view of a program may help a program continue to grow within a school district and community.¹⁴ Even rural schools with programs that may not be considered historically strong may benefit from this research as it may aid directors in decision-making when building their respective programs.

Research Plan

The research plan consists of three parts. First, research must be conducted to examine the available literature regarding rural music programs and their unique challenges historically. This research will guide the initial qualitative research component as the gaps in literature are identified.

Qualitative research was conducted, exploring historical data provided by band directors. Many successful programs throughout Pennsylvania have a rich history, and this history is essential in recognizing what worked for a program in the past. Research on school district enrollment trends and both curricular and extracurricular band programs within schools was collected as part of this data collection. The focus of this study was on mid-sized rural Pennsylvania schools. As many schools are classified as rural, the criteria for selection were

¹² Hartley, "Influence of Starting Grade and School Organization on Enrollment and Retention in Beginning Instrumental Music," 313.

¹³ Tim Lautzenheiser, "The Band Director as a Leader," in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band*, vol. 3 (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2000), 110.

¹⁴ Amy Cox-Petersen, *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community* (California: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2011), 165.

focused on midsized rural districts with 1500-3000 students K-12, using the enrollment data reports from the Pennsylvania Department of Education to allow for fewer variables between districts in the study.

A survey was sent to band directors identified by the size criteria, focusing on schedule within the district, enrollment within the band program at secondary levels, ensemble offerings, and descriptive data focusing on concerns and trends a director may see within their band program.

To provide more qualitative and descriptive data, the second element of this study was interviews with 60 percent of the directors who completed the survey to provide additional information otherwise not provided within the initial survey. The survey was used to guide discussions with the directors and to provide an opportunity for band directors to share their perceptions on what is affecting student enrollment and student retention within their band programs. Additionally, it allowed a director to share the strategies used to mitigate any declining enrollment or matriculation trends within the program, allowing directors to share the perception of the school community and the support received within the community, as differences may be noted in different geographic regions of Pennsylvania.

Core Concepts

The first concept to be addressed by this research is to establish the criteria that classify a school district as rural in Pennsylvania. The population per square mile formula was developed to define a Pennsylvania rural community or school district. Pennsylvania currently has 12,702,379 residents and 44,743 square miles of the state, resulting in a population density of

284 people per square mile.¹⁵ The definition of a rural community in Pennsylvania is any community with a population below the state average per square mile, resulting in the state classifying 235 school districts as rural. Figure 1 shows the geographic location of the rural school districts in Pennsylvania. It may appear that rural districts are more prevalent than non-rural districts. However, the non-rural districts are centered around the more populous regions of the state.

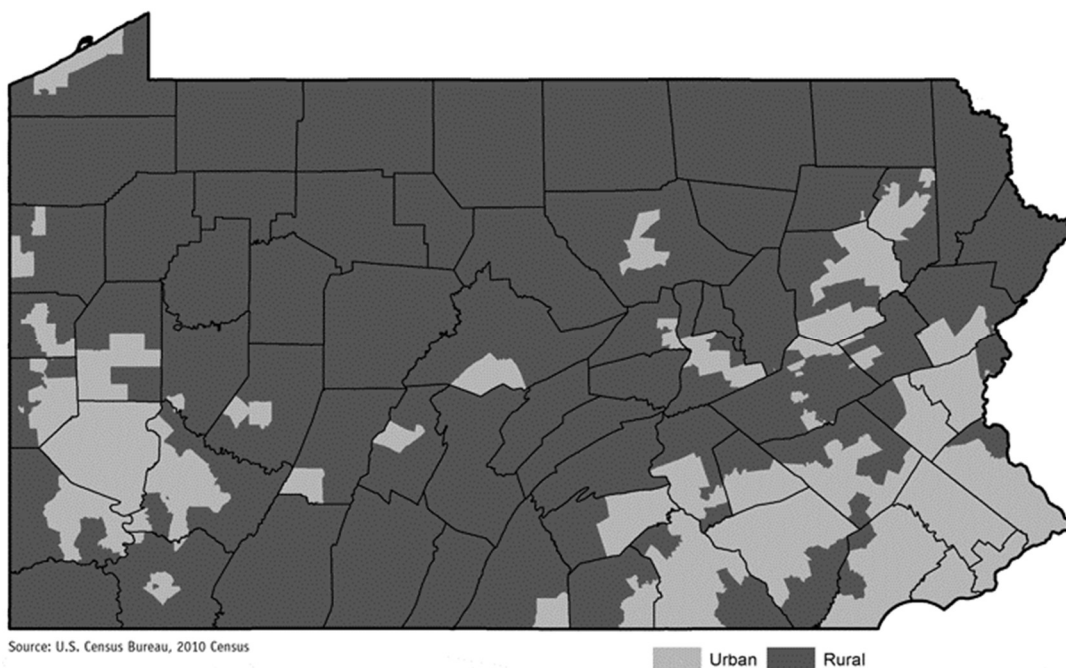


Figure 1: Rural Pennsylvania School Districts¹⁶

The broader definition of rural schools will be narrowed to further focus on this data. At the start of the 2023-2024 school year, Pennsylvania's smallest rural school district was the Austin Area School District in the north-central part of Pennsylvania. The district's 2023-2024

¹⁵ "Rural Quick Facts."

¹⁶ Ibid.

enrollment was 190 students K-12. The largest district classified as rural was the Mifflin County School District, located in central Pennsylvania, with an enrollment of 5300 students. With such a wide range of student enrollment, this study will focus on rural school districts with a minimum of 1750 students K-12 but no more than 3000 students K-12, which will allow for more depth of exploration within the midsized rural districts in the state, as several variables will be similar among these districts concerning their structure and operation. Additionally, districts with much lower or higher populations than midsized districts may yield results that will likely vary significantly, either due to a lack of resources in smaller districts or the wealth of resources in larger districts compared to midsized districts.

Within the school districts included in this study, it is essential to clarify what rural music education includes, such as curricular ensembles, general music courses, and extracurricular offerings for students.¹⁷ This can consist of programs within a district and the course of study outside of ensembles and extracurricular programs within school districts.

A broader understanding of a school's schedule will be an essential concept to explore as each is generally quite different. For example, some programs operate on traditional 7-8 period school days, some operate in block scheduling, and some operate in a hybrid form of traditional and block scheduling.¹⁸ These various schedules provide advantages and disadvantages to music programs. These various scheduling options may correlate with the director's perception of these schedules and how they affect their programs.

¹⁷ Isbell, "Music Education in Rural Areas," 31.

¹⁸ Sally J. Zepeda and R. Stewart Mayers, "An Analysis of Research on Block Scheduling," *Review of Educational Research* 76, no. 1 (2006): 137.

The descriptive research will attempt to address outside influences, including community infrastructure and the socioeconomic needs of students, which may differ from larger communities.¹⁹ Rural communities are often challenged by a lack of high school internet for twenty-first-century learning opportunities. The socioeconomic impact on students in rural communities may affect students and their families. While each of these items may have a solution, they affect a student's ability to participate and excel in music programs within a district.

A community plays a significant role in a band program. Often, these programs have historical value, and families may have been involved for many years and even several generations. This impact and this perception are crucial as it recognizes the importance of a band program having ongoing support in the school and within the community.²⁰

Definition of Terms

- *Twenty-First-Century Learning*: core concepts of collaboration, digital literacy, critical thinking, and problem-solving needed to succeed and thrive today.²¹
- *Block Scheduling*: extended periods with fewer courses per day per student. May be a rotating A/B schedule or quarter/semester course lengths.
- *Co-curricular Ensemble*: ensemble offerings with rehearsals both during the school day as well as outside the school day but providing course credit.

¹⁹ Hobbs, "Rural Education: The Problems and Potential of Smallness," 293.

²⁰ Edward McClellan, "Relationships among Parental Influences, Selected Demographic Factors, Adolescent Self-Concept as a Future Music Educator, and the Decision to Major in Music Education," *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* Winter 2011, no. 187 (2011): 50.

²¹ Elizabeth Rich, "How Do You Define 21st-Century Learning?," *Education Week*, October 11, 2010, sec. College & Workforce Readiness, accessed February 28, 2021, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/how-do-you-define-21st-century-learning/2010/10>.

- *Curricular Ensemble*: Ensembles offered for course credit during the school day.
- *Extracurricular Ensemble*: Ensembles offered for no course credit and take place outside the school day.
- *Rural Pennsylvania School District*: A school district with a population of less than 284 per square mile.²²
- *Socioeconomic Status*: The overall measure of economic and sociological influences on individuals.²³

Chapter Summary

The objective of this study is to provide a broader understanding of the state of rural high school band programs throughout Pennsylvania, focusing on school districts in the mid-sized rural category of 1750-3000 students enrolled in grades K-12 and providing insight into the various elements that directly and indirectly affect band programs within these rural districts. Geographically, Pennsylvania is primarily rural with pockets of urban centers, as shown in Figure 1. With approximately half of the school districts classified as rural, it is essential to find the successful trends for band directors and their programs and find common challenges these directors face.

Exploring the perceptions and potential solutions that may ultimately help band programs succeed in their respective school districts is vital for music education in midsized rural communities. This study is designed to understand common trends band programs are facing and develop potential solutions to provide program success. Data is often collected on band programs

²² “Rural Quick Facts.”

²³ Daniel J. Albert, “Strategies for the Recruitment and Retention of Band Students in Low Socioeconomic School Districts,” *Contributions to Music Education* 33, no. 2 (2006): 54.

and their directors, but the actual perceptions of those leading the program should be more generally addressed. This study seeks to collect qualitative data and, upon completing the analysis of the data, describe the current status of mid-sized rural band programs with an emphasis on developing strategies to improve student enrollment and retention.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview

The literature review will explore existing research regarding high school band programs historically and delve into the many factors unique to rural school programs compared to urban and suburban programs. Existing research must be reviewed to find the missing gaps in literature in order to answer the question of what factors affect rural band programs and student retention from middle to high school and how these may be counteracted. This is accomplished in four sections. The first section will describe what is a school band program. The second section will explore the pedagogical process for music education. The third section will examine rural schools and music programs. The fourth and final section will explore advocacy within music education.

The Gap in Literature

Much research has been completed on the history of school band programs, the specifics of rural school programs in a generalized capacity, and retention strategies for music education. There has yet to be any founded research on the retention strategies specifically for rural school band programs related to the outside influences students and programs face, including curricular offerings, extracurricular offerings, and offerings outside the school system. This study intends to fill the gaps where research is currently missing, linking the previously mentioned topics of historical data, rural school programs, and program retention and recruitment trends. No research studies exist to address the specific connections. The research studies used in this literature review will help develop meaningful connections and a list of trends affecting programs so that directors may use this data to advocate for their programs. In addition, no research study has

surveyed band directors within the rural Pennsylvania school system to determine their internal struggles.

School Band Programs

Music has been a part of the school curriculum throughout the United States since the inception of the modern school system, and approaching the twentieth century, it became a much more clarified and systematic educational program with the reform of schools.²⁴ William Lee, in an article describing the turn of the twentieth-century school reform, stated:

Though music was used as a tool of social amelioration earlier in the nineteenth century, it received greater attention with the rise of the social reform movement toward the end of the century. Social reformers began taking an intellectual interest in the relationship of the arts to social theory and reform and looking for practical applications.

While the *Norton/Grove Concise Encyclopedia of Music* defines the band as “an instrumental ensemble,” the more modern form has dramatically increased.²⁵ This is evident in schools with multiple large ensemble offerings and diverse offerings, including percussion ensembles, chamber ensembles, and the modern band ensemble in recent years. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* builds on the previous definition, stating that a band is “larger than a chamber ensemble” and refers to groups including brass, woodwinds, percussion, and only in some circumstances using string, accordions, and other instruments.²⁶ The definition provided is

²⁴ William R. Lee, “Music Education and Rural Reform, 1900-1925,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 45, no. 2 (1997): 306.

²⁵ Stanley Sadie, “Band,” in *The Norton/Grove Concise Encyclopedia of Music* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1988), 54.

²⁶ Stanley Sadie, “Band,” in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1980), 106.

not specific to exacting instrumentation or ability but is a broader definition that can be developed within individual programs.

What had once been a system of teaching individual instruments primarily in the orchestral idiom became a more cohesive ensemble experience focused on winds and percussion for students.²⁷ School band development mirrored the development of community and military band ensembles such as the United States Marine Band under the direction of John Philip Sousa.²⁸ The challenge of these early band programs was a need for appropriate modern repertoire. Most of the repertoire performed by these ensembles included transcriptions of orchestral works and marches.²⁹ While this repertoire is valuable and essential in the history of music education, it created limitations within ensembles as string parts are not easily transcribed to various wind instruments due to the techniques and limitations of the instrument.

How these orchestral works and marches are perceived and taught in programs where non-standard instrumentation or lack of resources affect what occurs within the classroom must be addressed. The United States Marine Band President's Own is a traditional concert ensemble comprising some of the world's best musicians. In a rural high school setting, there is often a singular concert band ensemble in which all students participate, regardless of ability.

A dissertation by Jacob Caines focused explicitly on the work of Fennell and the Eastman Wind Ensemble, looking at the growth of the wind band and wind band repertoire due to Fennell's influence. Caines stated that under Fennell's direction, the Eastman Wind Ensemble performed 242 new works over ten years, significantly contributing to the modern wind band

²⁷ Sadie, "Band." 107.

²⁸ Sadie, "Band."

²⁹ Ibid.

repertoire.³⁰ Fennell ultimately started a movement that led to the development of a wealth of new repertoire in the wind band idiom, which has since led to the development of even more wind band repertoire in the second half of the twentieth century. Caines' dissertation explored the importance of a new repertoire when he found Fennell had stated: "They should not include a Sousa march on the upcoming record because Fennell was aware of five other records released last year that contained a Sousa march."³¹ As such, the new repertoire for the wind band idiom outnumbered the contemporary repertoire for the orchestral idiom for the first time in history.³²

While Eastman's contribution to the band idiom is significant, the repertoire presented does not always work appropriately in a rural setting due to the demand for a traditional balanced ensemble. Caines discussed that the goals of Frederick Fennell changed over time, beginning as an exploration into newer repertoire to a goal of developing a library of repertoire that is considered to be high caliber, well-written, and educationally sound. Fennell's goal was to develop music that was enjoyed by an audience of trained, university-educated musicians.³³ While Fennell's indirect contribution to the wind band repertoire was long lasting, many directors faced challenges in rural ensembles with limited instrumentation, as they are forced to revisit instrumentation or substitute parts on other instruments to ensure the music is adequately represented as close to what the source composer intended.

While many resources exist documenting the history of the twentieth-century concert band and the influence of Frederick Fennell, it is beneficial to read his writings. Fennell

³⁰ Jacob Edward Caines, "Frederick Fennell and The Eastman Wind Ensemble: The Transformation of American Wind Music Through Instrumentation and Repertoire" (University of Ottawa, 2012), 56.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³² *Ibid.*, 80.

³³ *Ibid.*, 83.

documented the history of the wind band, stating that the rise of community and military ensembles following the American Civil War led to the increase of more college and university ensembles, which ultimately led to the need to continue the development of public school ensembles to meet the enrollment demand of these previously mentioned groups, which led to the standardization of the public school band program.³⁴

The challenge in band programs is the adaptation of critical pedagogical concepts within individual programs. In developing a program, looking at the future when starting band students on various instruments is fundamental to ensure a balanced program is achievable by the end of the high school experience.³⁵ While ensuring balance is a pedagogically sound goal of the program, directors must ensure students are not forced into instruments they otherwise do not have an interest in playing which can result in students not achieving the success a director would desire or may result in a student discontinuing their individual band experience.³⁶

Kristen Laine accurately documented the modern version in her book *American Band*, where she returned to her alma mater, Concord High School, in Elkhart, Indiana, to showcase what a traditional band year looks like through the eyes of high school students.³⁷ This book provided unique insight into an average band program in Indiana, a state filled with strong and nationally successful band programs, as evidenced by the results of both the Indiana State School Music Association (ISSMA) annual competitions and the Music for Band/Bands of America (BOA) Grand Nationals Competition. While Concord only placed highly in occasional BOA

³⁴ Frederick Fennell, *Time and the Winds* (Kenosha, WI: G.LeBlanc Corp., 1954).

³⁵ Miles, "Instrumentation: A 'Sound' Priority," 98.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁷ Kristen Laine, *American Band: Music, Dreams and Coming of Age in the Heartland* (New York: Gotham Books, 2008).

events, they usually performed well and provide a quality educational experience for these students.³⁸

Laine explored another element of the public school band program with the implementation and development of the modern marching band. Laine stated while the concert band was often considered a natural growth from the traditional orchestral ensemble, the marching band is a unique ensemble, stemming from the military traditions of the past but with a more modern look and sound. Shifting the overall design of the ensemble in such a way can result in a dramatic shift in music educators' pedagogical and ideological practices. Instead of a standard concert cycle with a full program, the marching ensemble spends rehearsal time perfecting a six-to-ten-minute musical performance with a substantial visual element in an outdoor setting.

Laine's exploration into her former program is not considered a scholarly source as it is primarily a case study without supporting research. Laine's book accomplished the goal of providing an overview of a specific band program; although it did not explicitly focus on a rural program as the school in Elkhart, Indiana is only 110 miles from Chicago and is considered a non-rural county as a result. Additionally, this does not focus on a program in Pennsylvania. The text provides insight into the community and familial interaction with the program, which is often not documented in a scholarly text. While this is not a rural program, some of these elements will connect directly to rural programs as interaction with community and family members should be very similar. Laine surmised that the reason for the success of the program in

³⁸ Ibid., 125.

Elkhart was a community “buy-in” for the program and support from alumni who are often parents and family members.³⁹

Band Pedagogy

A pedagogically sound foundation is a vital part of a quality band program. Assessing a quality band program's components is essential when developing each school program. Quality can be determined by the degree of excellence achieved in performance, whether in an adjudicated competitive setting or a community performance; however, other factors affect a program beyond the competitive experience. Educators must be aware that each band program in a district is unique, and each student within the program is equally unique.⁴⁰ Michalski stated that administrators often support flourishing, exciting, student-oriented, and creatively successful programs. Still, educators must use caution in creating a copy of a program from a neighboring district.⁴¹ While programs have many similar characteristics, each should have its unique vision and goal based on the frameworks provided.

In developing strong pedagogical underpinnings within a program, Tim Lautzenheiser stated that an inherent quality that should be a part of instruction, whether direct or indirect, is the development of leadership skills within a band program.⁴² These leadership skills allow students to develop a sense of ownership within the band program, and allow these students to develop leadership skills that work beyond the music ensemble setting. Similarly, Isbell mentioned that students who take ownership of their respective band programs often will

³⁹ Ibid., 129.

⁴⁰ Stanley F. Michalski, “Components of a Quality Band Program,” *The Clearing House* 55, no. 6 (1982): 263.

⁴¹ Ibid., 265.

⁴² Lautzenheiser, “The Band Director as a Leader,” 103.

continue to enroll in the band program regardless of adversity within the program and will develop a stronger sense of pride within the band program.⁴³

George Rogers stated that he felt that fewer than ten bands across the United States had achieved ideal instrumentation as of 1986.⁴⁴ This can be a result of financial resource challenges, enrollment, or other outside influences. Educators must be aware that they may not have ideal instrumentation but can still provide strong musical instruction. Often, the flute, saxophone, and drums make up a more significant percentage of programs as they are considered popular options for students; the flute is the option that is easiest to transport, while the drums and saxophone are part of a lot of modern music.⁴⁵ With limited financial resources in schools and school communities, these instruments are also most accessible to acquire and can result in unbalanced groups.⁴⁶

Frank Battisti compared purposeful teaching with the entertainment aspect of music performance when reviewing the Music Educator National Conference (MENC) program descriptions. While these have changed slightly with the development of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), the challenge is that programs often look at entertainment and short-term competitive rewards instead of the long-term appreciation of music through developing skills, understanding, and creativity.⁴⁷ Battisti stated that a music program

⁴³ Isbell, "Music Education in Rural Areas," 32.

⁴⁴ George L. Rogers, "Concert Band Instrumentation: Realities and Remedies," *Music Educators Journal* 77, no. 9 (1991): 34.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁴⁷ Frank L. Battisti, "Clarifying Priorities for the High School Band," *Music Educators Journal* 76, no. 1 (1989): 23.

should emphasize the primary role of the band program is to assist every student in “developing their potential to create, understand, and appreciate music.”⁴⁸

As education continues to evolve, programs often face the next great initiative. This can be traced back through the years. Music-specific initiatives were often overlooked as schools worked through Outcomes-Based Education, Effective Schools, and Mastery Learning. A push for Comprehensive Musicianship was based on several models used in the late twentieth century.⁴⁹ Since the adoption of the National Core Arts Standards, music educators nationwide used these standards to build their course offerings. Grashel described the goal of Comprehensive Musicianship as having an “integrated approach to performance, analysis, and composition as an element in every music course offering.”⁵⁰ A significant aspect was the connection of performance, analysis, and composition when building a repertoire list. Grashall explained that “literature should be selected for the music’s potential as a teaching piece as well as for its musical and aesthetic qualities.”⁵¹ While this article is thirty years old, it foreshadowed where public education was headed as the article stated that music educators would be required to be more accountable for content delivered in the classroom. As a result, music continues to evolve with the inclusion of “innovative instructional procedures and techniques in the classroom.”⁵² Grashall stated that failing to innovate could have a devastating impact on music’s place in the school curriculum, which continues to be a concern today.

⁴⁸ Frank L. Battisti, “Clarifying Priorities for the High School Band,” 25.

⁴⁹ John Grashel, “An Integrated Approach: Comprehensive Musicianship,” *Music Educators Journal* 79, no. 8 (1993): 38.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 41.

The current educational initiative all schools face is the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).⁵³ While many educators are suspicious of the next new federal program, ESSA defines schools as having a well-rounded education, meaning courses and programs include the core subjects, such as technology, engineering, computer science, music, and more. This is the first time in federal law that music has been listed as a separate subject, as it was not something covered by No Child Left Behind. Much like what was foreshadowed by Grashall in 1993, ESSA requires states to have new accountability systems and incorporate multiple accountability measures within a school curriculum. ESSA can provide positive momentum for comprehensive music education in school systems that advocate and support music appropriately.⁵⁴ As this is a federal initiative, it is essential to implement strategies outlined by the act in ways that benefit individual school systems. Once again, there is no specific definition of this regarding rural school systems.

Rural Music Programs

Daniel Monk explained the concept of rural communities in his research on recruiting high-quality educators. He stated that many of the qualities of modern rural schools are similar including the smaller population sizes and the spread between settlements. He also mentioned the narrow opportunities both in school as well as in the community. Often, these communities rely on agriculture or tourism. Each community is usually relatively small but has a close-knit

⁵³ Lynn M. Tuttle, "Another Perspective: The Every Student Succeeds Act: Opportunities for the Music Educator," *Music Educators Journal* 103, no. 2 (2016): 65.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

familial feel. He also stated explicitly that “rural often implies small, but small does not necessarily mean rural.”⁵⁵

William Lee explored the development of rural education and music through the early twentieth century. He stated that by 1918, states added music education as part of teacher preparation programs and a standard curriculum within the classroom.⁵⁶ This led to the development of a more appropriate repertoire for the band setting and, as a result, solidified the third performance-based ensemble in the educational environment.⁵⁷ Without this, the concert band curriculum seen in schools today would likely not exist, and instead, schools would see a growth of both choral and string programs. Lee stated that adding music to the schools' curriculum has many benefits. Festivals and contests became a feature of music teaching in schools and school communities.⁵⁸

Nearly nine million students attend schools classified as “rural” in the United States, not including the many students who attend schools in small towns that many could be defined as rural, though they do not meet the federal definition.⁵⁹ Strange stated that school funding may result in difficult decisions such as school closure and consolidation, negatively affecting a

⁵⁵ David H. Monk, “Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality Teachers in Rural Areas,” *The Future of Children* 17, no. 1 (2007): 156.

⁵⁶ Lee, “Music Education and Rural Reform, 1900-1925,” 316.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 318.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁵⁹ Marty Strange, “Finding Fairness for Rural Students,” *The Phi Delta Kappan* 92, no. 6 (2011): 9.

music program.⁶⁰ He also surmised that often, the cost per student of education in a rural community is as high, if not higher, than in non-rural communities..⁶¹

Research on the challenges of rural schools spanned the last century. Rural school reform dates back as early as 1909 with Theodore Roosevelt's convocation of the *Country Life Commission*, which signified the growing interest in reforming rural life across the country.⁶² While rural communities continued to evolve over the twentieth century, they still faced vastly different challenges than urban and suburban schools. Many still view rural schools with the enduring image of the one-room schoolhouse.⁶³ Financial and community challenges can often lead to teacher recruitment challenges, which may in turn result in continual turnover in a band program, affecting enrollment for students in the band as the program lacks consistency. Reformers throughout the century have questioned the relevance of the curriculum in promoting rural life versus suburban and urban life.⁶⁴ Biddle and Azano concluded that this seems less of a concern as transportation and technology have closed the distance between these various aspects of human life.

Horace Mann, often referred to as the father of the American school system, postulated that music education plays an essential role in the teaching of the whole child, as it fosters the thinking process, honors citizenship, and allows students to develop the ability to appreciate the

⁶⁰ Strange, "Finding Fairness for Rural Students," 10.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶² Catharine Biddle and Amy Price Azano, "Constructing and Reconstructing the 'Rural School Problem': A Century of Rural Education Research," *Review of Research in Education* 40 (2016): 305.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 307.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

beauty within our world.⁶⁵ Mann's exploration of the whole child is early in developing this concept but is often expanded upon by more recent educational minds. Mann did not specifically address what music education should "look" like in a school setting, but instead allows educators and decision-makers to adapt this concept to their school systems.

Thompson postulated that schools spend a continually increasing amount of time on federal and state government mandates when they should focus on developing the whole child, which includes music and the importance it plays in development beyond basic skills such as math and the ability to recite facts. His research explored the differences schools with a fully sequential instrumental music program have versus schools without this type of program.⁶⁶ The study focused on a singular school in rural Tennessee and found that a sequential music education program allows for excellent student success compared to schools with many singular course offerings that may need to be vertically articulated. The study focused on students' academic success outcomes due to their efforts in a sequential music education program, which may in turn affect retention in a band program.

Catherine Hunt of Washburn University explored the similarity between rural and urban teaching environments and the need to develop contextual awareness in music education.⁶⁷ One key element mentioned in the study worth considering when looking at the success of rural programs is that rural and urban schools must develop a strong plan for recruiting and retaining

⁶⁵ Tommy Merle Thompson, "Examining Sequential Instrumental Music Instruction Differences in Academic Achievement: A Case Study of One Rural Public High School," *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses* (Ed.D.Ed. Lead., Union University, 2020), 2, accessed May 3, 2022, <http://www.proquest.com/central/docview/2468132051/abstract/A3EFDDDB6EAAF436BPQ/6>.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁷ Catherine Hunt, "Perspectives on Rural and Urban Music Teaching Developing Contextual Awareness in Music Education," 2009, 34.

quality music educators. Hunt stated that the lack of resources, such as few music stores and few private teachers, can result in a substantial lack of growth opportunities within a rural music program.⁶⁸

Hunt explored the definition of a rural program. She stated, “The Department of Agriculture’s Rural Business Opportunity Grants Program defines “rural” as any area of a state with a population of less than 50,000 not within the boundaries of a city.”⁶⁹ Between this broader definition and the definition provided state by state, it is challenging to represent what constitutes a rural school district. The Pennsylvania Department of Education classifies rural schools as districts that have a population of fewer than 291 people per square mile within the county or district.⁷⁰ Using this formula, 235 of the 499 school districts in Pennsylvania currently qualify as rural. The challenge with researching rural schools is that the formula can vary from state to state and from a federal perspective, resulting in differing views of the percentage of districts that qualify as rural. Additionally, states that use the county system for schools instead of individual school districts result in a skewed average percentage of rural schools, as often these are not listed by county in other states. This researcher used a defined explanation of what constitutes a rural school district in Pennsylvania to ensure that all data collected can be appropriately correlated in developing answers to the research questions provided.

Rural programs are often a cornerstone in the life of a student. Cecil Adderley, Mary Kennedy, and William Berz surveyed students to discover their perception of a music program and its effect on culture. They summarized this by stating “that many students had strong views

⁶⁸ Catherine Hunt, “Perspectives on Rural and Urban Music Teaching Developing Contextual Awareness in Music Education,” 40.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁰ “Rural Quick Facts.”

on how people outside of the music program viewed the music program.” Many of the students interviewed felt a sense of pride and dedication to their ensembles and the goal of performing at a higher caliber. There is often still some concern about the view of the band program by those who are not enrolled in it.⁷¹

Clifford Madsen and Carl Hancock further explored retention and attrition. The authors stated that the Music Educators National Conference (MENC), now known as the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), stated in the *Vision 2020* publication the need to ensure quality music educators are certified to ensure classrooms are staffed with the most appropriately qualified educators.⁷² Teacher preparation programs must adapt to ensure future educators are prepared for all possible school and cultural environments, including, but not limited to, status such as rural, urban, or suburban, to ensure the needs of students can be adequately met.⁷³

Rural schools can enrich educators; however, many factors affect the goal of retention within these districts. Challenges can include non-instructional duties, teaching load, and faculty culture, while positives can consist of the level of autonomy and the district's philosophy.⁷⁴ For music programs, consistency within a program is one element that is essential for program stability and growth. If teachers are happy to make it a life-long career within a school district,

⁷¹ Cecil Adderley, Mary Kennedy, and William Berz, “‘A Home Away from Home’: The World of the High School Music Classroom,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 51, no. 3 (2003): 196.

⁷² Clifford K. Madsen and Carl B. Hancock, “Support for Music Education: A Case Study of Issues Concerning Teacher Retention and Attrition,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 50, no. 1 (2002): 6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁷⁴ Tiger Robison and Joshua A. Russell, “Factors Affecting Rural Music Educators’ Career Decisions,” *Contributions to Music Education* 46 (January 2021): 161.

the likelihood that a program thrives and grows is more significant than if constant teacher turnover within a program takes place.

Teachers must be motivated to stay in a rural school district. Many educators are drawn to rural districts only to find the appeal lost after a short time teaching in these districts.⁷⁵ The challenges faced often need to be recognized when applying for, or accepting, new positions. Rural schools have many positive elements, including building a program without oversight from larger districts and building internal and external relationships.⁷⁶ Teachers often need help in new environments beyond the scope they even considered. While Brenner, Price Azano, and Downey discussed this regarding teachers in general, much of the research shared previously showed these challenges to be more significant when also tasked with building a program.

Rural school districts often consist of smaller size of the buildings. Brenner, Azano, and Downey showed that researchers and reformers often critique larger schools as being impersonal, fragmented, and offering unequal program offerings, resulting in the inability to meet individual students' needs.⁷⁷ While this research did not explicitly address the positives of smaller schools, it shares the negatives of larger schools. The researchers found that the suggested high school size to ensure personalized environments is between 400-600 students. Many rural schools would not meet the suggested high school size.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Devon Brenner, Amy Price Azano, and Jayne Downey, "Helping New Teachers Stay and Thrive in Rural Schools," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 103, no. 4 (2021): 15.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷⁷ Linda Darling-Hammond, Peter Ross, and Michael Milliken, "High School Size, Organization, and Content: What Matters for Student Success?," *Brookings Papers on Education Policy*, no. 9 (2006): 163.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

One study looked into rural communities in a completely different way. Petrin, Schafft, and Meece found that rural communities have been divided into two streams over the last quarter century. Some areas are now becoming higher-end retirement destinations or have seen the suburban sprawl spread into them. In contrast, others have seen population loss and the closing of small businesses, resulting in a significant negative socioeconomic shift.⁷⁹ Due to this, the challenge in the educational world is that the curriculum prescribed by federal mandates is often “one-size-fits-all,” and does not adequately differentiate the needs of communities. This may result in students no longer wishing to be a part of the rural community in which they were raised, and continues the trend of shrinking communities and, as a result, shrinking student populations.⁸⁰

Rural schools face a challenge beyond traditional suburban middle-class schools in several ways. These schools are often communities with a very low population per square mile, with lower socioeconomic statuses, where more working families and students reside.⁸¹ To counter this, all band programs must have faculty, administrators, board members, and community members involved in providing feedback for the program, including but not limited to parents, alums, community members, and those directly involved in the internal school community.⁸² Rural schools often have more community involvement within the music program.

⁷⁹ Robert A. Petrin, Kai A. Schafft, and Judith L. Meece, “Educational Sorting and Residential Aspirations Among Rural High School Students: What Are the Contributions of Schools and Educators to Rural Brain Drain?,” *American Educational Research Journal* 51, no. 2 (2014): 295.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 296.

⁸¹ Cushman, “The Reality of Rural Education,” 4.

⁸² Roger E. Anderson, “A History of the Coolidge High School Band: Building a Rural Program through Community Engagement and Stakeholder Support, 1935–1980” (Ph.D., Arizona State University, n.d.), 18, accessed May 3, 2022, <http://www.proquest.com/central/docview/2331269399/abstract/963EB969AFD846CBPQ/1>.

These programs are one of the few outlets for students and few places for community members to experience the arts within a small community.⁸³ Roger Anderson mentioned this throughout his dissertation regarding the Coolidge High School Band (Coolidge, AZ) program and the need to engage and continue interacting with various community groups to ensure a group can successfully access all resources.

Anderson stated that over the forty-five years of data studied regarding the Coolidge band program, every director became a part of the community, whether they lived in town or not, regardless of the length of time as band director.⁸⁴ This community connection may relate to the research areas within this current study. Coolidge has similar correlations to Pennsylvania as the school population trended downward. Still, the band program's popularity and community impact remained strong and continued to grow and succeed.⁸⁵

Similarly, Off's research on rural arts programs showed that programs often form a strong connection between arts and the community. A strong music program may allow a community to develop an appreciation for the arts in an area otherwise not served by outside arts organizations.⁸⁶ While Off's research focused primarily on advocacy with community stakeholders, it also explored what constitutes a robust rural community supporting the arts. Like

⁸³ Anderson, "A History of the Coolidge High School Band: Building a Rural Program through Community Engagement and Stakeholder Support, 1935–1980", 19

⁸⁴ Anderson, "A History of the Coolidge High School Band," 409.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 400.

⁸⁶ Sarah Off, "The Arts in Rural Areas Building Musical Communities in Rural Areas" (D.M.A., Arizona State University, n.d.), 72, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1896684827/abstract/4A3B7DE4B435474DPQ/8>.

other research in this review, she found that rural communities often have small towns and sparse or spread-out populations with limited access to ample shopping and large businesses.⁸⁷

Rural schools are generally considered to be of a lower socioeconomic status. This creates an even more significant challenge, as research has found that the poorest students in the country are significantly underrepresented in high school music classes.⁸⁸ This is typically a result of music courses being non-compulsory. Many states require fine arts credits for graduation. Still, even then, a student may elect to enroll in music or visual arts, and often, the numerous single course offerings, such as advanced placement and International Baccalaureate classes, limit scheduling options. Hoffman stated that there is no singular solution to the inability to serve every student, regardless of family income. School educators must creatively problem solve to place instruments in students' hands and ensure continued involvement to facilitate music instruction for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, must be a priority in programs.⁸⁹

One area that needs to be addressed in rural schools' curriculum development and research is the marching band, which is often an optional extracurricular ensemble. Moore stated that directors often have to choose the type of marching ensemble they have, whether it be competitive band program or program which only performs for football games, and in a rural setting, this decision is often more important as it can affect a more significant percentage of students given the smaller number of students within the school itself.⁹⁰ She further explained

⁸⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸⁸ Adria R. Hoffman, "Compelling Questions about Music, Education, and Socioeconomic Status," *Music Educators Journal* 100, no. 1 (2013): 63.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 68.

that student engagement with curricular and extracurricular ensembles is essential for program success.

Daniel Isbell stated, “Community dynamics play a major role in determining the duties of music educators.”⁹¹ A challenge in rural programs is the need for educators to travel between multiple schools often, which usually takes away valuable classroom time. Rural programs need to recognize the need for adequate staffing to ensure students have the appropriate amount of time in the classroom, as this is the most pedagogically sound approach. This challenge can often be countered by the ability of the educator to teach the same group of students for several years.⁹²

An element of retention that is timely and not currently deeply researched is the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on music programs. This researcher would be mindful to mention this as a part of the literature review as this includes some of the most current data that indirectly affects student retention in a music program. While information has been released based on the current timeframe with the pandemic and its immediate effects involving respiration, more studies must address the pandemic's impact on programs and their long-term viability. The University of Colorado addressed the respiratory element and how to safely provide music instruction with minimal risk.⁹³ The study showed the ways to mitigate, including spacing an

⁹⁰ Alli Moore, “‘I Belong in the Band’: The Role of the Marching Band in a Small, Rural School and in the Community” (M.M.E., University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, 2023), 5, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/2818628971/abstract/4A3B7DE4B435474DPQ/25>.

⁹¹ Isbell, “Music Education in Rural Areas,” 30.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Nicholas Good et al., “Respiratory Aerosol Emissions from Vocalization: Age and Sex Differences Are Explained by Volume and Exhaled CO₂,” *Environmental Science & Technology Letters* 8, no. 12 (December 14, 2021): 1071.

ensemble, masking, bell covers, and proper ventilation in a room.⁹⁴ As time has progressed, this can be secondarily correlated to helping maintain programs if safely incorporated into teaching. Still, this data must explicitly advocate for music programs' continued development and growth.

Lisa Urkevich looked at the impact the global pandemic had on music communities. She found the overarching commonality of music programs that succeeded through the pandemic was the use of technology and the willingness to adapt to survive the pandemic.⁹⁵ Without the pervasive nature of music and music educators, programs would have failed during the pandemic. Much like the turn of the century in the industrial world, music professionals turned to one another through the pandemic for support and ideas to ensure programs could survive and ultimately thrive due to the challenges everyone faced.⁹⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic is an anomaly that has affected band programs but is likely not a repeatable or continuing factor in student enrollment and retention.

In addition to the need to look at innovative ways to maintain programs, an element explored throughout this review was the need to maintain community engagement. At a time when music programs were struggling, community outreach was needed to continue to show the value music has for students. The confinement and containment associated with lockdowns through the worst of the pandemic resulted in the challenge of community engagement when people were told not to engage. Digital tools were essential, even in music, to ensure the

⁹⁴ Nicholas Good et al., "Respiratory Aerosol Emissions from Vocalization: Age and Sex Differences Are Explained by Volume and Exhaled CO₂," 1072

⁹⁵ Lisa A. Urkevich, "Our Rebirth: Reshaping the Music Discipline after the Covid-19 Pandemic," *College Music Symposium* 60, no. 1 (2020): 3.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

community saw the value music education held for growing students and maintaining engagement.⁹⁷

Advocacy in Music

Music education programs often benefit from advocacy both in and out of the classroom. This can come through the engagement of many groups affecting the program, including current students, former students, school district faculty, administration, and community members.⁹⁸ These various groups can provide a differing perspective on a program and can be beneficial in developing successful programs

The need to advocate is a topic that has been discussed previously and researched routinely. Lauren Kapalka Richerme examined six years of online archives for major American news stations and revealed the troubling issues facing music education. Most articles discussed the disappearance of music education rather than the positives in our school systems.⁹⁹ Richerme postulated that educators should concentrate on the successes first but share the challenges faced so that those supporting the program are aware of the needs and can be a voice to those who otherwise may not be aware of the need.¹⁰⁰

Off's research went beyond what makes a rural program and focused on the advocacy element. She stated that a successful program will incorporate members of the community and identify the qualities a music program needs to be successful in a long-term way within a town

⁹⁷ Alana Cattapan et al., "Community Engagement in a Time of Confinement," *Canadian Public Policy / Analyse de Politiques* 46, no. S3 (2020): 5288.

⁹⁸ Anderson, "A History of the Coolidge High School Band," 87.

⁹⁹ Lauren Kapalka Richerme, "Apparently, We Disappeared," *Music Educators Journal* 98, no. 1 (2011): 35.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

or community.¹⁰¹ Developing a performing arts council or parent/community advocacy group is one area that she found was successful in advocating for continued growth and support of a music and arts program.¹⁰²

Marci Major explored the decision-making process when a school district discusses whether a music program is kept or cut. Major stated that one metric that schools use to define a “thriving program” is the percentage of students enrolled in music.¹⁰³ This data point is subjective, as the discussion needs to be on whether general music or non-traditional ensembles are included in this metric or if it is simply the data of who is enrolled in ensembles within a school or district. NAFME has continued to grow the offerings outside of traditional ensembles, with the most recent push being the modern band ensembles. These programs may reach students otherwise are not enrolled in traditional ensembles, and it is important for educators and administrators to determine if these students are considered part of the percentage of students enrolled in music. Additionally, some districts may include students enrolled in general music electives as students enrolled in music, even if a performing element is not included. Major stated that most research looks at programs that have been lost or have had detrimental changes taking place when researchers should instead look at the positives within a program and how those positive elements can be exploited to allow programs to thrive.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Off, “The Arts in Rural Areas Building Musical Communities in Rural Areas,” 77.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁰³ Marci L. Major, “How They Decide: A Case Study Examining the Decision-Making Process for Keeping or Cutting Music in a K–12 Public School District,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 61, no. 1 (2013): 7.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

Stevens and Davis explored the trends rural schools are facing across the country being smaller by nature, as they are in a less populated area and often have a vast geographic region.¹⁰⁵ Music programs may be deprioritized due to lack of funding. As a result, music instructors must attempt to create high-caliber music with limited resources. Still, they must also spend more time advocating for their programs to ensure budget appropriations are provided.¹⁰⁶ Often, it requires thinking beyond what is considered instructional norms to ensure programs are adequately staffed and have adequate supplies and equipment. This progressive thinking often results in more realistic solutions to music programs' problems.¹⁰⁷ The goal of the completed study is to provide this type of progressive thought, as these strategies must usually be provided in a comprehensive teacher preparation program.

An element of advocacy often overlooked is the goal of equity in the music classroom. Poverty is something that divides school communities. Schools currently face growing inequity, as the income of the wealthy is booming while 43 percent of American children live in low-income families.¹⁰⁸ To continue the goals of relevancy in a program, educators must learn about and embrace the musical traditions of less affluent students and those who are more affluent.¹⁰⁹

Regardless of socioeconomic status, advocacy must show the importance of music in the child's development. Johnson and Memmott's study on the relationships between music participation and standardized testing have demonstrated that music can positively affect the

¹⁰⁵ Alan N. Stevens and Beverly Irby Davis, "A Plan for Success in the Small District," *Music Educators Journal* 80, no. 5 (1994): 19.

¹⁰⁶ Stevens and Davis, "A Plan for Success in the Small District," 20.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁰⁸ Vincent C. Bates, "Equity in Music Education: Back to Class: Music Education and Poverty," *Music Educators Journal* 105, no. 2 (2018): 72.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

outcome of students on standardized testing, which is a significant part of every federal mandate. While few studies add the correlation of socioeconomic status to this, Johnson and Memmott's study does show that these confounding variables affect results more often at the elementary level and are far less influential on middle and high school test scores.¹¹⁰

Unfortunately, music programs may suffer due to challenging budget situations and declining enrollment, which is often even more prevalent in rural and urban music programs. As recently as 2010, the United States Secretary of Education acknowledged the challenges music programs faced during the economic declines facing schools, as was outlined in an article by Elizabethtown College assistant professor Kevin Shorner-Johnson. He stated that budget issues quickly trickled down to music programs as they are less emphasized than Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs. As a result, schools music continue to explore new and innovative career options to maintain relevancy.¹¹¹

Shorner-Johnson further explored this, stating that music programs have an automatic "demonstration effect" as a result of performance ensembles, which can be used to clearly show the observable effects of music and its importance on the individuals to a variety of needed stakeholder groups.¹¹² Music ensembles are often viewed for their entertainment value, but educators must continue to advocate for their program. This can be as simple as words used in discussing the program or in the deliberate choice in the repertoire. Every opportunity to provide

¹¹⁰ Christopher M. Johnson and Jenny E. Memmott, "Examination of Relationships between Participation in School Music Programs of Differing Quality and Standardized Test Results," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 54, no. 4 (2006): 302.

¹¹¹ Kevin Shoener-Johnson, "Building Evidence for Music Education Advocacy," *Music Educators Journal* 99, no. 4 (2013): 51.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 52.

advocacy for a program will continue to keep the program in the relevant view of decision makers within a school district.

Shorner-Johnson provided valuable data regarding funding but did not explicitly explore the effects on various socioeconomic statuses faced by school districts or rural versus non-rural school districts. Scholarly research explored the variety of classifications as stated throughout this study; however, study of the correlation between these studies and what was shared here must be completed.

Rural programs often need more elements that are considered pedagogically sound, such as balanced instrumentation or leveled ensembles, which is a challenge directors must overcome and must be explored. In researching this topic at great length, no scholarly sources specifically address the pedagogical differences between many rural programs and those with a large population and socioeconomic base. While many pedagogical sources exist, this researcher has yet to locate one that specifically addresses the direct differences between more extensive programs and those in rural schools with more minimal resources both internally and externally.

Conclusions

In a time of ever-changing educational norms, rural schools remain a topic of interest for many researchers. Many rural communities continue to see population declines and often have unique population challenges due to limited infrastructure and distance between places. Additionally, this can be connected to music programs as some of these unique challenges may also cause challenges for music education programs. Through this research, this information was available individually but not explicitly connected.

School band programs have been extensively researched throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. School band program research was broad in that it covered a variety of

pedagogical concepts, including development of schedules and the need to articulate goals within a program; however, none of this research specifically addressed school bands in rural Pennsylvania communities and the unique challenges these communities face.

Rural schools have been a significant topic of research for education scholars. Throughout the country, rural schools comprise a large percentage of schools as defined by the Department of Education; however, the previous research broadly addressed these programs without focusing on Pennsylvania schools. Additionally, several studies focused primarily on individual programs, none of which were in the region prescribed through this research topic.

Rural Pennsylvania band programs, pedagogical concepts, and rural music programs were extensively researched. These concepts were also very broad, and while some addressed the ideas of rural versus suburban and urban districts, none of the research addressed the unique challenges of the number of small districts across Pennsylvania. Much of the research focused on rural programs within larger geographic districts, whereas Pennsylvania has many much smaller districts.

Advocacy was the final major topic researched. In the previous areas, a common point mentioned was the need for community involvement, both in and out of the school itself. A lot of data does exist on the types of advocacy that work best, as well as the value of advocacy within a music program. Advocacy indirectly relates to engagement and retention in a program as it provides a consistent message to all those affected by the program and continues to share the value and relevancy of a band program. As students have more options available to them in schools and in the community, educators must continue to share why students should be involved in school band programs. Throughout the scholarly research, no data was found that directly connected to Pennsylvania schools' challenges.

The topics mentioned in this literature review covered these various elements connected to the research on rural Pennsylvania high school band programs. Still, it only partially connected all aspects. Previous research did not explore Pennsylvania rural schools, nor did it delve into the intricacies of the band programs at high schools as outlined in the research plan. A research gap on the issues of enrollment and retention in mid-sized rural Pennsylvania band programs exists, and the goal of this study is to fill in the missing information to inform educators about their respective programs.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Introduction

This study investigated factors that positively and negatively affected enrollment and retention in band programs and are often outside the control of mid-sized rural high school band directors in Pennsylvania. This study collected data from the Pennsylvania Department of Education as well as from directors identified as band directors of mid-sized rural Pennsylvania high schools to provide a robust plan for countering negative enrollment and retention trends within individual band programs and to provide insight into programs of similar demographics throughout the state. However, no previous studies have been completed that focus directly on retention and enrollment trends of mid-sized rural Pennsylvania band programs as classified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The goal of the study is to identify perspectives that have not yet been explored and documented concerning these perspectives and perceptions to develop a comprehensive list of strategies to counter negative retention trends.

Benefits of the Study

Often, band directors share information casually with colleagues in their respective regions, but no formal research has been conducted to explore the trends across the state. Band directors often collect detailed enrollment and retention data on the band program within their school, but lack detailed data on other programs of similar demographics. The hope is that the data will help reverse declining enrollment trends within band programs and reassure directors that the trends are not isolated to their specific program. This study may benefit society by identifying and analyzing the challenges many rural band programs face, some of which may be unique in comparison to non-rural schools. While the previously mentioned challenges may be unique to Pennsylvania due to the size of the state and the number of school districts, solutions

identified as a result of this study may benefit band directors outside Pennsylvania when making informed decisions for their programs.

Design

This study primarily focused on qualitative and descriptive data to correlate the challenges affecting student enrollment and retention in mid-sized rural Pennsylvania band programs. Data collection from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) was used to identify schools that qualified as mid-sized rural districts, as well as to view the district-wide enrollment trends within these districts.¹¹³ The 2022-2023 school year data showed the smallest rural district, Austin Area, in Potter County, as having only 171 K-12 students, while the largest rural district is Mifflin County, with 4636 K-12 students. This extensive spread results in the challenge of comparing data. The median size of rural districts in Pennsylvania was 2274 students. To ensure data can be adequately synthesized and permit similarities between school districts, the researcher chose to focus on districts with 1500-3000 students K-12 to allow for an adequate data pool. This enabled the researcher to closely examine 48 school districts in 36 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

The researcher created an online survey via a Google form consisting of several sections to collect this information. The first section covered the basic demographics of the school district, including the structure of the band program, the structure of the school, and the structure of the middle school feeder system. The second section explored the variety of course and extracurricular offerings a school system provides, both within the music department as well as across all content areas. The final section was designed to collect data regarding the band

¹¹³ Pennsylvania Department of Education, "Enrollment Reports and Projections."

director's opinion on what factors affect their programs. The questions on the survey are included in Appendix A. A topic of the literature review of this research was the need to synthesize data regarding the scheduling of band courses and lessons when compared to the high school scheduling process, offerings to students, and courses that may affect band enrollment.

Following the survey, an interview request was sent to those participants with a goal of interviewing at least 40 percent of those who responded. The interview provided four open-ended questions to those who were willing to participate.

- What are the biggest challenges you have faced as a rural Pennsylvania high school band director?
- What internal or external influences do you perceive are affecting your band enrollment?
- What influences are affecting retention from year to year within your band program?
- What have you done to successfully mitigate negative enrollment or retention trends within your band program?

Interviews took place via Microsoft Teams and were approximately thirty minutes in length, allowing a band director to provide sufficient insights as they were willing to regarding the four questions. All interviews were transcribed via Microsoft Teams. All interview transcripts had names removed and were uploaded to Delve, a secure online platform to code qualitative data. Coding was developed using the raw transcripts to find keywords within the interviews that showed common trends and common concerns band directors were experiencing within their band programs. The transcripts of all conducted interviews are included in Appendix B.

Data was collected, compiled, and compared, connecting the qualitative data through the survey and interviews with the enrollment data collected from the Pennsylvania Department of

Education. The purpose of connecting the data was to inspect for commonalities, such as what enrollment trends occurred within school districts and if these trends affected the enrollment in a band program, including if a program added or removed music options for students based on the enrollment trends in their school districts. Additionally, data was compared to see if enrollment trends and budget allocations affected capital projects within a school system and how these enrollment and budget trends affected the internal feelings of band directors concerning their opinions on their band programs.

The purpose of the data collection and interviews was to develop strategies to ensure the continued success of a band program. Examining the trends occurring throughout the state in mid-sized rural Pennsylvania schools was valuable to band directors as they may have similar positive and negative elements affecting their band programs. Strategies to ensure continued positive enrollment and retention and mitigate declines may ensure the continued success of each band program.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

In the heart of rural Pennsylvania, high school band programs have long been a part of school curriculums. These band programs have long been a part of these close-knit communities and have served as an example of the value of the arts within the state's rural regions. This tradition has faced an array of formidable challenges, which may include recruitment and retention. The intent of this chapter is to share the results and findings of the survey data regarding enrollment and retention trends within high school band programs in rural Pennsylvania.

This analysis began with revisiting the foundational data for high school band programs, including school district demographics and scheduling data. The analysis then focused on what elements affect individual band programs. Pennsylvania has many rural districts, which, while spread throughout the state's sixty-seven counties, all have similar challenges. The analysis will draw on the research findings to illuminate the specific dynamics within the rural context.

The data collected regarding enrollment and retention trends was used to explore common factors affecting band programs. The research data was dissected to uncover student, educator, and community members challenges in keeping young musicians engaged and motivated. While the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected band programs, it was noted that the effects on band programs were not reoccurring factors affecting band enrollment upon exit from pandemic protocols.

The core objective of this chapter is to illuminate the trends and provide strategies that emerge from the research data. By distilling the findings, those affected may better understand the complex recruitment and retention landscape affecting rural Pennsylvania band programs.

School District Demographics

Five hundred school districts across sixty-seven counties serve Pennsylvania. Chapter One mentions that the Pennsylvania Department of Education classified 235 school districts as rural. Thirty counties have only rural districts, and only four counties are fully classified as urban/suburban. Rural districts make up a geographically significant portion of the state and are spread across the state of Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Office of Open Records states that all Commonwealth agencies must provide specific data under the law, including salaries, enrollment data, demographics, and employment information that does not reveal specific personal data of individual employees.¹¹⁴ Public school districts in the state are considered Commonwealth agencies. With these open records, to fit the research criteria, the list of 235 school districts was narrowed down to forty-five districts with a K-12 population of 1500-3000 students, as this was the median window of school districts and ensured similar programming options were available to students. The band directors of these forty-five school districts were contacted to provide qualitative data on their specific band programs and the feeder programs they have in place. Of these forty-five schools, sixteen directors responded, and their data is included in the study.

Figure 2 shows the 2022/2023 PDE-reported enrollment of the sixteen 9-12 high schools within this study. The average enrollment in the sixteen schools under this study was 698 students. The lowest enrollment was Forest Hills High School, with 532 students; the highest was Crestwood High School, with 953 students. The median enrollment for the sixteen schools was 692 students.

¹¹⁴ “OOR - RTKL Citizens’ Guide,” accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.openrecords.pa.gov/RTKL/CitizensGuide.cfm>.

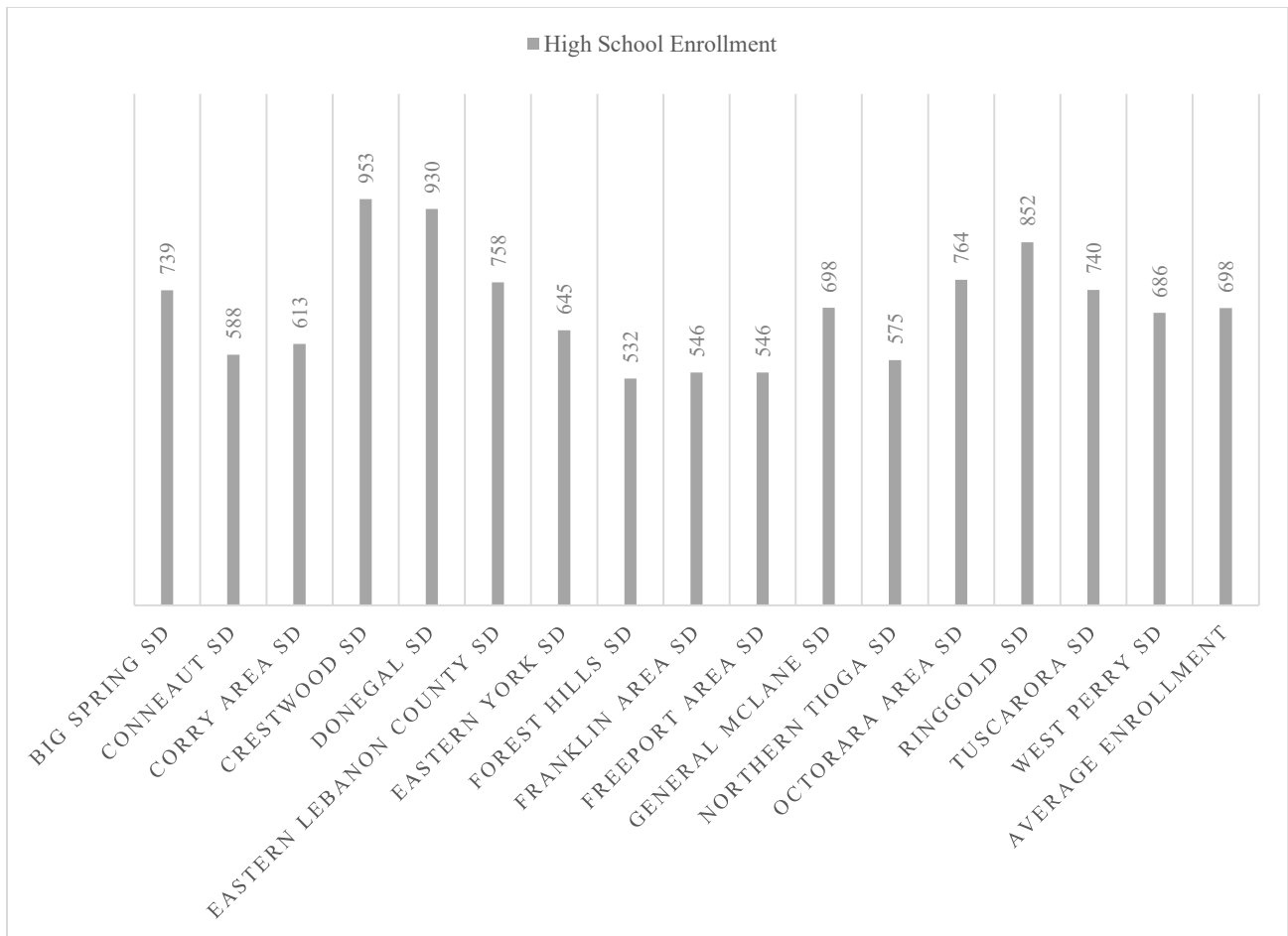


Figure 2: Rural PA high school enrollment using schools within the study as outlined.

Following the overview provided by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania's statement that the rural population is declining, enrollment trends and enrollment projections for schools included in this study were evaluated. Enrollment data from PDE dating back to 2010/2011 and projections are available through 2032/2033 based on previous trends and growth projections in each school district location. Figure 3 includes each school district's enrollment in the study as well as the average enrollment within the study. In addition to the school districts in the study, the enrollment average for all schools within the study is also included. The average is displayed in the larger bold line, showing the drop in average enrollment from 2010/2011 through the

present, as well as the projected drop in enrollment from the present through the 2032/2033 school year. Several school districts within the study do not follow the average enrollment trend as shown below.

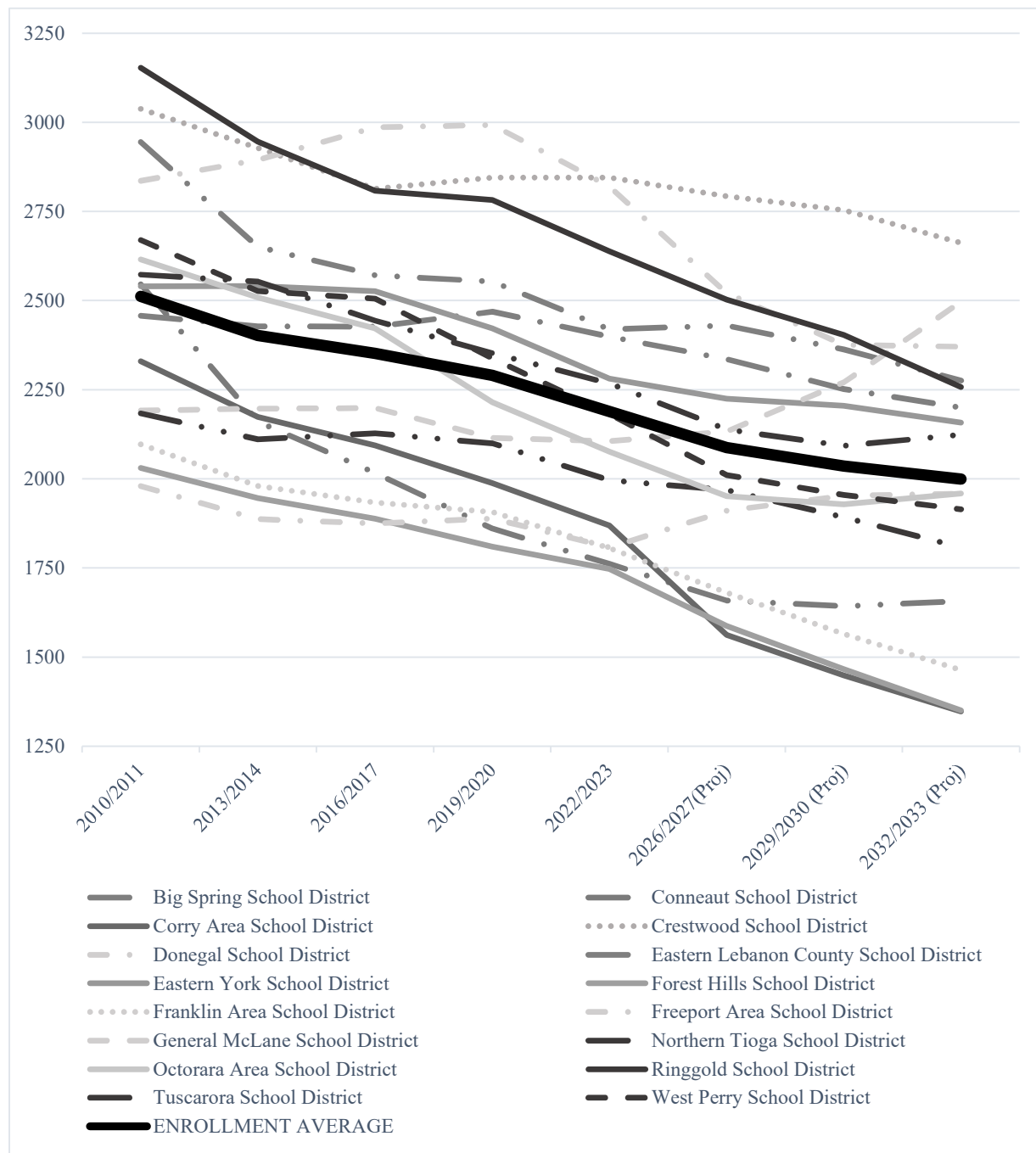


Figure 3: Historical enrollment and enrollment projections as provided by PDE for the rural schools within this study

Currently, most rural districts have seen a downward trend in enrollment as the urban and suburban centers have grown. Statewide, this downward trend is slowing. From 2010/2011, the average drop in enrollment among the sixteen districts in this study has been 14.3 percent, while the projections show an additional reduction of 9.8 percent. The enrollment drop is beginning to level off, and PDE has projected it may begin an upward trend over the coming years as development continues to move beyond the current urban and suburban centers.

School District Program Offerings

Beyond the structural elements outlined, school program offerings affect a music program in many ways. This portion of research focused on several key areas, including:

- Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) offerings
- Advanced Placement offerings
- Music Ensemble offerings

The PIAA is the governing body for interscholastic sports throughout Pennsylvania. Every district and private school is a member, and the PIAA oversees and governs all athletic offerings.

Currently, thirty recognized athletic opportunities and seven offerings are considered emerging sports, including E-Sports, Girls' Flag Football, Girls' and Boys' Ice Hockey, Girls' and Boys Rugby, and Girls Wrestling. Figures 4 and 5 show the number of schools offering a specific sport in the sixteen school districts in this study, both for boys and girls.

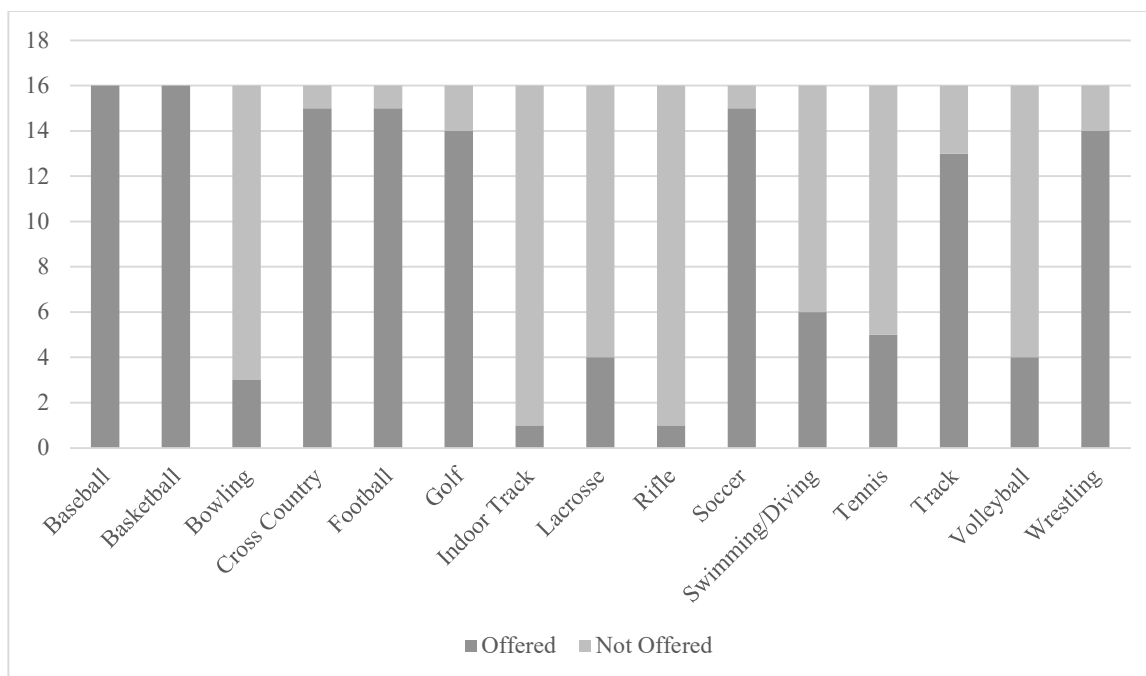


Figure 4: Boys sports in study schools as reported by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

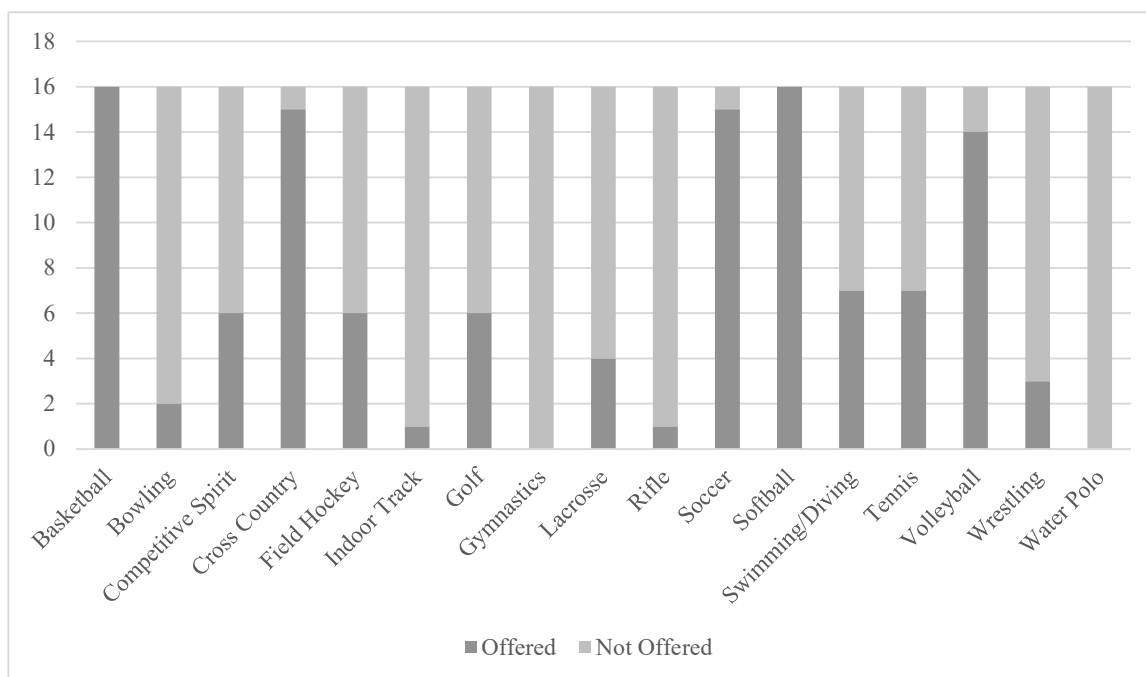


Figure 5: Girls' sports in study schools as reported by the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association.

As the data in these two charts shows, currently, only two boys' and two girls' sports are offered in every school district, with both boys' and girls' basketball, baseball, and football. Often, this can be attributed to facilities. The sports that offer fewer opportunities require additional facilities that may not be available, such as a pool, tennis courts, bowling alleys, and indoor running facilities. Smaller districts may also struggle with space for practices for multiple basketball and wrestling opportunities if there are not multiple competitive-sized gyms available.

The College Board lists all authorized Advanced Placement (AP) courses within a school district. For this study, the snapshot used was approved courses for the 2022/2023 school year. In all, twenty-eight unique course offerings were available to students in the study schools.¹¹⁵ Figure 6 shows the number of AP offerings available per high school. The number of AP course offerings ranges from zero at Williamson High School to sixteen at Ringgold High School, with an average of 7.37 AP courses per school. The median is seven AP courses per school across multiple disciplines within the study schools.

¹¹⁵ “AP Course Audit,” accessed November 1, 2023, <https://apcourseaudit.inflexion.org/ledger/>.

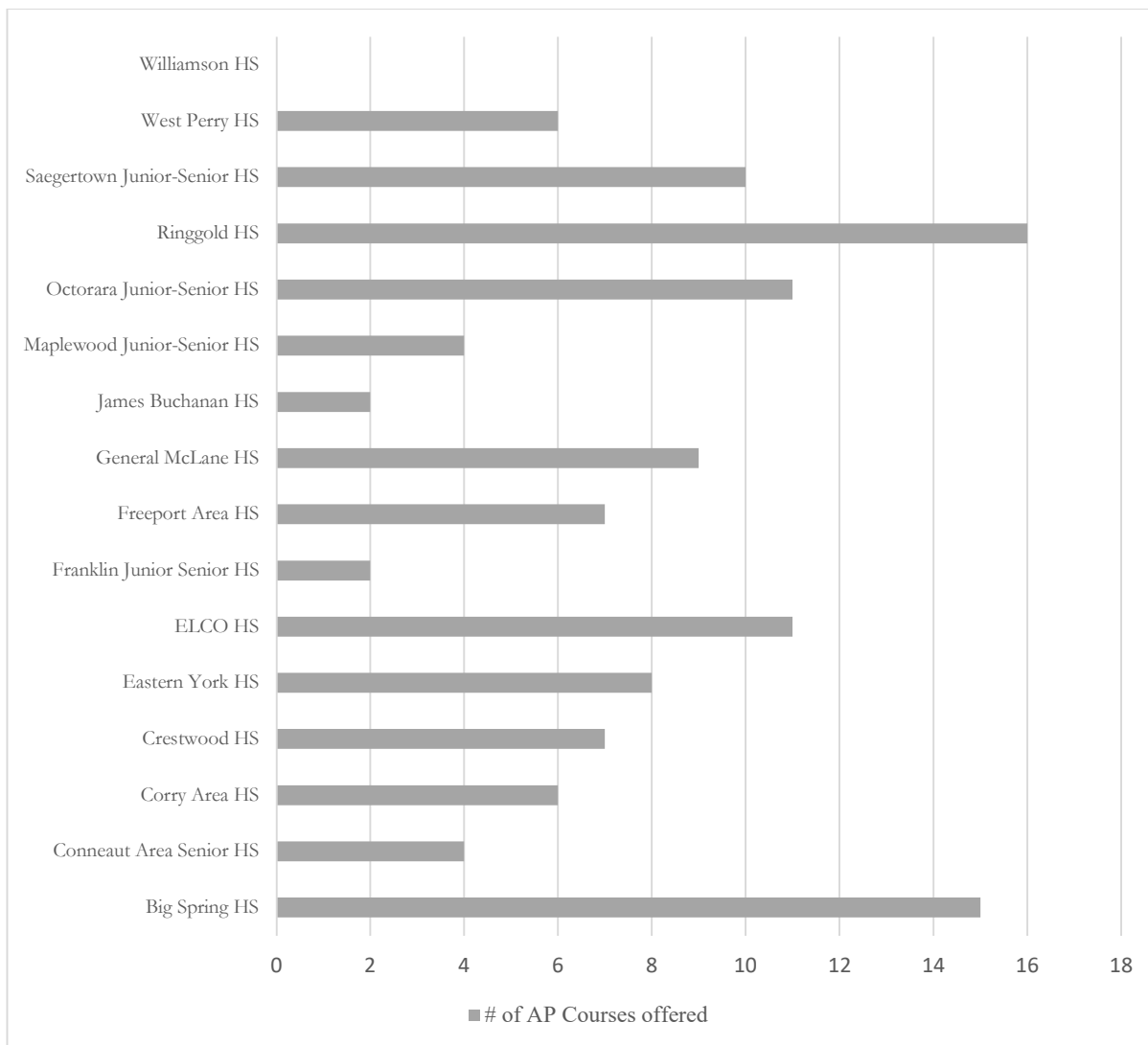


Figure 6: AP Course offered in the 2022/2023 school year

Each school district in the study publishes a “Course of Study” guide listing the courses offered and provides a Course of Study on its website. The document correlates courses to related concepts using Pennsylvania state standards, as the state does not require a specific number of courses offered in a music department. Each category and the definition of courses are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Categories of instruction based on PA State Standards

Category	Definition
Band	Traditional concert band with woodwinds, brass, and percussion
Choir	Vocal ensembles (mixed, treble, bass) for credit
Orchestra	String Ensemble or Full Orchestra for credit
Music Appreciation	A course that provides a survey or overview of a variety of music topics
Guitar	Pedagogical instruction in individual or group setting
Music Theory	A course covering basic music theory, harmony, and analysis (non-AP)
AP Music Theory	See previous definition; certified by the College Board.
Jazz Band	Jazz/Stage Ensemble for credit
Steel Band	Ensemble using steel drums for credit
Music Technology	A course providing instruction using digital recording technology
Piano	Pedagogical instruction in individual or group setting
Musical Theatre	A theatre-arts course with a focus on the musical aspects
Ukulele	Pedagogical instruction in individual or group setting
Music History	A course providing an overview of music from a historical context
Modern Band	A course following the NAFME framework for a modern band ensemble
Voice	Pedagogical instruction in individual or group setting
Percussion	A percussion pedagogy/group performance class

Each course offering was categorized using the state framework, as course titles vary from district to district. The previous figure separated the three traditional ensembles before listing the various elective opportunities for students. Figure 7 shows the number of schools in the study that provide various opportunities for students.

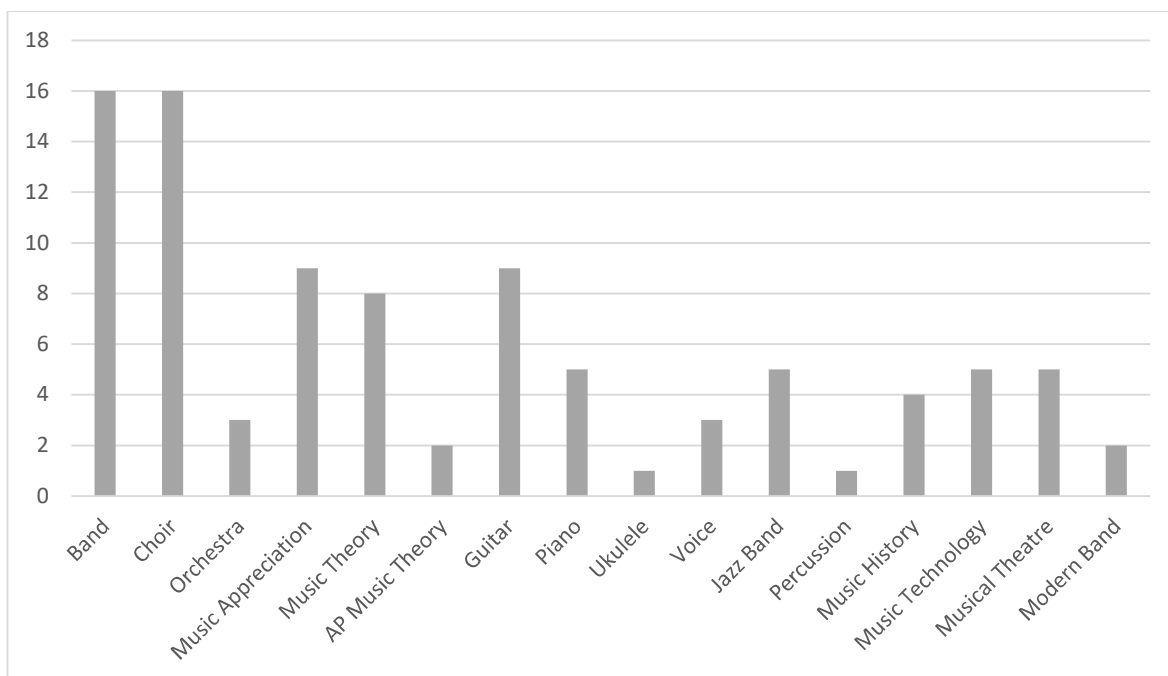


Figure 7: Course Offerings in Study Schools

The only common offerings among the sixteen high schools in the study were band and chorus. Only three schools offered string instruction in the form of either a string orchestra or a full orchestra. Beyond the prominent three ensembles, five schools offered a jazz band course, one offered a percussion ensemble course, and two offered a modern band course. For course credit, beyond the three traditional performance opportunities (band, choir, and orchestra), the variety of courses offered is all across the board, with the average being 3.62 topics offered beyond the traditional ensembles.

Of the sixteen schools, all offered band and choir to students, while only 18.75 percent offer band, orchestra, and choir. All students can enroll in any combination of ensembles, and the opportunity to enroll is offered throughout the entire four years of high school.

Director Perceptions and Data Collection

Directors were surveyed on various items regarding their school band program. The survey and results are found in Appendix A. All identifying information was removed from the tables provided in the appendix. The items included in the survey were:

- Middle school feeder ensembles and configurations
- District Format
- Middle School Data
- High School Data
- Enrollment Challenges
- Finances and Community

Middle school grade configurations in the study school districts widely vary, primarily based on student population. Figure 8 shows the configurations of the schools within the study.

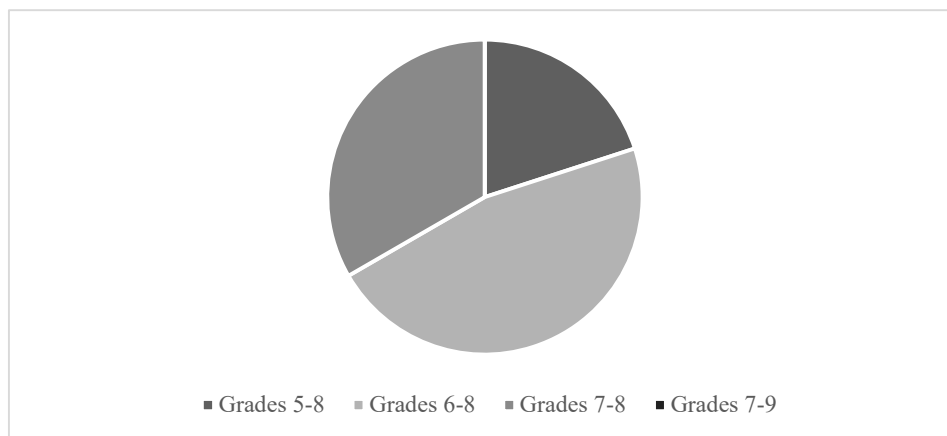


Figure 8: Middle school grade configuration

As shown, 47 percent of schools in the study follow the traditional middle school model of sixth through eighth grade, 33 percent follow the junior high model of seventh and eighth

grade, and 20 percent follow a less traditional model of fifth through eighth grade. No schools in the study follow the older junior high model of seventh through ninth grade.

It was vital to examine ensemble makeup within the study schools, as this often led to differences in pedagogical approaches for educators.¹¹⁶ Directors were asked about the standard format for ensembles within the feeder middle school programs. Figure 9 shows the split between grade-level ensembles in a school compared to a mixed-grade ensemble approach.

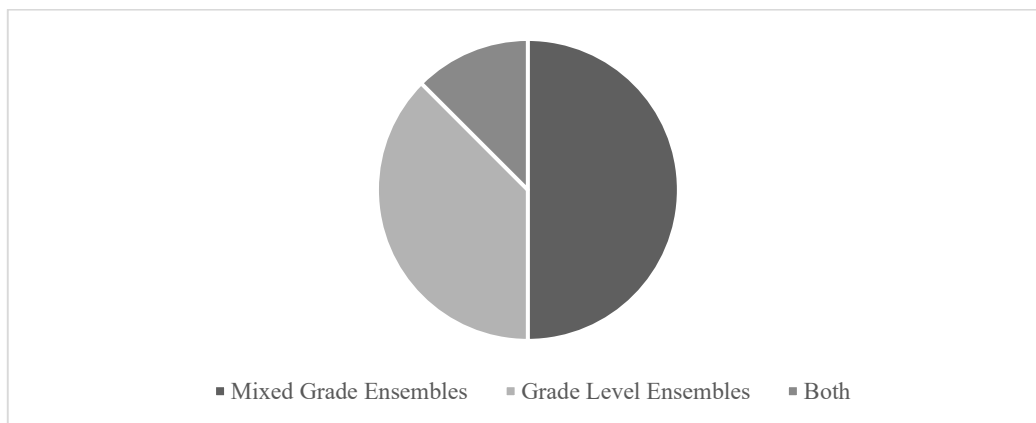


Figure 9: Ensemble design in the middle school

Fifty percent of ensembles in middle schools within the survey were mixed grade or leveled ensembles where students were mixed in appropriate levels. Thirty-eight percent of ensembles were grade-level ensembles, where each grade is separated. Often, this is done for scheduling purposes in middle-level programs. Finally, the remaining 13 percent of ensembles were a mix of both models, typically in the form of a sixth-grade ensemble and a mixed seventh and eighth-grade ensemble.

¹¹⁶ Isbell, "Music Education in Rural Areas," 32.

In addition to the type of ensemble, the number of rehearsals is also an essential distinction in program success. Figures 10 and 11 show both rehearsal frequency and rehearsal length in middle school programs.

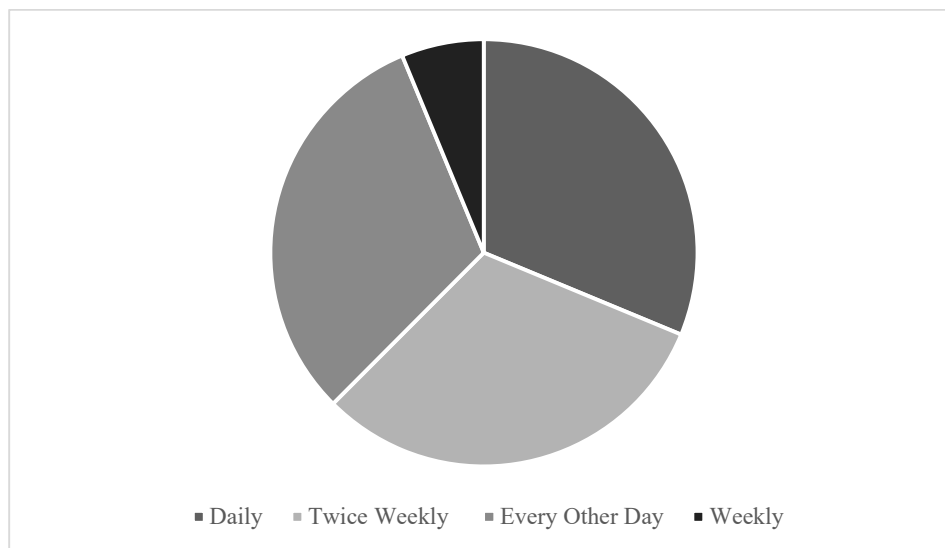


Figure 10: Rehearsal frequency in middle school

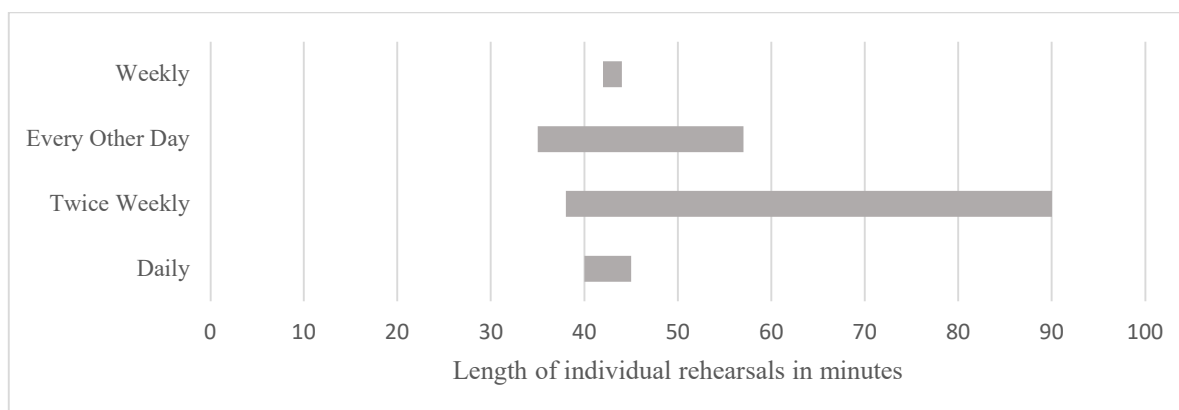


Figure 11: Range of rehearsal lengths in middle school

The middle school schedule is designed differently from school to school. Only six percent of schools in the study had once-weekly rehearsals, while the remaining schools were split evenly between daily, twice-weekly, and every-other-day ensemble schedules. Using this

data, the daily rehearsal schools averaged 210 minutes of ensemble instruction weekly. The twice-weekly schools averaged 99 minutes of instruction weekly. The schools offering every-other-day rehearsals averaged 125 minutes of instruction weekly. The once-weekly schools averaged only forty-three minutes of instruction weekly.

Middle schools often offer individual and small group instruction in pull-out lessons. Figure 12 shows the percentage of schools that offer pull-out lessons for schools offering rehearsals daily, every other day, twice weekly, and once weekly.

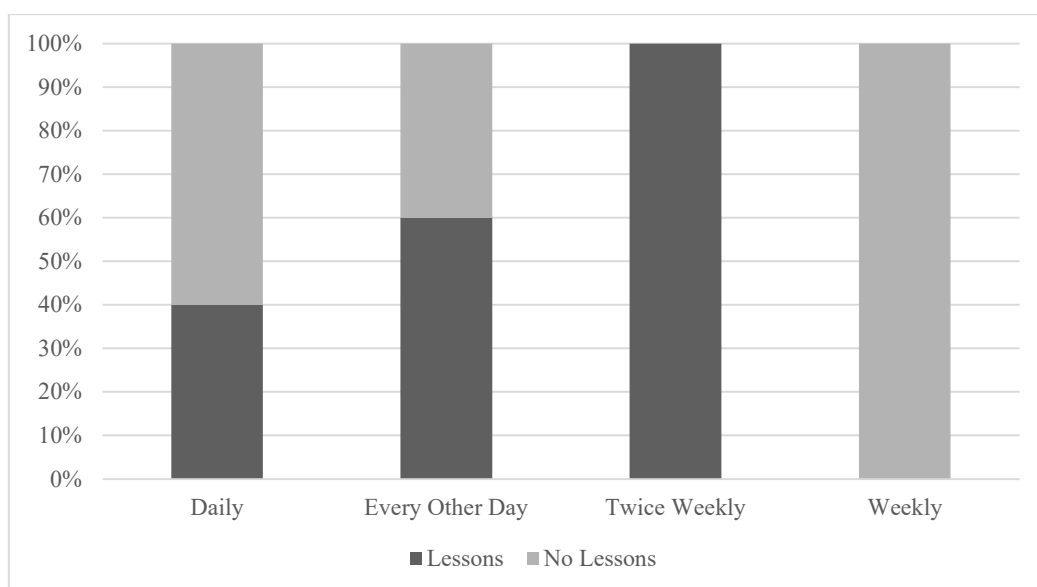


Figure 12: Pull out lesson offerings within rehearsal structures in middle school

The data showed that twice-weekly rehearsal was the most common rehearsal structure supporting pull-out lessons. The outliers were two schools that only offered weekly rehearsals, as they also did not offer lessons.

High School Structure

Directors were surveyed regarding the structure of their high school. All high schools within the study followed the traditional ninth through twelfth-grade structure. Figure 13 shows

the structure of the classroom day within the buildings, with the options of a traditional seven-, eight-, or nine-period day, a four-by-four block schedule, an A/B block schedule, or a hybrid block with a mix of block and regular periods.

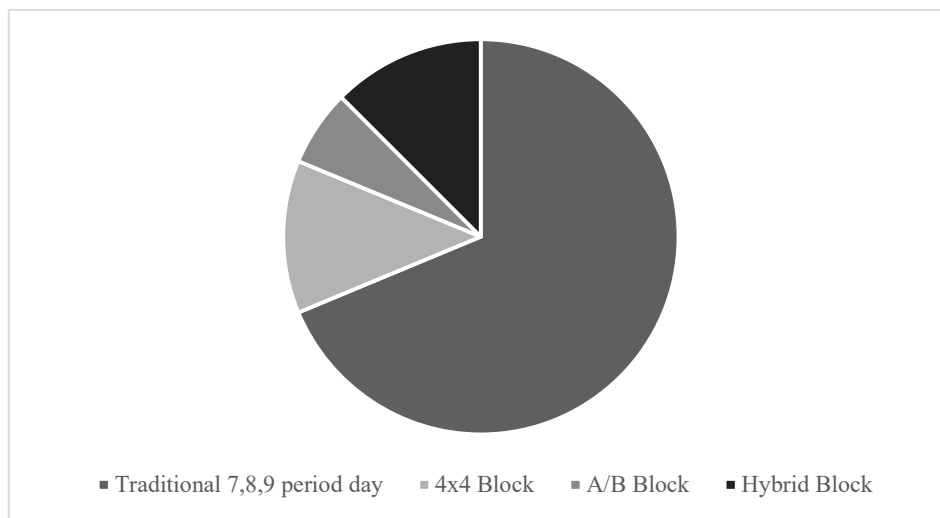


Figure 13: High school schedule structure

Most schools have either continued with, or returned to, a traditional day of shorter classes, with sixty-nine percent of schools following this schedule. The remaining schools function within a block of some type, as shown in the previous chart.

Much like in middle school, examining the frequency of rehearsals was essential. Figure 14 shows this frequency regardless of the structure of the school schedule.

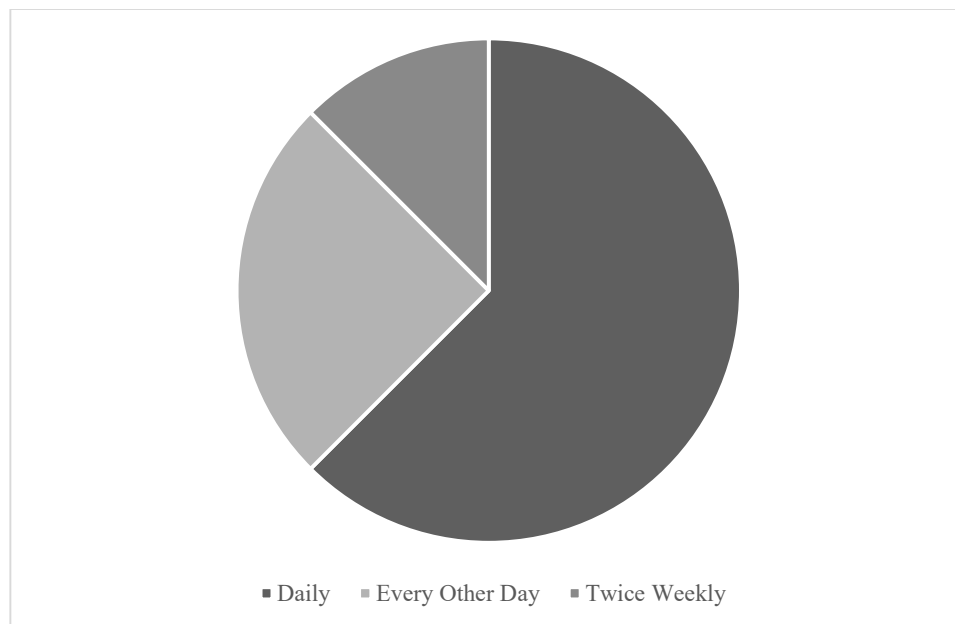


Figure 14: Frequency of high school band rehearsals

One item to note when comparing the high school frequency in Figure 14 to the middle school frequency in Figure 10 was that the high school schedules provided daily rehearsals far more often than the middle school schedules. Sixty-three percent of schools offered daily rehearsals, which may be shared with other ensembles. Figure 4.14 notes the schools offering a dedicated band period versus those that shared the period among ensembles. This structure was evenly split among schools, with 50 percent offering each option.

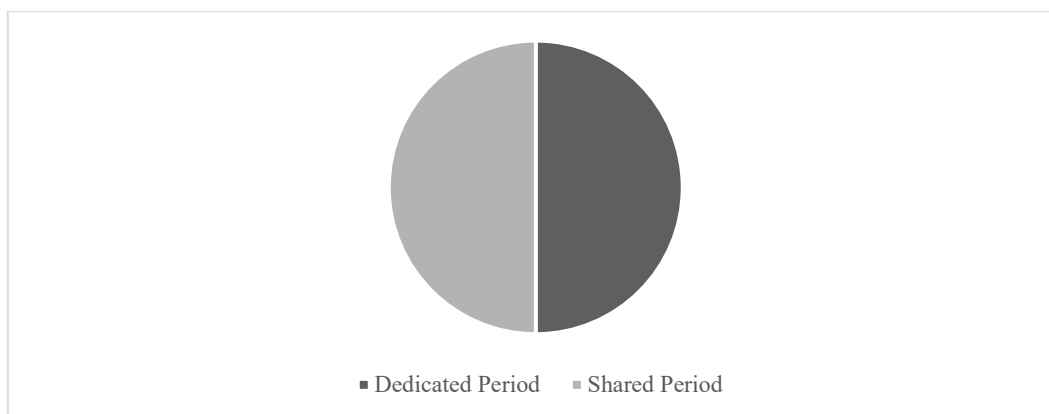


Figure 15: Rehearsal structure, shared versus dedicated

The high school level offered daily rehearsals more often than the middle school schedules. Consequently, the rehearsal time must also be explored. Figure 16 shows the rehearsal time for those offering daily, every other day, or twice-weekly rehearsals.

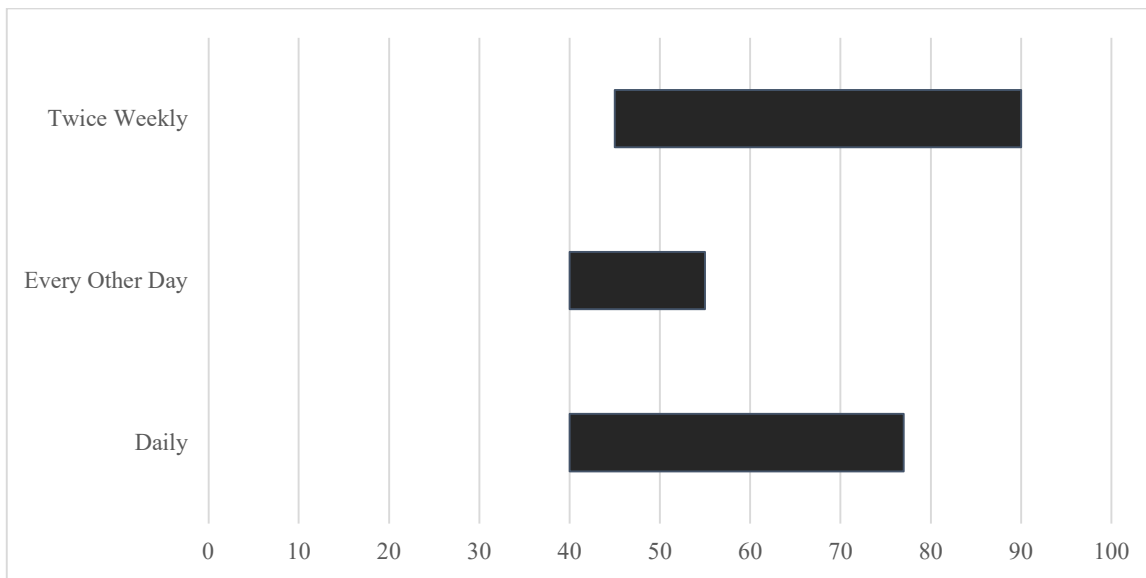


Figure 16: Length of rehearsals sorted by rehearsal frequency

The average daily rehearsal length was 48 minutes, resulting in 240 minutes of rehearsal per week. The average rehearsal length for schools meeting every other day was also 48 minutes, resulting in an average of 120 minutes of rehearsal per week. The average rehearsal length for schools rehearsing twice weekly was 65 minutes, resulting in an average of 125 minutes of rehearsal per week. Figure 17 compares the weekly high school rehearsal minutes to the mentioned middle school minutes. Except for every other day's schedules, high school rehearsal time was fourteen percent higher for daily high school rehearsals and twenty-six percent higher for twice-weekly schedules. High school rehearsal time was four percent lower than middle school for every-other-day schedules.

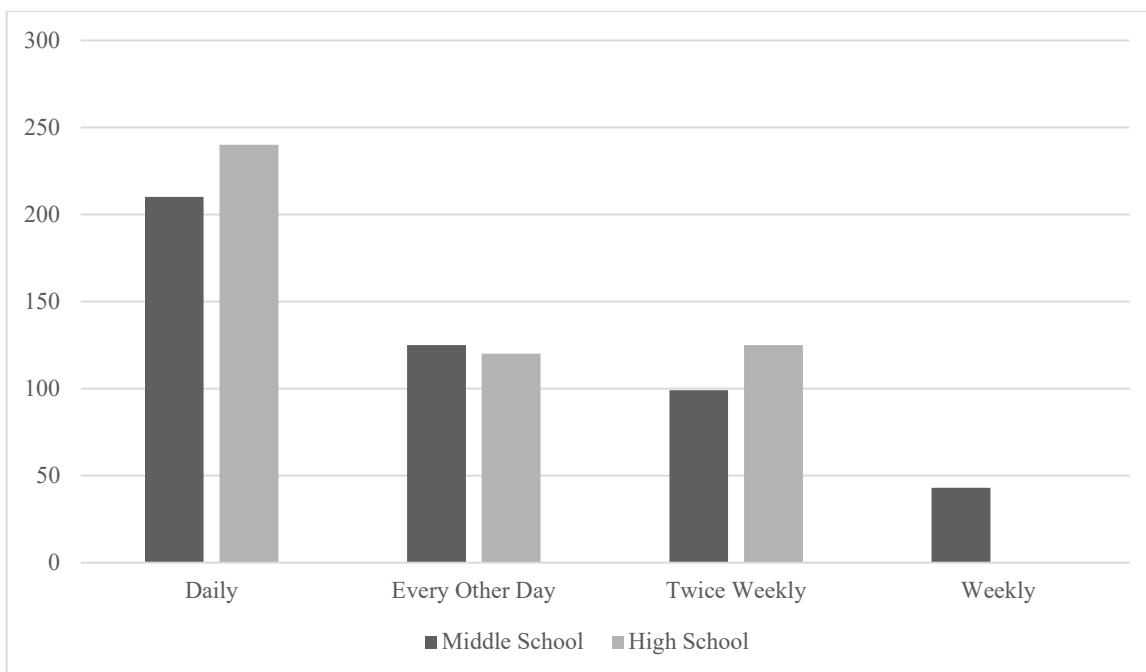


Figure 17: Comparison of rehearsal minutes between middle school and high school

One area specific to the high school is a marching band program. For this study, no discussion regarding the philosophical differences between competitive and non-competitive band programs took place. While all schools in the study have a band program, two did not have a traditional marching band program. Additionally, Figure 18 shows the breakdown of whether marching band is a requirement of the concert band program or if they are distinctly separated.

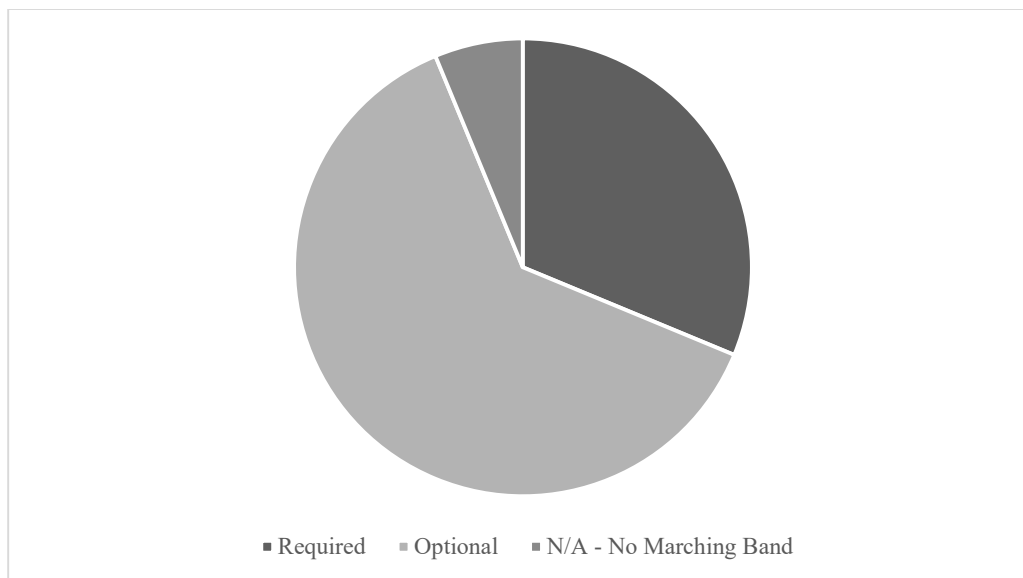


Figure 18: Required marching band versus optional/extracurricular programs within school districts

The survey showed that 63 percent of schools did not require students to be part of the marching band program. As mentioned previously, the purpose of this study is not to look at the philosophy behind the decision of requiring students to participate in marching band as part of the school curriculum versus providing an optional extracurricular marching band which may or may not be competitive.

As mentioned in the literature review, the decision of what type of marching band, whether competitive or non-competitive, can be a deciding factor for student participation in band programs. Ninety-four percent of programs surveyed offer a marching band program in some form. Figure 19 shows the percentage of programs that offer competitive versus non-competitive programs. A non-competitive band program typically performs at football games and parades. In contrast, a competitive band will offer the football game and parade experience as well as association with one or more of Pennsylvania's many competitive marching band

circuits. Unlike many other states, Pennsylvania does not have a statewide marching band circuit; instead, it has several regional organizations.

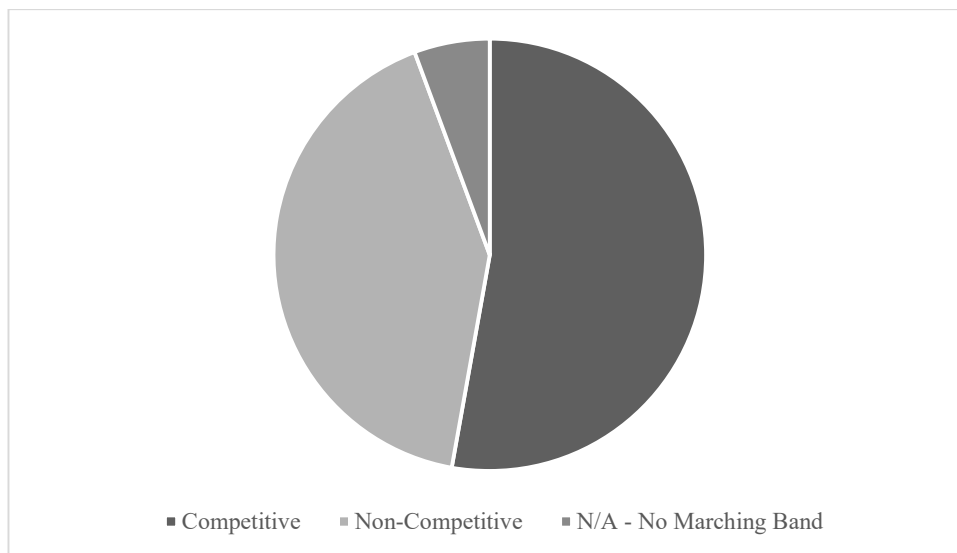


Figure 19: Competitive versus non-competitive marching bands

While fifty-three percent of programs offer a competitive experience, forty-two percent do not. This data compares closely with the programs that require marching bands versus those that do not, with only a few programs that require marching bands and fielding a competitive program. While 63 percent of programs have an optional marching band experience, only 53 percent offer a competitive band experience.

Directors were asked to explore enrollment trends within their high school band programs. Given the challenges associated with the pandemic, directors were asked to look at five-year trends to accurately represent data before the pandemic and where programs stand in the current music culture. Figure 20 shows the enrollment trends in band programs surveyed.

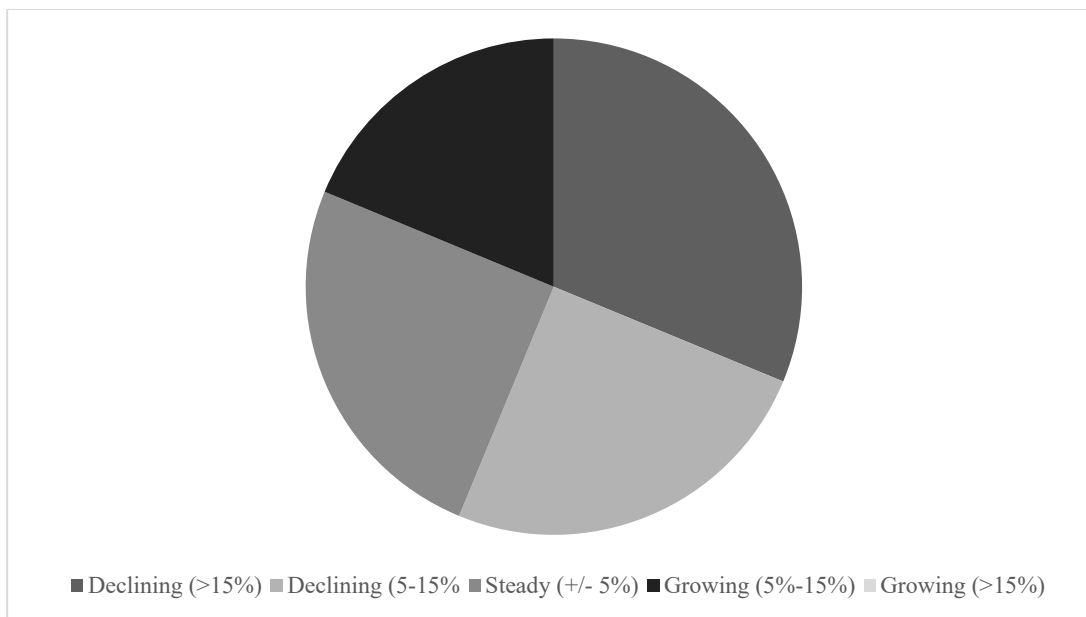


Figure 20: Band enrollment trends in study schools

Programs throughout Pennsylvania were experiencing a variety of enrollment trends. Just over half of the schools studied, or fifty-six percent, have seen some decline over the last five years. In contrast, 25 percent of schools stayed consistent, while 19 percent were experiencing minor growth. No programs reported growth more significant than fifteen percent over the last five years.

Directors were asked about program budgets and other support programs. Specific budget figures were not requested, but five-year budget trends are shown in Figure 21.

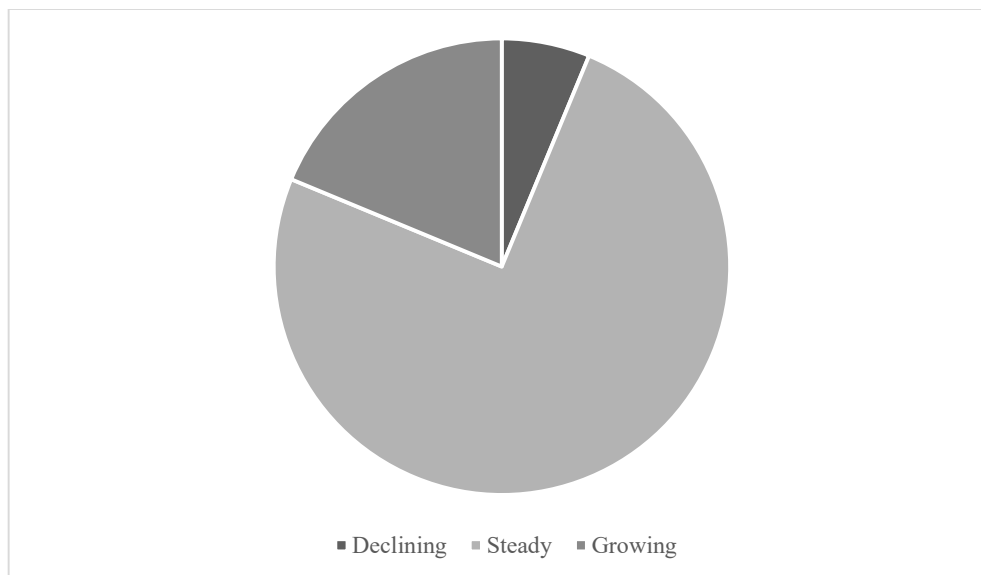


Figure 21: Five-year music department budget trends

The data showed that most schools did not experience budget cuts, and some had seen budget allocations grow. Only six percent of programs had seen a budget cut at some level. Knowing that average school district enrollments in the study schools have been declining, administrative financial support is clearly seen in this data.

While school district funding is the primary funding source for a school band program, outside supplementation through a booster organization is often utilized in band programs. Figure 22 shows the number of schools with booster groups versus those without. Some schools have a music department booster organization, while others have a band-only booster organization.

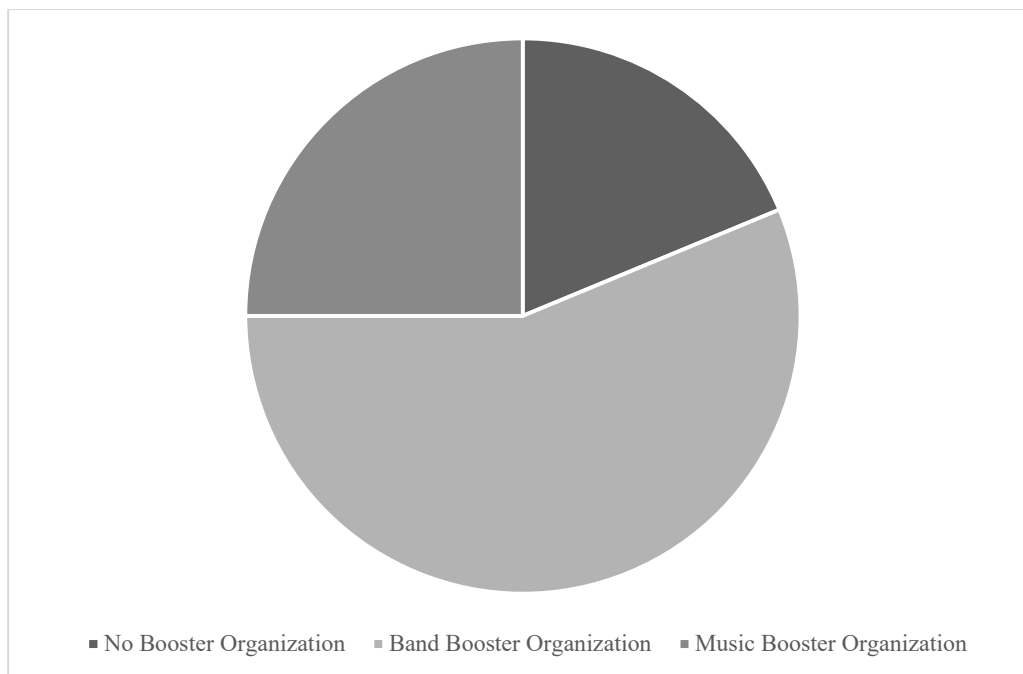


Figure 22: Booster Organizations in Study Schools

Figure 22 demonstrates that fifty-six percent of schools had a band-specific booster organization, and twenty-five percent had a music department booster organization. Only nineteen percent of schools in the study provide no booster organization. Funding ability and volume were not collected. Data collected primarily showed the percentage of funding the boosters provide but to show the schools with additional support organizations, whether funding or parent support.

Finally, directors were asked open-ended questions about what factors they felt were challenges to student enrollment. The points were summarized and categorized into ten main categories, which were open-ended. The main categories include the following areas:

- Community/parent support
- The COVID-19 pandemic and how the district handled the challenges
- Feeder program support, whether at the elementary or middle school

- Financial concerns for students and families, as well as financial concerns within the department
- Jobs that students may have that affect the time needed to perfect their craft in music
- Other activities, including school-sponsored sports and extracurriculars, as well as activities sponsored through non-school entities
- Scheduling of courses both inside and outside the band program, including AP coursework and other conflicts
- Staff concerns, including those currently in place as well as if there were staffing cuts made for budgetary concerns
- Student perception of the program and its success
- Time commitments needed to continue in the program, without explicitly naming what other items may cause these time commitment concerns

Figure 23 shows the number of surveys in which a band director mentioned the ten topics above in the open-ended questions on the director survey.

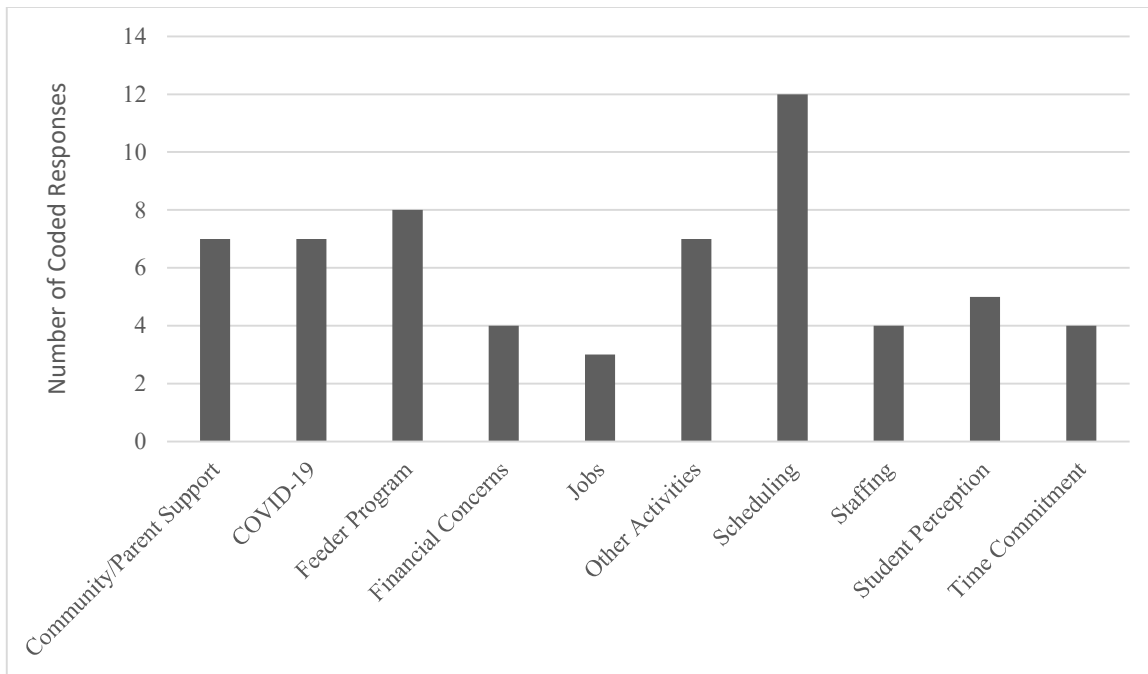


Figure 23: Director's Perception of Program Challenges

As Figure 23 shows, there are numerous factors affecting programs with several of these factors that are common concerns, including scheduling their respective band programs and support for the program, COVID-19, feeder programs, and other school and outside activities. These points are crucial to seeing how a director perceives and overcomes the challenges an individual program may face.

Qualitative Data

To gather further information, interviews with directors in the study were requested. Seven directors responded with a willingness to have a twenty- to thirty-minute discussion with this researcher regarding their perceptions regarding their individual band programs. These interviews took place via Microsoft Teams and were automatically transcribed to save a record of the discussion. Researcher edits were made in cases of spelling errors and to remove identifying information of directors and schools. Data was then uploaded to Delve, an online

tool to allow more accessible coding of data collected. An analysis of what each subject provided is summarized below.

Subject #1

This subject responded quickly to the request to interview and provided a wealth of information regarding their individual program. The first challenge he identified as holding back enrollment was the variety of organizations competing for students, whether sports or FFA in the extracurricular realm or the Career and Technical Center offerings provided to his school district. The subject spoke about the building schedule and stated “if a kid decides that they want to go to votech, I've lost that kid from the program.”

The community support was a positive aspect of the program; however, sports created a challenge for him. When discussing parent support, the subject stated that parents often said, “it's better for my kid to sit on the bench than it is to participate in marching band.” He agreed that sports are valuable and should not be taken lightly but felt there is a cultural challenge with them.

When discussing retention, the common theme was developing relationships with the students and the community. He stated, “The culture that I've been able to cultivate in the high school is where I want it to be, and of course, it's taken me twenty-five years to get it there. But it's where I want it to be. So the kids that are here are here because they want to be here, and I don't have a lot of dead weight.” He continued stating that while his program numbers are not as high as he would prefer, the quality is much improved. He added “from a performance standpoint, we're playing at a better level now than we ever have. But from a number standpoint, it's the smallest it's ever been.”

His final thoughts were that rural school students have a much stronger work ethic than non-rural students. His final statement was, “You've got farm kids who are up at 3:00 AM milking cows. You know, they've got a different perspective on life and the world.” This perspective permeated the conversation.

Subject #2

As with the previous subject, the interview request was acknowledged very quickly. This subject's experience differed from the previous, as he had only served in his position for a few years, whereas the previous subject had served most of his career. Much like the previous subject, the director had a much smaller program. He only had two seniors in the program and approximately ten students in the high school band. He felt this was partially because of consistency, as he was the third band director in ten years.

A concern was the public perception of the program. He stated, “And like my parents' generation, I grew up in this town where I teach now. And so people see it and are like, oh, man, what? What happened? Why isn't there, you know, anybody in the band and all this stuff?” He felt this concern permeated the community, though no blame was being sought by anyone involved.

Like the previous subject, this person provided insight on sports versus bands and stated, “five-year-olds play recorder, but you can watch a five-year-old play football because they just kind of run around and are just kind of cute.” This perspective seemed to fit the community perspective on music versus sports.

The final significant points this subject discussed were scheduling elements, primarily in looking at the middle school feeder program. He stated that the administration had just recently changed the middle school schedule to be positive for the band program, and he seems to have

substantial growth on the horizon. Still, he acknowledged it would be several years until the high school saw the results of this change. He stated that once he had kids in high school, “they are pretty committed.” This commitment appears to be a testament to the internal culture built by this director.

Subject #3

The focus of conversation for this subject was the financial element of his band program. He stated, “Living in an economically disadvantaged area and teaching a subject that notably has a price tag associated with it probably has been the largest challenge.” His secondary concern was the demand for student attention with various program offerings. He stated that there are good working relationships with coaches and music department members, but it still challenges student engagement.

An area affecting retention in high school was student work ethic. He stated, “We see a lot of kids struggle with sticking things out because of the work ethic involved. And I think that relationship sometimes is the piece that helps them overcome that.” His solution was to develop strong relationships with his students to ensure they felt they belonged within the band program and continued their music careers.

This subject’s primary solution to the initial focus on finances was to call on the community. He mentioned a grant foundation that provides alternative funding for music and theater programs. He stated, “It’s when I was able to start getting thousands of dollars each year from the grant foundation, students no longer have to find their own instrument, rent an instrument, purchase an instrument.” He continued by discussing that he had seen a growth from twenty students per year to roughly seventy per year due to this financial barrier being removed

from students. He felt this will continue to allow the band program to grow and retain students in future years.

Subject #4

This subject was also a longer-tenured teacher within rural programs. His initial insight into the current state of his band program was that he is still experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated, “We lost a lot of kids because of COVID because our kids were only in school for half the week at a time, which really affected our middle school band program.” He continued by stating he felt this was the end of the pandemic and that the numbers were beginning to rebound to pre-pandemic levels. He felt that in a school his size, if he can maintain 20 to 25 students per year coming from the middle school, he is at a comfortable enrollment level.

Beyond the pandemic challenges, he also stated that the socioeconomic impact of his community is affecting his band program. He saw not only the traditional rural socioeconomic impact but also the fact that families are moving away from the regional urban centers to the rural setting, which is affecting the district's socioeconomic status. He stated that it “doesn't afford too many to be able to take private lessons and things like that to maybe get better as individual students.” In addition to the private lesson aspect, he discussed instrument quality for students. He stated many “in my high school band are still playing the same student instrument they got in fourth grade.”

When exploring internal factors within the band program, he discussed the marching band program. He felt that in a smaller district, the band program is comprehensive, including the marching band, as the marching band is the “flagship of your program.” His concern was that a smaller marching band was seen more by the public and could affect community support

negatively if it were smaller than the overall band program. He stated this may result in some students not continuing at the high school level as they begin to focus on sports versus music, then comparing this to the larger districts in the region, and that it is less noticeable with a larger student population than it is in the smaller school districts.

As a previous subject had mentioned, a solution to grow student enrollment within a program and avoid socioeconomic concerns was the acquisition of more school-owned inventory. Beginning at the elementary level and continuing through high school, he tries to acquire larger instruments so that the price tag of rentals is no longer a barrier to student enrollment in their band program.

Subject #5

This subject provided many insights on various topics previously mentioned. His first point regarding challenges was that rural schools often want to be similar to their non-rural counterparts. These schools wish to offer the same opportunities for students; however, the resources may not be the same. As a previous subject mentioned, students “aren't the ones going out that are getting lessons that some of these bigger schools do” due to their socioeconomic status.

As a director works to build culture, the subject mentioned that it takes time and is not the same as a core subject teacher “who rolls in at 7:00 and leaves at 2:30.” He stated that “you have to be willing to put the time and the energy and the longevity in to get to the point where it's gonna have that again, that sort of like good, the great flywheel effect, where it runs itself and you'll be eventually able to step back.”

The subject discussed the need to build culture and the idea of building it through repertoire selection, which was a unique perspective among those interviewed. He stated that

part of this was due to scheduling, but it was also important that he “pulled out something else that is just as educational” from his music library that was not from one of the great composers. The educational value of a piece the students would enjoy was more valuable to him than making sure they were experiencing the great composers.

When comparing performance quality and culture building, the subject stated that there is a connection between them, as “you're not going to build a good culture by having a bad performance.” The subject felt it was important to select the repertoire that met his educational needs. He finished the idea by stating he “can't be an educator if there's no one in the room.”

Some of his current students had experienced a cultural challenge, which he mentioned could be a result of the pandemic. His current senior class seems filled with apathy, which is negative toward internal culture building. He stated that rebuilding the culture he had worked to develop is currently a struggle.

The subject said several solutions for mitigating enrollment and retention challenges are based on the community of music educators he is surrounded by. He discussed the importance of playing for each other face-to-face, discussing individual students, sharing their knowledge bases, and working through each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Subject #6

This subject echoed many statements of the previous subjects of this study. He stated that the first challenge is the population pool of students. He stated that the “school wants to act as though it's a much larger school than it is, knowing we only have a population of about 750 students in the high school.” The two areas within the district that are affecting enrollment are Future Farmers of America (FFA) and vocational/technical programs. He also discussed the

desire for students to be part of the many programs the school offers versus the opportunity to excel at a smaller number of programs.

When exploring external influences, the primary one mentioned was the socioeconomic status of the school district. He stated that many students work jobs to support themselves or work on family farms. This may affect student participation, especially in extracurricular offerings.

The subject stated that the middle school feeder program improved significantly following the pandemic. He stated, “We're seeing quality as well as quantity, and it's definitely a noticeable change.” He also stated that while last year was the smallest the program has been, the current school year is showing substantial growth. He attributes some of the size discrepancies to a “bubble” class in 2020 that graduated while navigating recruitment in the early stages of the pandemic as a reason for student enrollment declines.

Related to cultural issues, the subject stated, “We also have a lot of second-generation band kids. Their parents were in the music program, and they were part of the band when they were in school, so they remember when the band was huge. This band in the 1980s was 150 or 200 kids.” This challenge in culture was overcome by developing a culture within the band program and through the band booster organization. He stated that he had developed a commission consortium series funded by his booster organization and even went as far as having students help raise funds for one commission.

Subject #7

As with other subjects, the school size was the first challenge mentioned by this subject. He stated it is difficult for the students to schedule the needed graduation requirement courses, and this has been a more significant concern with the high school bell schedule changing from a

traditional eight-period day to seven periods. With one less course option, providing every course the students request is harder. This scheduling change has resulted in a dramatic drop in band enrollment, but growth in the quality of those students who are present.

This subject had a differing philosophy of marching band, as the band does not perform at football games or traditional band competitions and only performs at parades throughout the fall months. This helps offset a booster organization that no longer exists. He stated a willingness to consider a traditional marching band program; however, he cautioned, "It pulls the kids into another activity, and I don't want to make that commitment for them. I want them to be part of the conversation."

He stated that within his school district, students are not likely to participate in activities that are not part of the school day and, as a result, do not have any extracurricular band activities beyond the parade marching band. Even though the district is located near several non-rural population centers, he stated, "It's hard for us because we just don't have the kids to and the ability for the kids to get back and do the things because they're working or being a rural community."

A unique area of growth this subject considered was based on an offering by the art department with the potential development of a four-year course for music students culminating in a senior project. He stated that it is crucial when students are part of the band program to praise when needed and show the students you care about their time in the band program. Even if a student is making minimal growth, note the growth off the podium to allow them to see the care the director has. This subject mentioned that he tries to provide opportunities for students, including Music in the Parks, Music Performance Assessments (MPAs), and the various honor festivals, to show students there is more to music outside the walls of the school building.

Code Analysis

The interview transcripts were analyzed based on the three research questions for this thesis. These questions were summarized to organize the data coding. The three categories of codes were:

- Impacts on Enrollment and Retention
- Influences on Enrollment Trends
- Strategies to Counter Influences

Numerous codes specific to research questions were found within the three main categories. Table 2 lists the codes used and the number of times these codes were located within the interview transcripts. The table is sorted by the number of references to a specific code under each of the three aforementioned topics. The quantity column notes the number of times these codes were located within the interview transcripts.

Table 2: Code references from interview transcripts

Impacts on Enrollment and Retention		Influences on Enrollment Trends		Strategies to Counter Influences	
Code	Qty	Code	Qty	Code	Qty
School District Enrollment	22	Availability of Instruments	16	Alternative Funding	12
Socioeconomic Status	20	Career Technical Opportunities	16	Community Partnerships/Connections	10
Community Engagement	12	Lack of Resources	12	Targeted Recruitment/Retention	9
External Influences	11	Competing Activities	11	Relationship/Reputation Building	8
School Funding	10	Bell Schedule	10	Enhancing Program Reputation	6
Student Engagement	9	Community Support	10	Instrument Availability	6
Lack of Excitement	6	COVID-19 Pandemic	8	Positive Internal Culture	4
Sports	6	Curriculum Changes	5	Improving Public Relationships	4
Limited Access to Band Resources	4	Economic Factors	4	Revised Curriculum	3
Culture of the Band	3	Student Work Ethic	3	Flexibility with Scheduling	2

The data provided by directors shows numerous trends across the band programs within the study. Based on the interviews completed, the top factor impacting enrollment and retention is the declining district-wide enrollment each director is seeing, which is a challenge that cannot be corrected internally. The top factors influencing the enrollment trends are the availability of student instruments and the career technical opportunities provided to students as an option in their school curriculum. Numerous strategies are ranked highly through coding. The most frequent solution is finding alternative funding, which may help counter the lower socioeconomic statuses affecting band enrollment. This may be expanded upon by developing community partnerships and connections, which was the second most frequently mentioned strategy for countering enrollment and retention challenges. Developing a strong recruitment

plan and a retention process was the next most common solution, and this can be connected to several of the other points, including building relationships within the school district as well as relationships with the public. While many individual strategies were mentioned through the interviews, several of the strategies may be related.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Rural high school band programs face unique challenges compared to non-rural programs. The data collected from band directors within this study demonstrated similar perspectives on their band programs' challenges and the challenges that may be outside of individual control as educators. Enrollment in many rural school districts in Pennsylvania continues to decline but is beginning to level off and, in some cases, showing growth within rural communities. While this growth is positive, it does not fully reverse the many years of decline.

Some factors within a school that affected band programs included scheduling within a school building and the extracurricular and athletic offerings. The district's overall enrollment limited high school directors as a primary factor in student enrollment and retention within a band program. The master schedule within a building also affected enrollment if it is not conducive to a band program.

Financial concerns affect band programs in numerous ways, including budgets within a program, financial support from booster and community organizations, and funds to maintain equipment. Band programs are inherently expensive, and without financial support, the successes a program may hope to achieve are often questioned.

An area that affected band programs in the short term was the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic is over, its effects on programs were noted to have long-lasting effects on the growth of the program, in addition to student achievement as a whole, as an activity that required breathing was affected by a respiratory illness. Enrollment was affected, which affected the perception of programs by parents, students, and community members. How a school district and program reacted and adapted had a direct and lasting effect on a band program.

Finally, directors needed to build strong relationships with students. This is something that often must be intentional. Relationship building can lead to positive culture building within a band program. Rural programs are unique because a singular educator often works with a smaller group of students for a substantial amount of their formative years within a band. The culture this educator fosters and the relationship this educator builds will be paramount in seeing student engagement within a band program.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

A large amount of information was accessible freely via public records maintained by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), including descriptive data on school district population, population trends, and many more specifics of teaching staff within individual school districts. Rural Pennsylvania populations have declined approximately 2 percent from 2010 to 2020.¹¹⁷ PDE has forecasted a leveling off of population decline within school districts, which should help school districts provide forecast data for programmatic decision-making.

Much of the scholarly work regarding rural teacher retention showed that the challenges of the rural communities, including but not limited to a lack of resources and infrastructure and limited advancement opportunities, contributed to higher than average turnover of teachers in rural communities. The retention of teachers within the qualitative data collected showed a nearly even split among those interviewed. Several were early in their teaching career, while the rest were longer-tenured educators who have spent as much as twenty-five years building the culture within their band programs.

The other activities within a school district affected music programs directly and indirectly. The Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) is the statewide

¹¹⁷ “Rural Quick Facts.”

organization that oversees all scholastic athletic offerings. PIAA oversees school districts, private schools, and charter schools throughout the state. All schools are members of this organization. PIAA currently recognizes thirty athletic opportunities as well as seven emerging sports. Within the study schools, every currently recognized athletic offering was represented at least once, and one emerging sport, girls wrestling, was represented several times. Several offerings were represented infrequently. This may be a result of facilities within a school district. Limited populations may result in the challenge of having enough students to fill multiple teams; often, in rural districts, two- and three-sport athletes compete all year in various activities. This can directly affect music programs as these students must choose to commit to an activity and, as a result, may need to drop other activities.

The average school district offered eight of the thirty-six Advanced Placement (AP) courses.¹¹⁸ While as few as no AP courses were offered in one district and as many as sixteen were offered in another district, having an average of seven to eight courses may create unique challenges when building master schedules within a school, as these courses are often only offered once per year within these school districts.

When looking at a school district course of study, it must be noted that each Pennsylvania district runs autonomously and provides what it determines are the best course offerings for its populations. Of the sixteen high schools in this study, all offered traditional band and choral programs. Only eighteen percent of districts in the study provided an orchestral program. This may be attributed to the added cost of a second type of instrumental ensemble, specifically with facilities, equipment, and staffing, as well as the limitations of the student population. Almost every district offered some music elective beyond the two, primarily performance offerings, with

¹¹⁸ “How Many AP Classes Should I Take?,” accessed November 21, 2023, <https://www.collegetransitions.com/blog/a-guide-to-high-school-course-planning>.

music theory, guitar, and music appreciation being the most common within a traditional schedule. A growing trend was emerging ensemble offerings, including guitar, voice, piano, and modern band, as this can often attract additional population centers within a school district. Two schools within the study offered a formal modern band curriculum. The National Association for Music Education states explicitly that music programs are not “one-size-fits-all” and must adapt to fit the specific needs within the district.¹¹⁹ Directors may find multiple methods to implement and incorporate modern bands and emerging ensembles within a district, and this is another opportunity for educators to provide relevancy in the ever-changing musical landscape in classrooms.

Feeder programs for high schools enable a program to succeed and thrive. Every high school in the study was in a traditional grades 9-12 configuration, with all feeders offering some programming between grades 5-8 in various configurations. Middle school feeders were offered in various ways, and each had advantages and disadvantages, whether in individual grades or mixed-grade ensembles. The amount of time spent in instruction provided a more valuable educational experience for students in ensembles and small group lessons.

Within full ensemble instruction models, the weekly instructional time for middle school band ensembles varied significantly from 45 to 210 minutes. The more time spent in large ensemble instruction, the more students grew and developed as a cohesive musical ensemble.

Beyond the full ensemble, small group lessons in middle schools were a valuable addition to a band curriculum. While not surprising, the schools that offered band daily were less likely to offer pullout lesson instruction than those that offered band every other day or twice

¹¹⁹ Christopher Cavarretta, “Curriculum Design for the K-8 Modern Band Instructor - NAFME,” *Https://Nafme.Org/*, accessed November 21, 2023, <https://nafme.org/blog/curriculum-design-for-the-k-8-modern-band-instructor/>.

weekly. While this structure varied from district to district, this added time in small group instruction provided a valuable supplement to the large ensemble setting.

Within the study, over half of the schools provided daily rehearsal, though some shared that time with other performance ensembles. The resulting schedules within the high school schedule provided an average of 240 minutes of instructional time, yielding a substantial amount of additional time compared to the middle school schedules.

High school band programs typically include a marching band program. Within the study, only one school did not offer a traditional marching band. The band only performed in parades. Half of the programs within the study offered a competitive band program, while the others were non-competitive.

Whether to compete as band program against other band programs is a philosophical decision of directors, communities, and programs.¹²⁰ Only 30 percent of schools required students to be in the marching band as part of the band curriculum, whereas the vast majority offered marching band as an extracurricular. This philosophy is one that differs and is often based on the director's priorities for their individual band program.

While school district enrollment was a significant factor, it was not always in line with band program enrollment, given the many circumstances surrounding the desire to be part of a band. Nearly half of this study's programs showed steady enrollment or slight growth. The remaining showed moderate to substantial enrollment declines of over 15 percent over the last five years.

One area that affected programs was financial support from the district and outside organizations. The data showed that most schools within the study had maintained steady

¹²⁰ Janel Healy, "To Compete or Not to Compete," *Halftime Magazine*, last modified September 24, 2007, accessed November 22, 2023, <https://halftimemag.com/july-august-2007/to-compete-or-not-to-compet.html>.

budgets despite district enrollment declines. Several programs saw growing budgetary allocations from the school district, which, given the cost of goods post-pandemic, appeared appreciated by directors surveyed. Additionally, 81 percent of schools in the study had a booster organization, whether in the form of band only or music department support. This added resource for funding and volunteer support aided in the growth and sustainability of a band program.

Directors were asked about their perceptions of what is affecting the growth and sustainability of programs. Several common factors among the study schools negatively affected band programs. The primary factor recognized throughout was scheduling, whether it be how band itself is scheduled or the conflicts mentioned previously with other course offerings for students and added elements such as dual enrollment programs or internship opportunities. An area noted by approximately 20 percent of directors was the feeder program, both as a challenge and positive. If a band had a robust feeder, it ensured sustainability. Still, if a feeder program struggled to maintain the quality and quantity of students, it negatively affected a band's offerings at the high school level.

The COVID-19 response to bands and schools created an added challenge in the current climate. In a respiratory pandemic, activities like music that rely on respiration were affected. How a school district responded ensured success or guaranteed failure through the pandemic. Many districts in the study followed the available research and data regarding the pandemic. They provided modified experiences for students through socially distanced ensembles and staggered rehearsals to ensure music could happen safely while doing so. Since the official end of the pandemic in May of 2023, most, if not all, music programs returned to formats used before March of 2020.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study was the sample size resulting from the parameters outlined in the research plan. While Pennsylvania has 499 school districts, with nearly half being classified as rural, less than 10 percent of the total school districts in the state fit the study size based on student enrollment, and fewer directors responded within that category. Many small rural districts are difficult to compare to average districts as they often have a different depth of program offerings historically and currently. A challenge within this study is the comparison of a school district of 2000 students K-12 and compare it to districts of 4000 students, given that it would be nearly impossible to provide any balanced ensemble experience for those students.

The other limitation of this study was ensuring that directors provided detailed information for the qualitative survey and were willing to participate in interviews. While some data provided could be discerned through public records, the need to rely on the accuracy of director data created potentially biased results. The most valuable elements provided by directors were the enrollment figures of their programs and the internal structure of their respective band programs, as this data is often private. The perspectives of band directors on their respective programs were negatively biased, providing for negative qualities from directors. However, they were also designed to allow directors to note strategies they found that worked to mitigate these negative qualities through open-ended input. This input was crucial in developing strategies to mitigate enrollment challenges, and the goal of the negative bias was to provide directors an opportunity to recognize those specific areas that are working to mitigate these challenges.

Recommendations for the Profession

Rural band directors were often isolated compared to their counterparts within urban and suburban districts. In Pennsylvania, this isolation is exacerbated by the amount of local control compared to states with regional or county-based school systems. While each may be influenced by regional, state, or federal guidelines, local districts may choose on their own how to educate their population. Most choose to comply with regional/state/federal mandates for reasons including continued funding, accreditation, and governmental pressures. The study group size allowed for comparing similar demographic makeups within rural communities to find trends and commonalities and develop recommendations for educators.

Continued Relationship Building Within a Community

Directors in rural school districts must continue to be their most potent advocates. This must follow a multifaceted approach. Directors must build relationships within their buildings. This begins with their students in the classroom and beyond instruction from the podium and can extend to the faculty, staff, and administration. As programs experience growth or decline, and as schedules and needs within a building continue to shift, educators must advocate for their program's continued needs. In addition to the length of rehearsals, it must include the time and other courses scheduled concurrently both within and outside the music department.

As programs grow, a push towards the development of added performance opportunities such as string programs or the more recent push for modern band programs may provide opportunities for community support in differing ways, as this reaches an added demographic of students within the district. While these opportunities provide added student experiences, directors must review program demographics to ensure that added programs do not negatively affect existing program enrollment, as they will be pulling from the same student population. In

rural schools, there are often fewer opportunities within the building schedule to support these added opportunities adequately.

Outside the school building, directors must also build strong relationships within the community. This includes parents, alumni, and outside community members, who may also serve as district school board members. In communities that are often working class, advocacy is essential to ensure programs thrive and the community still recognizes the relevance of the music program. Many directors surveyed and interviewed stated in their comments that students are pulled in many directions, including sports, career, technical centers, and more extensive national programs such as FFA. Music departments must advocate to maintain relevancy within these communities to continue a visible presence for many people within the surrounding communities.

Relationships with Colleagues

Many music educators are isolated in their districts, and this isolation may be more noticeable in smaller schools. Several of the subjects interviewed as part of this research indicated the value of colleagues within their districts, regardless of the level they teach. These relationships allow educators to work together and use each other's strengths and weaknesses to continue building a band program successfully.

Many counties throughout Pennsylvania have county band festivals, and all districts in Pennsylvania are eligible to send musicians to the PMEA District Band Festivals in their geographic regions. Festivals allow directors to have face-to-face conversations they may not have had regularly, allowing for continued collegial development with colleagues in similar districts. These conversations are often some of the most valuable professional development a director can receive, as they can talk about their successes and challenges with colleagues who

have similar needs within their districts. Connecting with colleagues will allow educators to continue growing and have sounding boards to provide feedback on ideas and challenges in the classroom.

Creative Funding

Many schools in Pennsylvania struggle with budget concerns. Unfunded mandates are commonplace throughout Pennsylvania schools, and these mandates allocate money automatically without a specific funding source provided. Budgets outside of core subjects could be susceptible to cuts.

Most directors surveyed and interviewed touched on creative funding options to remove barriers for those in rural high school band programs. The cost of instrument rentals and purchases is one of the highest expenses within a program. Several directors mentioned the desire to purchase the more expensive instruments within a band, such as oboes, baritone saxophones, and tubas, as a simple barrier removal for students and parents.

One interviewed subject discussed the option of a grant foundation to cover the cost of school-owned instruments and rentals. Removing the financial barrier is still the common goal; however, finding unique sources of funding can benefit a program beyond the current generation.

Most subjects interviewed did not specifically mention a booster organization. However, most of those who responded to the initial survey stated they had a booster organization. Booster groups are a potential source of added funds beyond the school budget. One subject mentioned the implementation of a commission consortium to continue supporting composers and new repertoire to the wind band idiom. While not a solution to the financial barrier for

students, this can serve as an opportunity to showcase the music program to the community, which, in turn, can provide added support to a music program.

Intentional Instructional Design

Curriculum development is a constant process in school districts. As band directors work with members of their school district music department when developing courses, educators must ensure relevancy for the students as well as programming to ensure that band programs continue to demonstrate success. Intentional programming within a music program was apparent in the schools surveyed, as the majority do not offer a string program. When ensembles pull from a smaller population of students, it becomes more difficult for students to participate in a third ensemble beyond band and choir while ensuring they dedicate adequate practice times. Additionally, while many opportunities exist within the Pennsylvania curriculum framework, ensuring that a district does not offer too many courses allows educators to focus on their individual strengths as educators to ensure both relevancy and quality of instruction take place.

As schools build individual courses of study, many offer opportunities for students outside the music department. As the survey data showed, AP courses are prevalent throughout Pennsylvania schools. These courses may be valuable to a student's education but can also limit student scheduling opportunities. Similarly, the career and technical programs can also affect student enrollment as these are typically off-campus offerings and take the place of a portion of the school day.

Beyond the curricular offerings, band directors must be intentional in choosing extracurricular opportunities offered to students. While the majority of schools offer a traditional marching band, there continues to be two philosophical ideas when looking at competitive versus non-competitive programs. Directors should capitalize on the student

relationships they have built to gauge the preference of their students when planning these programs. Beyond the marching band, directors must also be aware of the population size when looking at other opportunities such as indoor colorguard, indoor percussion, and jazz band, to ensure there are enough students to support these programs. Evaluating each band program may need to take place annually to ensure viability of elements within the individual band program.

Recommendations for Future Study

Given this study's purpose, procedures, limitations, and findings, the primary recommendation for future research would be to expand the data set from the mid-sized rural districts to all rural districts in Pennsylvania, providing the opportunity for more extensive data collection and allowing for comparison of the smaller districts to what is and is not working when compared to the larger rural districts. Beyond that, the next level of recommended study would be to expand outside of Pennsylvania and look at rural districts of similar demographics to see if there are other aspects within other states that provide differing effects on music programs.

Beyond the expansion of this study, the evaluation of studied schools in five to ten years would benefit the profession. Programs may continue to experience positive growth and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will have passed. Allowing for continued data collection on the strategies recommended and their viability in developing positive trends in a band program will aid in developing continued strategies for positive enrollment.

Summary

Music plays an essential role in the development of the whole child. What this looks like from child to child, director to director, and school to school can vary greatly; however, the

fundamental need for a well-developed music education program for students is the common factor in ensuring student success.

The goal of this study was to develop strategies to counteract negative affects on enrollment and retention in mid-sized rural Pennsylvania high school band programs. The primary strategies can be summarized into four main areas. First, a director must continue to build a positive relationship with the community, both inside the school as well as the external community surrounding the school district. Positive relationships may foster added solutions to counter any negative effects a program faces, including funding and public perception of the band program.

A director must build relationships with their colleagues, including music colleagues in a school district as well as music colleagues in other local districts. Developing strong relationships with colleagues will provide opportunities for a band director to have collaborative discussions and work to determine ways to build on successes within a band program.

A director must find creative ways to fund their band programs, as often the school budget may not provide for all of the needs of a high school band program. Band programs may face challenges as a result of unfunded mandates within a school district. Finding creative funding steps, whether through grants, fundraising, or the community, may offset these inherent funding obstacles.

Finally, a director must be intentional when developing the instructional design of the program, whether in looking at the band itself or the other course offerings within the music department in the school. It is beneficial for a band director to periodically review the current offerings to ensure relevancy as well as ensure student enrollment continues to trend in a positive

direction. Finding solutions to provide opportunities for students to grow musically will benefit a band program directly in long-term positive enrollment.

Rural schools are unique when compared to their urban and suburban counterparts. Still, recognizing the sheer number of rural districts in Pennsylvania shows that while directors often may feel isolated, it is vital that these directors realize they are not alone in their work. Rural schools can provide equivalent performance opportunities for students in band compared to their counterparts in the larger population centers throughout the state. However, how this looks from the outside may be different.

Rural band programs provide opportunities for students in communities that are often vocationally centered. Many students in these schools are part of career and technical center programs or the FFA programs, which provide opportunity for students to learn trades. The rural music programs provide an added element to the careers of these students and may be long lasting. Music educators in rural schools are poised to provide relationships with students that will allow students to grow, and must remove the barriers in place that may impede student enrollment and retention, whether it be scheduling or financial concerns. The more barriers removed and the more positive relationships fostered through a band program will result in positive trends in enrollment and retention year to year.

Many studies have been completed, both in and out of music education. One common factor being discussed in current education reform is the development of culture and relationships within a school setting. Music educators must consider this when developing their programs and allow their students' needs and desires to help direct the program's trajectory.¹²¹ A student's perspective and input in a program ensure student buy-in and allow a program to grow.

¹²¹ Patrice Madura and Michael L. Mark, *Contemporary Music Education*, 4th ed. (Boston: Schirmer Cengage Learning, 2014), 160.

Student perspective may be strengthened through those positive interactions within the band program and the specifically the band director. Additionally, students will have a positive perspective when they are afforded many opportunities to excel within a band program without barriers in place.

Rural directors should recognize that the trends in rural music education are not isolated to one school, and they must be part of the changes needed to ensure success and growth in the future. Children from every background within a school should feel welcome to be a part of the music program, and working in a vertically aligned system from start to graduation will allow this to occur more often. In an environment in education where students desire to be part of as many opportunities as possible in their respective high school careers, students must see the value of what is provided in a comprehensive music education and band program to continue being involved. Educators must know that opportunities may pull students away from the band for the remainder of their high school time or even for short windows. Still, they must be willing to adapt and welcome these students back whenever possible.

Rural schools can be challenging educational environments, but they can also be rewarding opportunities for educators. Rural communities are often tight-knit and very family-oriented. With this, the right educator with the right mindset will feel as though they are welcome regardless of their background. Rural directors must celebrate the successes and, more importantly, celebrate the students participating in their band programs.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY/INTERVIEW TOOLS**Initial Survey**

1. Does your High School have a single Middle School feeder, or do you receive students from multiple schools?

Single Feeder School

Multiple Feeder Schools

2. Which of the following ensemble options does your school district offer K-12?

Check all that apply.

Band

Chorus

Orchestra

Modern Band

3. What is the current configuration of your Middle School?

5th – 8th grades

6th – 8th grades

7th & 8th grades

6th – 9th grades

7th – 9th grades

4. What is the current configuration of ensembles at the Middle School level?

Grade-Level Ensembles

Mixed-Grade Ensembles

Other: _____

5. How often per week does each Middle School Band meet?

Daily

Every other Day

Twice per week

Once per week

Other: _____

6. How long is each rehearsal period?

7. Do students receive pull-out band lessons?

Yes

No

8. If you answered yes, how often are pull out band lessons?

9. What is the band enrollment in the youngest grade level of this building?

10. What is the band enrollment in the oldest grade level in this building?

11. What is the current configuration of your High School?

7th – 12th grade

8th – 12th grade

9th – 12th grade

10th – 12th grade

Other: _____

12. How many students are currently enrolled in your high school band program?

13. What is your current curricular ensemble offering?

Single Ensemble

Multiple Ensembles (grade level)

Auditioned Ensembles (difficulty level)

Other: _____

14. How many first year high school students are in your band program?

15. How often does each band rehearse?

Daily

Every other Day

Three times a week

Twice a week

Once a week

Other: _____

16. Is band rehearsal time dedicated to the singular ensemble, or is it in a shared period with other ensembles such as choir and/or orchestra?

Dedicated period

Shared period

17. How long are band rehearsals?

18. Which of the following Co-curricular or Extra-curricular musical opportunities does your program currently offer?

Check all that apply.

Marching Band

Indoor Colorguard

Indoor Percussion

Percussion Ensemble

Brass Ensemble

Woodwind Ensemble

Jazz Ensemble

Modern Band

Tri-M Music Honor Society

Musical (cast, crew, or pit)

Extracurricular Wind Ensemble

Other: _____

19. Is enrollment in marching band a requirement of enrollment in Concert Band?

Yes

No

N/A – we do not have a marching band

20. Is your marching band program competitive?

Yes

No

N/A – we do not have a marching band

21. What model does your high school schedule follow?

A/B Day Block

4x4 Block

Hybrid Block (mix of block and traditional periods)

Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day

Other: _____

22. Which of the following AP courses are currently offered in your high school?

AP Art and Design

AP Art History

AP Biology

AP Calculus

AP Chemistry

AP Chinese

AP Comparative Government

AP Computer Science

AP Environmental Science

AP French

AP German

AP Music Theory

AP English Language and Composition

AP English Literature and Composition

AP European History

AP Human Geography

AP Italian

AP Japanese

AP Latin

AP Macroeconomics

AP Microeconomics

AP Physics

AP Psychology

AP Spanish

AP Statistics

AP US Government

AP US History

AP World History

23. Which of the following PIAA sports are currently sanctioned in your school?

Baseball

Basketball – Boys

Basketball – Girls

Bowling – Boys

Bowling – Girls

Cross Country

Field Hockey – Girls

Football

Competitive Cheer

Golf

Gymnastics

Indoor Track

Lacrosse – Boys

Lacrosse – Girls

Rifle

Soccer – Boys

Soccer – Girls

Softball

Swimming and Diving

Tennis – Boys

Tennis – Girls

Volleyball – Boys

Volleyball – Girls

Water Polo – Boys

Water Polo – Girls

Wrestling – Boys

Wrestling - Girls

24. In the past 5 years, what has been the enrollment trend in the high school band?

Declining (15% or more loss)

Declining (5-15% loss)

Steady (+/- 5%)

Growing (5-15% growth)

Growing (15% or more growth)

25. In the past 5 years, what has been the enrollment trend in your school district?

Declining

Steady

Growing

26. What are the top 3 challenges you feel are the causing for your band enrollment trends?

Please list them in order from 1st to 3rd

27. Do you have a booster organization?

Yes – Band-only

Yes – Music Department

No

28. In the past 5 years, what has been the trend of your school-district provided funding?

Declining

Steady

Growing

29. In the past 5 years, has your school district provided any capital improvements to music department-related facilities or equipment?

Yes

No

Planned (in the next 12-24 months)

30. If you answered yes or planned, what projects?

31. Is there any other information about your program you would be willing to share that may be beneficial to this study?

Interview Results

	Does your High School have a single Middle School feeder, or do you receive students from multiple schools?	Which of the following ensemble options does your school district offer K-12?	What is the current configuration of your Middle School?	What is the current configuration of ensembles at the Middle School level?	How often per week does each Middle School Band meet?
Response 1	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	6th - 8th grades	Grade-Level Ensembles	Daily
Response 2	Multiple Feeder Schools	Band, Chorus	5th - 8th grades	Mixed-Grade Ensembles	Every other Day
Response 3	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	6th, 7th-8th for purposes of music classes	6th only, 7th-8th together	6th once per week, 7/8 every day
Response 4		Band, Chorus	7th & 8th grades	Students participate 7-12	Twice per week
Response 5	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus, Orchestra	6th - 8th grades	Mixed-Grade Ensembles	Twice per week
Response 6	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	7th & 8th grades	Grade-Level Ensembles	Daily
Response 7	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	6th - 8th grades	Grade-Level Ensembles	Daily
Response 8	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	5th - 8th grades	Grade-Level Ensembles	Daily
Response 9	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus, Orchestra	6th - 8th grades	6th grade is a separated ensemble; Grades 7 & 8 are combined ensembles	Twice per week
Response 10	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus, Modern Band	7th & 8th grades	Mixed-Grade Ensembles	Three days out of a 4-Day cycle.
Response 11	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus, Orchestra	5th - 8th grades	Grade-Level Ensembles	Daily
Response 12	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	6th - 8th grades	Mixed-Grade Ensembles	Twice per week
Response 13	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	7th & 8th grades	Mixed-Grade Ensembles	Students in chorus meet every other day. Those not in chorus meet every day.
Response 14	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	We don't have a "middle school". We're in a 7-12 building, We do have a Jr. High grades 7-8	Mixed-Grade Ensembles	Band only students meet every day. Full Bandmeets every other day.
Response 15	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus	6th - 8th grades	Grade-Level Ensembles	Twice per week
Response 16	Single Feeder School	Band, Chorus, Modern Band	7th & 8th grades	Mixed-Grade Ensembles	Every other Day

	How long is each rehearsal period?	Do students receive pull-out band lessons?	If you answered yes, how often are pull out band lessons?	What is the band enrollment in the youngest grade level of this building?	What is the band enrollment in the oldest grade level in this building?
Response 1	40	Yes			
Response 2	40 minutes	Yes	Once a week.	40	20
Response 3	42 minutes	No		50	15
Response 4	1 1/2 hrs	No		5	15
Response 5	approx. 40min	Yes	Once ever cycle - though it often turns out to be once every other cycle (6 day cycle)	21	15
Response 6	40 minutes	Yes	as needed per student	30	30
Response 7	42 minutes	No		11	14
Response 8	30 to 60 minutes	No		50	13
Response 9	38 minutes	Yes	The attempt is for once a week; but students are pulled from their academic classes so it's determined by the classroom teacher	16	9
Response 10	57 minutes	Yes	Once per week	29	21
Response 11	45 min	No	4th grade get one weekly 20 min lesson	107	45
Response 12	38 minutes	Yes	once per 6 Day cycle	33	7
Response 13	35 mintues for MS; 40 minutes for HS	Yes	once a week for a class period.	4th grade-24 students	5 seniors
Response 14	42 min	No		32	11
Response 15	40 minutes	Yes	Once per week	50	27
Response 16	35 minutes	No		10 out of about 75	9 out of about 60

	What is the current configuration of your High School?	How many students are currently enrolled in your high school band program?	What is your current curricular ensemble offering?	How many first year high school students are in your band program?
Response 1	9th - 12th grade	56	Single Ensemble	12
Response 2	9th - 12th grade	50	Multiple Ensembles (grade-level)	20
Response 3	9th - 12th grade	7	Single Ensemble	0
Response 4	9th - 12th grade	32	Single Ensemble	5
Response 5	9th - 12th grade	70	Single Ensemble	13
Response 6	9th - 12th grade	80	Single Ensemble	
Response 7	9th - 12th grade	120	Multiple Ensembles (grade-level)	30
Response 8	9th - 12th grade	75	Marching Band, Percussion Ensemble, Woodwind Ens. Brass Ens, Jazz Ens, Jazz improve, Concert band, Symphonic Winds	24
Response 9	9th - 12th grade	33	Multiple Ensembles (grade-level)	
Response 10	9th - 12th grade	65	Single Ensemble	18
Response 11	9th - 12th grade	97	all of the above	38
Response 12	9th - 12th grade	39	Single Ensemble	20
Response 13	9th - 12th grade	28	Concert Band during the school day, marching band and Jazz band after school	3
Response 14	9th - 12th grade	45	Single Ensemble	0
Response 15	9th - 12th grade	53	Single Ensemble	18
Response 16	7th - 12th grade	34	Single Ensemble	1

	How often does each band rehearse?	Is band rehearsal time dedicated to the singular ensemble, or is it in a shared period with other ensembles such as choir and/or orchestra?	How long are band rehearsals?
Response 1	Daily	Dedicated period	40
Response 2	Daily	Dedicated period	42 minutes
Response 3	Daily	Dedicated period	50
Response 4	Twice a week	Dedicated period	1 1/2 hrs
Response 5	Twice a week	Shared period	45 minutes
Response 6	Daily	Dedicated period	40 minutes
Response 7	Daily	Shared period	42 minutes
Response 8	Daily	Dedicated period	77 minutes
Response 9	Daily but band/chorus students are shared; every other day would be a full ensemble. Some students take it as an after school elective. So full band rehearsals may happen once or twice in a 2 week time period.	Shared period	43 minutes
Response 10	Three days of a 4-Day cycle	Shared period	57 minutes
Response 11	Daily	Dedicated period	45 min
Response 12	Daily	Dedicated period	44 minutes
Response 13	Students in chorus rehearse every other day. Others are every day.	Shared period	40 minutes for HS, 35 for MS
Response 14	Band only meets every day. Band with chorus meets every other day.	Shared period	42 min
Response 15	Every other day	Shared period	20 minutes
Response 16	Every other day	Shared period	55 minutes

	Which of the following Co-curricular or Extra-curricular musical opportunities does your program currently offer?	Is enrollment in marching band a requirement of enrollment in Concert Band?	Is your marching band program competitive?
Response 1	Marching Band, Indoor Colorguard, Jazz Ensemble, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	No	Yes
Response 2	Marching Band, Brass Ensemble, Woodwind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Tri-M Music Honor Society, TubaChristmas	No	No
Response 3	Marching Band, Jazz Ensemble, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	No	Yes
Response 4	Marching Band, Jazz Ensemble	No	Yes
Response 5	Marching Band, Percussion Ensemble, Brass Ensemble, Woodwind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Musical (cast, crew, or pit), Extracurricular Wind Ensemble	No	Yes
Response 6	Marching Band, Jazz Ensemble, Extracurricular Wind Ensemble	No	No
Response 7	Marching Band, Indoor Percussion, Percussion Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	Yes	No
Response 8	Marching Band, Indoor Colorguard, Percussion Ensemble, Brass Ensemble, Woodwind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Modern Band, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	Yes	Yes
Response 9	Marching Band, Indoor Colorguard, Indoor Percussion, Jazz Ensemble, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Musical (cast, crew, or pit), Orchestra; Show choir out of the regular choral class		Yes
Response 10	Marching Band, Jazz Ensemble, Modern Band, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	Yes	No
Response 11	Marching Band, Indoor Percussion, Percussion Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	No	No
Response 12	Marching Band, Indoor Colorguard, Jazz Ensemble, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	No	Yes
Response 13	Marching Band, Percussion Ensemble, Brass Ensemble, Woodwind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	Yes	Yes
Response 14	Marching Band, Jazz Ensemble, Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	No	No
Response 15	Marching Band, Jazz Ensemble	Yes	No
Response 16	Musical (cast, crew, or pit)	N/A - we do not have a marching band	N/A - we do not have a marching band

	What model does your high school schedule follow?	Which of the following AP courses are currently offered in your high school?
Response 1	Hybrid Block (mix of block and traditional periods)	AP Art and Design, AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP Computer Science, AP Environmental Science, AP Music Theory, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, AP European History, AP Physics, AP Psychology, AP Spanish, AP Statistics, AP US Government, AP US History, AP World History
Response 2	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP Computer Science, AP English Literature and Composition, AP Human Geography, AP Physics, AP Psychology, AP US History
Response 3	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP Psychology, AP Statistics
Response 4	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP Physics, AP US Government, AP US History
Response 5	4x4 Block	AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, AP European History, AP Physics, AP Statistics, AP US Government, AP US History, AP World History
Response 6	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	AP English Language and Composition, AP World History
Response 7	A/B Day Block	AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP English Language and Composition, AP Physics
Response 8	4x4 Block	AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP European History, AP Physics, AP US Government, AP World History
Response 9	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP Music Theory, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, AP European History, AP Physics, AP Spanish, AP US Government, AP World History
Response 10	8-period drop block	AP Art and Design, AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, AP European History, AP Physics, AP US Government, AP US History, AP World History
Response 11	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	AP Art and Design, AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Computer Science, AP Environmental Science, AP English Language and Composition, AP English Literature and Composition, AP Microeconomics, AP Physics, AP Psychology, AP Statistics, AP US History
Response 12	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	
Response 13	Hybrid Block (mix of block and traditional periods)	AP Biology, AP Chemistry
Response 14	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP Chemistry, AP Computer Science, AP English Language and Composition, AP US History
Response 15	Traditional 7, 8, or 9 period day	AP Biology, AP Calculus, AP French, AP Music Theory, AP US Government, AP US History, AP World History
Response 16	Rotating, 8 period schedule	AP Calculus, AP English Language and Composition

	Which of the following PIAA sports are currently sanctioned in your school?
Response 1	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Field Hockey - Girls, Football, Golf, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Swimming & Diving, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys, Wrestling - Girls
Response 2	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Lacrosse - Girls, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Volleyball - Boys, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys
Response 3	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Rifle, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Swimming & Diving, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys
Response 4	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Field Hockey - Girls, Football, Competitive Cheer, Golf, Lacrosse - Boys, Lacrosse - Girls, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Boys, Volleyball - Girls
Response 5	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Field Hockey - Girls, Football, Competitive Cheer, Golf, Lacrosse - Boys, Lacrosse - Girls, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Track & Field, Volleyball - Boys, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys
Response 6	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Swimming & Diving, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Boys, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys, Wrestling - Girls
Response 7	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Bowling - Boys, Bowling - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls
Response 8	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Indoor Track, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Swimming & Diving, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys
Response 9	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Swimming & Diving, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys
Response 10	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Field Hockey - Girls, Football, Golf, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys, Wrestling - Girls
Response 11	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Competitive Cheer, Golf, Indoor Track, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Swimming & Diving, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys
Response 12	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Field Hockey - Girls, Football, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys, Wrestling - Girls
Response 13	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Competitive Cheer, Golf, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys, Wrestling - Girls
Response 14	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Competitive Cheer, Golf, Rifle, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Boys, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys
Response 15	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Bowling - Boys, Cross Country, Field Hockey - Girls, Football, Golf, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys
Response 16	Baseball, Basketball - Boys, Basketball - Girls, Cross Country, Football, Golf, Soccer - Boys, Soccer - Girls, Softball, Tennis - Boys, Tennis - Girls, Track & Field, Volleyball - Girls, Wrestling - Boys, Wrestling - Girls

	In the past 5 years, what has been the enrollment trend in the high school band?	In the past 5 years, what has been the enrollment trend in your school district?
Response 1	Growing (5-15% growth)	Declining
Response 2	Declining (15% or more loss)	Declining
Response 3	Declining (5-15% loss)	Declining
Response 4	Declining (15% or more loss)	Declining
Response 5	Growing (5-15% growth)	Steady
Response 6	Steady (+/- 5%)	Declining
Response 7	Steady (+/- 5%)	Steady
Response 8	Declining (15% or more loss)	Declining
Response 9	Declining (5-15% loss)	Declining
Response 10	Declining (5-15% loss)	Declining
Response 11	Growing (5-15% growth)	Declining
Response 12	Declining (15% or more loss)	Declining
Response 13	Steady (+/- 5%)	Declining
Response 14	Declining (15% or more loss)	Steady
Response 15	Declining (5-15% loss)	Growing
Response 16	Steady (+/- 5%)	Growing

	What are the top 3 challenges you feel are the causing for your band enrollment trends?
Response 1	1. COVID 2. Student need for jobs 3. Scheduling
Response 2	1 - competing electives and Vo-Tech 2 - doubling up on math and science classes 3 - declining enrollment in the MS band programs - mostly due to Covid
Response 3	Scheduling, changing instructors, low community support
Response 4	Rebounding from COVID, selling parents on Fine Arts and competing w/ other extracurricular activities.
Response 5	Too many activities, too many classes, and lack of community acknowledgement of the effort of the band and it legitimacy
Response 6	elementary instrument music teachers
Response 7	1) Time to commit 2) Kids feel they're not good enough 3) Sparking of other interests
Response 8	Middle School Engagement and encouragement of kills, 18th century curriculum, scheduling in middle school
Response 9	1) Support of elementary and middle school band programs, not strong. Poor leadership and support by music staff and administration. No one understands the term "feeder program"! 2) Eliminated 2 music positions in the last 6 years. We went from 8 to 6 full time music positions. It has put much pressure on the 6 of us to complete the standards "I DESIRE". 3) Frustrated with losing athletic programs; sharing students, trying not to wear them out but still produce quality ensembles.
Response 10	Covid-19; scheduling; lack of staff
Response 11	1. Great Middle and elementary feeder program 2. Inclusion of 8th grade in marching band 3. Being non competitive.
Response 12	1. Financial aspect of owning an instrument 2. Loss of interest at the middle school level 3. COVID-19 restrictions at the elementary and middle school levels
Response 13	1. Cultural shift in sense of responsibility (many more "I didn't feel like going" excuses than ever before-and I suspect that excuse holds up in the home) 2. Lack of parent understanding (my kid practices at home, so she doesn't need to go to marching band practice) 3. Playing in instrument takes time and patience to improve. I start 4th grade students and many of them expect to be good at playing an instrument without practicing. Recently I was told by a 9-year old "I'm too busy to practice...I have to watch a lot of youtube videos because I'm addicted to it".
Response 14	Covid killed the younger kids and there are no kids coming up in the middle grades. Providing instruments for kids who can't afford them. Scheduling.
Response 15	Covid, lack of instructional time, apathy of students
Response 16	1- enough time to work with every kid individually, 2- parent support, 3- perceived time commitment from students

	Do you have a booster organization ?	In the past 5 years, what has been the trend of your school-district provided funding?	In the past 5 years, has your school district provided any capital improvements to music department-related facilities or equipment?	If you answered yes or planned, what projects?
Response 1	Yes - Band-only	Steady	Yes	1. Full Acoustic treatment of band and choir facilities 2. Full digital sound and LED upgrade of HS auditorium 3. Complete MS Auditorium renovation
Response 2	Yes - Music Department	Steady	No	
Response 3	Yes - Band-only	Steady	No	
Response 4	Yes - Band-only	Declining	No	
Response 5	Yes - Band-only	Growing	No	
Response 6	No	Growing	Yes	band uniforms, instruments, music
Response 7	Yes - Music Department	Steady	Yes	Built new middle school with state of the art auditorium/band room and upgrades in sound/light equipment.
Response 8	Yes - Band-only	Steady	No	
Response 9	Yes - Music Department	Growing	Planned (in the next 12-24 months)	Purchasing a grand piano for the HS music dept this year. The school has replaced one keyboard every year for the past 3 years, but that's within my regular budget I've attempted to do that. I have a xylophone that dates back to 1936!!!
Response 10	No	Steady	No	
Response 11	Yes - Band-only	Steady	No	
Response 12	Yes - Music Department	Steady	No	
Response 13	Yes - Music Department	Steady	No	
Response 14	Yes - Band-only	Steady	No	
Response 15	Yes - Band-only	Steady	Planned (in the next 12-24 months)	Renovation to music wing.
Response 16	Yes - Band-only	Steady	Yes	purchased music stands and instruments, considering upgrading auditorium

	Is there any other information about your program you would be willing to share that may be beneficial to this study?
Response 1	
Response 2	1992 - District enrollment 3200 students - currently under 1600 students. 2012 - Consolidated 3 single A schools into one larger AAA school. 2022 - Discussions are underway to consolidate again due to declining enrollment.
Response 3	I am the third director in the past 5 years (on my 2nd year). I grew up in the district and 20 years ago, the high school band was easily 30 students, and enrollment has not dropped that much (180-140 per class). I believe some of the problem may even start in the elementary feeder program (4/5). And in 7/8 students are not required to take a music elective, putting band/chorus up against non-rigorous courses as "exploratory".
Response 4	
Response 5	Let me know if you need any further details
Response 6	
Response 7	
Response 8	
Response 9	Sports always wins out!! The students take band for a credit but as you know, most of this activity takes place outside the school day, whether you're a competitive band or a football band. When the student has conflicting band vs. sports engagements, the coach/ athlete always wins!! I'M AN ACADEMIC SUBJECT!!! So what do I do about that student's grade?!?!? And when you have a small band, and your only trombone or horn player decides to go to the game and not your concert, what do you do?!?!?
Response 10	
Response 11	
Response 12	
Response 13	I teach the entire band program grades 4-12. There is one other elementary school that sends about 4-5 students to me when they reach 7th grade. Marching band is open to any student grades 7-12. I had 45 this year, 30 of which were HS students.
Response 14	
Response 15	No sectional time at high school level.
Response 16	

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND TRANSCRIPTS

Interview Questions

1. What are the biggest challenges YOU HAVE faced as a rural Pennsylvania High School Band Director?
2. What internal or external influences are affecting your enrollment?
3. What influences are affecting retention from year to year within your program?
4. What have you done to mitigate these enrollment/retention challenges successfully?

Subject #1

Subject #1: Good morning, Sir.

Researcher: How's it going?

Subject #1: In service today.

Researcher: Oh, I'm sorry. I appreciate you taking a few minutes on your in service day to talk to me about a few things with my doctoral research that I'm doing. You had filled out a survey and it had been about a year now, but I'm doing some final follow up stuff. I just have a couple of questions and I know you and I have talked several times, but this is going to be one of those kind of on the record ways.

Subject #1: Umm yeah.

Researcher: So I just have a couple questions. We'll kind of keep it real organic. I'm actually going to have Teams record the transcription just so I have all of the documentation for my research, but we remove all the names and all of that, of course.

Subject #1: Yeah, no problem.

Researcher: So first question I have is knowing that you're a rural high school band director like myself. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges that you face as a rural band director?

Subject #1: Not in any specific order.

Researcher: Of course.

Subject #1: Obviously, everybody wants everybody to do everything. So my competitors, if you will, for lack of a better word, FFA. And sports, you know, I think you probably feel the same exact way that I do when it comes to the competition factor and trying to get kids to do everything, even if I'm just working on trying to get kids to stay in concert band, sometimes from year to year. The other factor that we have is the votech factor, because I don't know about you, but with me, since I have band in the high school band in the morning. Umm, that's when votech is. So if a kid decides that they want to go to votech, I've lost that kid from the program. And it's yours, mostly between 9th and 10th grade. So and I think that's a lot to do with the fact that we send the most kids out of any district that goes.

Researcher: I think I'm pretty sure we're right behind you guys.

Subject #1: You're probably close to us, but I mean we have like 150 kids from the high school to go to votech.

Researcher: Wow.

Subject #1: So yeah, it's massive. So those are my biggest things. I mean, sports affects me more for the marching band than it does for concert and jazz band, because Jazz band is actually not a class. It's a club. It meets during a flex time that I have, so I have it during school so. I kind of don't count that as an extracurricular. Marching band is my only true extracurricular and of course, that's where I lose kids from concert band because of the sports deal. Especially fall

sports, and then FFA is just I don't know about you guys, but FFA is just like they're always away at stuff and they're always doing stuff.

Researcher: Yeah, absolutely.

Subject #1: I mean, I have kids out of school constantly, who are at FFA for different conventions and stuff? I thought PMEA was bad. FFA takes the cake, so those are probably my biggest challenge. That and getting kids from the middle school to the high school.

Researcher: That makes complete sense there, and that's actually leading right into my next question. If you could narrow it down to a couple of them specifically, what do you think are either internal within the district or external influences that really do affect the retention rate, especially looking at that middle to high school thing.

Subject #1: Internally, its just lack of communication. It's paramount, like there's no communication between the buildings at all, and even within me, doing elementary band in three different buildings, there's no communication between the buildings. So case in point Monday is a makeup day and we had to find out what cycle day it was. What building am I supposed to be Monday afternoon? They know what's going on, so we didn't figure it out, but it it took a little bit of time and I'm like, come on, this is this is like a no brainer. You guys should have this stuff down, so we've got communication issues, both admin and teacher to teacher which causes problems between high school and. Umm, the external factors community wise I would say we have fairly good community relations and community support, but I think that sports rules the roost, and if it comes down to a choice between music and sports, well, we're gonna go sports. Even if I'm gonna sit on the bench, it's better for my kid to sit on the bench and it's participate in marching band. So I mean, I know a lot of people didn't want that because I've had a lot of different conversations with a lot of different people, but it it is it's like, what's the benefit to

this? Now I'm not, I'm not bagging on sports, you know. Sports are important and they have their place and all, but it's like I think that we're just way overkill on things that we probably shouldn't be way overkill on.

Researcher: So in looking at that, I know rural schools and like I face it myself, it's always finding ways to mitigate some of those retention challenges that we have. What are some of the things that you've found that are either successful or things that just you spent a lot of time on that may not have been the, you know, you may not have reaped the rewards from that have really helped him build that retention and build that just to keep those kids involved or get them from middle school to high school?

Subject #1: Umm, well, this year is an odd year because with the senior class that I currently have when they were in fifth grade is when I started doing elementary school. So I've had relationships with every single class coming through. The kids had me in the beginning. They go to middle school, they come back to me in the high school, so I already have some type of relationship with those kids. Except this year's 8th grade class, this year's 8th grade class started band when we had the pandemic that was what the 2021 school year? So I didn't do elementary band that year. They kept me at the high school and then took all my bands and choirs and put them into multiple sections, and that was a mess. But the middle school guy did elementary that year, so I don't have a relationship with those kids, and I have found it extremely difficult this year trying to make a connection with them because of that. Now the current 7th and 6th graders all know me because they had me for elementary band. So I've got a better connection with them. I think it's all about the connection. The other thing I do every year is when I find out a kid wants to go to votech. I talk to the kid about Votech. You know what do you want to do with votech because you know there's there's two different types of kids. There's the kid that

goes to tech and there's exactly what they want to do, and that's the that's my path and that's why I want my career to go and that's great. Do it. Go for it and then I got the other kid just wants to get out of the high school. Well, going to Votech is not gonna be any different, so I actually had a couple of kids this year who have withdrawn their request for votech for next year because they want to stay. One for choir and one for band.

Researcher: That's saying something about the culture that you've worked to develop.

Subject #1: The cultures big too. The culture that I've been able to cultivate in the high school is where I want it to be, and of course it's taking me 25 years to get it there. But it's where I want it to be. So the kids that are here are here because they wanna be here and I don't have a lot of dead weight. I would pretty much say I don't think I have any dead weight, which is kind of something I know not a lot of us can say now. The size of the Ensemble was the smallest it's ever been. I have 38 in concert band right now. It's the smallest concert band I've ever had, but when I look at my attrition, why did a 9th grader not come back in 10th grade? I would say 85% of the time it was either because they wanted to take more classes than FFA stuff or votech and the other 15% are because they just either didn't want to or couldn't handle it.

Researcher: So with your Ensemble being the small is like you said it is, do you think that's kind of part of the whole COVID bubble that we're still working through in various ways?

Subject #1: Yeah, I only got this this year. I have 4 freshmen who came from the middle school, and two who moved in from other districts. And then I've got an eighth grader whose parents fought with the middle school because she's a gifted kid and wasn't being challenged enough. So they let her come down to high school, said. I don't care. Come on down. I could use another clarinet player. I'm not gonna turn you away.

Researcher: Of course.

Subject #1: So I got 7 new kids, if you will. I mean, the vast majority of the Ensemble is back from last year, which is great. Umm, so I would say from a from a standpoint of the COVID bubble, I think we hit, I thought we hit rock bottom last year. I'm starting to think we're gonna hit rock bottom this coming year. This eighth grade class to 9th grade class? I don't think I'm getting a lot coming up, even though there's more kids. It was kind of amazing because last year there were only four eighth graders in the middle school band and all four eighth graders joined the high school band. So we had 100%, we had 100%, but it was four kids. My hope is the 7th grade class is gonna start taking the trend and moving it upward. I do think the band might even be one or two kids smaller next year before we start swinging the other way. Marching band is gonna be about the same size. And my gosh, marching band were loaded because we only graduated 5, 2 guard, 2 trumpets and a tenor sax. So the whole yeah Ensemble is back including entire percussion sections and the entire woodwind section, minus one kid is back. The whole brass section minus two kids is back. So we're I, I mean, we're gonna be in great shape, but we're not picking up a lot.

Researcher: It seems with the COVID bubble like people have either faced it or they're facing it right now. It's also interesting to see the various just the way districts had handled the situation, and I'm sure that has something to do with it, but it's also just the way the community is handled it too.

Subject #1: We have a different Administration) now than we did during COVID. Even some of the bigger districts nearby are struggling with smaller groups so it seems like they're facing their COVID bubble now, but like when you look at. And you know from a performance standpoint, we're playing at a a better level now than we ever have. But from a number standpoint, it's the smallest it's ever been, so you know can't have both like I guess I don't know.

But we're getting kids that wanna play. I think my case it goes back to the culture I think because I think that, you know, it seems to me that when those kids get to 8th grade and they hear about how much work they have to put into the high school band, you either get the kids who are like, I wanna do that. I've got a flute player right now. She came in to me last year as an eighth grader. She knew 5 notes. Was overwhelmed in marching band. Almost quit in the beginning of the season and she was the only flute player, so I was like, hey, we're gonna tailor your parts to what you can do because you're the only player and you're doubled all the time with clients anyhow. So it's not a big deal. This girl's killing it now. She's worked a tail off. She's got all 12 scales down. She's got up to a high G above the staff down pat. She sounds great and it's all because she worked at it because while early on, she didn't think you could handle it. She eventually figured out well, hey, if I work at this, I can actually get pretty good. And I think you know, when you look at the rural schools and you could probably attest to this, the work ethic in rural schools is a lot better than the work ethic in some of your suburban schools. You know you don't have spoiled brats. You've got farm kids who are up at 3:00 AM milking cows. You know, they've got a different perspective on life and the world. I mean, I might not have the most talented kids in the world, but I've got kids that work with tails off with me. So you know, I mean, if there's anything that's good about it, rural schools, that's it.

Researcher: This has definitely been helpful and I'm looking forward to kind of correlating all of this data because I've got about a dozen folks I'm talking to all over the state in this way, along with the data I've collected. So once I'm sitting down and I've got everything, I'll be happy to share it all with everybody who's been involved.

Subject #1: Of course.

Subject #2

Researcher: Good morning.

Subject #2: Good morning.

Researcher: First of all, it's nice to meet you. Thank you for replying to my request to have a quick conversation and for doing the survey a little while back. I am working on my doctoral research that Liberty University currently and and just trying to get some follow up information specifically about mid size world band programs in Pennsylvania. So I just have a couple questions for this morning. First question, just because I don't know your program very well. If you kind of just give me a kind of a quick overview of what you feel you face as a rural band director?

Subject #2: Sure, this is only my third year there. I teach 6th grade through 12th grade. Mostly band, but some general Music as well. And then there's one elementary. He starts in 4th grade and he'll do 4th and 5th grade and then they come up to me in 6th grade. I'll start out the like 6th grade program I have. I have about 40, probably out of 150 kids are in that class. Probably then by the time you get up to my senior class, I have two seniors in band. There are but ten of them. That'll be 9 through 12. Like I said, it's only my third year, and there have been three band directors in the past ten years, so I think that's part of it. And COVID and of course everything else. But you know, we do marching bands, pep bands, we have a small jazz band, even even smaller than our high school band. Obviously participate PMEA Events, district bands, bandfest this year. So a lot of community support and you know, people see back in the 70s, of course there was 150 kids in the band and it was baby boomers. And like my parents generation, I I grew up in this town where I teach in now. And so people, people see it and they're like, oh, man, what? What happened? Why isn't there you know anybody in the band and all this stuff?

Nobody's like blaming anybody. I don't think they just don't wanna see it be so small and I don't know. We do competitive marching bands. LMBA - that's the circuit so.

Researcher: Alright, so as a rural band director, especially in Pennsylvania, what do you think some of the biggest challenges you faced within your program? I know you've been there only three years now, but just thinking through what you've had, what are some of the challenges that you've been facing?

Subject #2: I mean one of them at the early early stages is like and I I know, I don't know if this is a me problem or them problem, but kids cause not wanting to practice like thinking that they'll get everything they need at school to succeed in something like Music. You know, even in the 6th, 6th grade I think 5th grade and 4th grade, they practice a little bit. My 6th graders, I think I had like 3 that practice out of 40. I only see them once a week for, you know, 40 minutes. So it's like, well, you gotta practice. And I I think they're busy and I think you know their parents aren't pushing them to bring it home and practice. And then I maybe the other thing is just like there's so much to do and the kids wanna do a lot of things. So it kind of spreads them a little thin or for band. Band is kind of low on the like list of things that's kind of fun or cool to do? Umm, not that there's a bad, you know, wrap arounds band kids. I don't think that's the case, but there's just so much other stuff to do that it's kind of at the bottom of the list.

Researcher: That makes sense, and it kind of leads into my next question of what are some of the internal or external influences that you're perceiving are really affecting your program, whether they're in the building or whether there's something outside in the community that might be affecting the retention within your program?

Subject #2: Like I probably just what I said. You know, just having so many other things think I've really come to realize, and I I don't have a solution yet. But it is everything else that like

these kids do cheerleading, soccer, football the anything like that? They start when they're like 5 years old, so they've already like, got em, you know. And we're not starting until 4th grade. So then, even if they really like, you know, playing an instrument or something, they've already got all these other practices and and something for every season. So that like one more thing in you know, it's just almost impossible. I don't think it's the kids fault. I think maybe some of them want to do it, but you know, maybe their parent is like, hey, well, we need to choose or you're already doing these other things. So we're not gonna, you know, you can't have one more thing. My thing is here, you know, 5 year olds play recorder, but you can watch a play football because they just kind of run around and just kinda cute but.

Researcher: So looking at that and knowing that we're all facing similar challenges, what are some of the things that you've been able to find that may work to mitigate some of the retention issues?

Subject #2: Well, I mean, I'm I'm hoping that me being there, you know, more than three years, four years is gonna help. I mean I'm I'm trying to work with the guy at the elementary level where he really wants to see the band get bigger and and not get smaller. And so doing some things where, like at least the kids see me, I can't go down there and help. He actually kind of needs a little bit of help, to be honest. Just as far as like volume of kids for lessons. I'd like to so anytime those kids can see me or they can see him. You know, in 6th grade and be like oh, yeah, you know, he really, you know, cares about us and is his excited that we're doing Music. As far as like marching band we typically starting 7th grade or 8th grade trying to do a little bit, you know, like preseason low expectation kind of things. We haven't started it yet. We haven't done a great job to try and get them excited about doing something. I'm trying to work with scheduling a little bit with the Admin at my school who are supportive of the arts. Scheduling

wise the 7th and 8th grade used to be different. They changed it like right before I came in to be an exploratory period. So band was up against all these like fun things. So my first year I had maybe three, well maybe five kids in seven and 8th grade band and they finally changed it. Not really, because of what we wanted, but the other teachers kind of got sick of these other classes they had to teach. So now we're up against some more like classes that aren't as fun. And now I have 35 seventh graders this year. So to me, that's a win. I have 0 eighth graders but umm the but we'll see. Hopefully at least you know fifteen of those seventh graders do 8th Grade and I get five of them in there's, you know, 10 in in 9th grade would be I'd be static.

Researcher: Just out of curiosity, within the district, like how many music teachers do you guys have within your whole district?

Subject #2: We have 4, so we have one with Pre K through 3 and then 4 and 5

Researcher: So your elementary band person also does elementary general music too.

Subject #2: Correct. Yeah, and like I said, you really needs a little bit of help on as a for a if you wanna start an instrument now in 4th grade you can only do it for half the year because one of instruments we don't have enough and like people aren't gonna rent them and he just doesn't have enough time to get through all the lessons. So they only get half of their first year and then if they do it a second year, they have him for the whole year.

Researcher: Alright, so at the high school level, do you find anything like outside of the school that's really affecting retention?

Subject #2: I'd say some of them work. I don't think it's necessarily, you know, to support their family as more just ask some money for their own use. I feel like at the high school, most of the kids are like pretty committed. Like I haven't really had many new ones. I helped with the marching band here a couple years before I started in the position, so I've known like a seniors

five or six years now. I'm just hoping with the 7th graders that they know me. They know what I'm like, that I stay there. So they just keep in the program, but still. So certainly, I mean I would, I would hope for consistency sake, it would just continue that way.

I don't see anything outside, you know, factors that's really affecting the numbers.

Researcher: I mean, those were the primary questions I had because I have a lot of the data that you submitted on the survey.

Well, thank you so much for your time this morning. I appreciate it.

Subject #2: Alright, thank you.

Subject #3

Subject #3: Morning.

Researcher: Good morning.

Subject #3: How are you?

Researcher: I'm good. How are you doing?

Subject #3: Doing alright thanks.

Researcher: I appreciate you taking some time this morning to chat. I know I had sent you a survey several months ago. I'm working on my doctorate currently through Liberty University and I'm a rural high school band director just like you, so trying to just gather as much data as I can. And today I just have a handful of questions. It shouldn't take us very long looking at just some of the more qualitative information specifically with your program. I have a few questions and it's gonna kind of be an organic conversation as we go. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges that you're facing as a rural Pennsylvania high school band director?

Subject #3: Well, I guess I would say the the primary challenge would be finances. I mean,

living in an economically disadvantaged area and teaching a subject of that is notably has a price tag associated with it that probably has been the largest challenge as far as increasing student involvement and the retention of those students.

Researcher: As you're looking at it, I know you mentioned the dollar sign, but do you think there are any other internal like within the school or external influences that it could be affecting enrollment otherwise?

Subject #3: I'm not quite to the level of finances, but I would also say being in a rural school and you probably see this yourself. A lot of our students do everything, and so there's also the challenge of time. Fortunately for the most part, not everyone we encounter, but for the most part, there's a level of flexibility here between directors, coaches, teachers, staff. We recognize that and for the most part, we try to work in harmony. Now, of course, you occasionally have those outliers who demand you know all the time and attention. But like I said that that would probably be secondary, but not nearly as challenging as the financial piece.

Researcher: Alright, from a just kind of following up on the Financial piece, I'm just curious to see if you have a similar challenge that we have. I know in our community we're also in a socioeconomically challenged area. Do you find that your students are often working jobs or anything like that outside of the school day?

Subject #3: Some more so juniors and seniors. The upper level there, but yes, certainly there are kids that hold down part time jobs while also playing three sports doing band doing, yes.

Researcher: OK, I'm I know you mentioned the finances and you mentioned that the the elements of like sports and other activities, do you feel that it's that you've had anything other influencing either at like affecting the retention from year to year, do you think you've had things that are kind of helping mitigate retention issues from year to year?

Subject #3: For the most part, I don't struggle a whole lot with retention. Now, of course, the elementary level at that exploratory phase, you know, some students decide it's not for them after trying it a year. But usually if I can get them past that, that gap of elementary in the middle school, for the most part, they're locked in and they they choose to continue.

I think this largely has to deal with the rapport I build with them. I mean, a lot of the times that retention is due to my relationship with the student and then wine to stay involved, I find.

I think another obstacle I was talking about time being that secondary. But I think another one well along the same lines as you know, I think currently modern day speaking, we see a lot of kids struggle with sticking things out because of the work ethic involved. And I think that relationship sometimes is the piece that helps them overcome that. Like, yeah, Band is a lot of work, but man, do I have a lot of fun with my director. Or you know, so I feel that that like you're saying there, that rapport really is dynamic and helping retain those students in the program? Yeah.

Researcher: Do you see that the the COVID bubble has kind of broken for you or is it still a challenge?

Subject #3: No, I would say it's absolutely in the past for us now. I was away from this position for about five years. I was on hiatus during the COVID period, but at last in looking to see like right when I returned pretty much the year after. At this point, like we, we're not dealing with any COVID precautions. Recruitment is back up.

Researcher: So just to kind of keep things into perspective, it seems like you're facing a similar challenge in terms of finances always being the issue, both for students and I'm guessing from within the district itself. But at the same time, you're able to maintain the growth and mitigate some of the retention issues simply from having a good rapport with your students as well.

Subject #3: Well, that and a trust, a grant foundation down the road that heavily supports the arts. And that's really really what has balanced out the finances. So when I have started at this position, I'm gonna estimate about 2012. Before I had left.

We do grades 4-5 and six and there were, uh, I would say approximately 15, maybe 20 kids total in those three grades involved in the band. But you know, certainly there was slight building due to personality and that rapport and all that.

But really, it's when I was able to start getting thousands of dollars each year from the grant Foundation students no longer have to find their own instrument, rent an instrument, purchase an instrument. Umm, I'm now instead of 20 kids, I'm now up to 70 kids this year, which is last year. I probably had about 50, so this year that 70 number I have never been that high. I can only assume what has made that huge jump, and I hope to maintain it, but I know without a doubt that part of that is the fact that I now have a full instrument inventory where kids can use (School instruments at zero costs. And and I have to imagine that's the largest thing when you when you remove the price tag altogether, the numbers explode. And not everyone has that. You know, it just happened to be down the road that the person who left the money behind happened to emphasize the arts heavily. So both my band program and my theater program benefit from that greatly, and that's really helped turn the tide. Yeah. And then for me the excitement is like, you know, in the hopes that I'll be able to retain those 70 kids. You know, as they filter up into my middle school band and my high school band. Really hoping to see just those large numbers go spread across the board over time.

Researcher: Thank you so much for your time. I do appreciate you taking a few minutes out of the day. This data is incredibly helpful in my study

Subject #3: Absolutely. I'm glad I could be a help to you and your research.

Subject #4

Researcher: Hey, are you there?

Subject #4: -Yep, I'm here.

Researcher: Awesome. Well, I appreciate you taking a few minutes to talk to me.

I know it's been a while since I collected some data from you.

Subject #4: Hey, no problem.

Researcher: So I just have a couple of questions. We're gonna kind of keep this very organic.

So, you know teams is recording and creating the transcription, so I have it for all my research and names and everything else will be removed from it. So there's no identifiable information from a research standpoint.

Subject #4: OK.

Researcher: Alright, so first question for you is, uh, what do you think are the biggest challenges you've been facing as a rural Pennsylvania high school band director?

Subject #4: Post COVID or pre COVID.

Researcher: Both.

Subject #4: Yeah, right now the challenges that I'm we're trying to work through is just the COVID like the COVID years, we lost a lot of kids because of COVID because our kids were only in school for half the week at a time really affected our middle school band program. So our numbers really kind of slipped off at that point. So now those kids are in the high school, so now I'm working through those lower numbers, but it looks like next year things are starting to rebound about. I think I'm gonna have, like, 20 freshmen in the band next year, so if I can keep

we, I always said to my middle school director, if I can keep around 20 to 25 kids per class in the band, that's a great size band for our size school.

Researcher: Well, that's awesome.

Subject #4: And yeah, the other challenge is probably for small rural district like ours is simply the socioeconomic background of the kids. We're also seeing a decline not just from a rural standpoint, but we're starting to get a lot of movements from like Lebanon and things like that. So again, the the lower socioeconomic background of our students. Doesn't afford too many to be able to take private lessons and things like that to maybe get better as individual student individual instrumentalists. The other thing I will say from a rural standpoint is the accessibility to those lessons like kids would have to, you know, drive a long distance to find it. Even a teacher we have a couple of teachers in the area. Umm, like our former elementary instrumental guy. He's still in town, so a lot of saxophones. Take lessons with him, thank goodness, but we don't have access to a lot of private teachers then say we do where I live or they would at, you know, bigger cities. So that's kind of how that's kind of how we affect it.

Researcher: That makes sense.

Subject #4: And then again, from a certain standpoint, from the socioeconomic standpoint, is kids being able to purchase better instruments as they get up through, you know, the the band, like many of them in my high school band, are still playing the same student instrument they got in 4th grade.

Researcher: So you mentioned COVID, especially in the socioeconomic part of it. Are there any other either internal within your building or district or external influences within the community that you think are affecting your enrollment?

Subject #4: I wouldn't say necessarily outside or inside? I guess one of the things but in this doesn't necessarily have to do with being a rural school, but kind of our schedule. Umm, you know, we band and chorus meet, sharing a quote unquote flex time or quote unquote. Social or study hall time and we only have like 1/2 an hour for like band every other day. So the frequency of being able to meet. There, you know, we're just trying to get concerts ready. There's really no instruction going on and I don't have pull out band sectionals either, so that's a that's a factor.

Researcher: We talked the enrollment now do you think there are other things that affect the retention from year to year once they make it to the high school?

Subject #4: And could be as far as retention is concerned, going from the middle school to the high school, if you're in band you have to do marching band. And I have shied away from separating it only because I've seen other small rural schools in our area do that. And when that happens, they're marching. Band enrollment goes down tremendously and I've always felt like the marching band is kind of the flagship of your program and your music department as a whole. If the if the marching band is small and you only have a few kids participating in that that then that to the public eye that gives them a sense of, well, what's happening with the music department. There, their band is so small, so I know that turned some kids off. They don't continue from middle school to high school because all I I just because they don't want to do marching band even though you know we're not competitive and I try to stress to them it's it's not really that much of a time commitment outside of school etcetera. So that would probably be the only thing. And then there are some kids that they just use that as an excuse. They just don't want to do it. Umm, the other thing being, in a small rural school district, as I'm sure you're aware of this umm, so that our our school district, everybody does everything. So as so, we have a lot of

kids who are athletes, and then once they get to high school, they sometimes say, well, I'm not going to do that because I want to concentrate on my sport. Whereas in a neighboring district, they're a bigger school district. There's very few kids that do banned and sports because by the time they get to middle school, if they wanna do sports, they've already either they're, they're either gonna continue to do sports or they're like, ohh I'm in. But in that respect then I think the the reason he can get a lot of kids to do competitive marching band is because you've got a lot of kids who can't who can't make it on sports teams, but they want to be competitive. They wanna do something competitive and so that kind of scratches that competitive itch to be in competitive marching band so.

Researcher: You mentioned quite a few challenges. Have you found some strategies that you think are successful for mitigating either of these enrollment or these retention challenges that are working in your program?

Subject #4: I think the the strong thing to do is have a a very strong elementary program, getting a lot of kids involved at the elementary level, trying to keep their interest, to get till they get to middle school and then you know, my middle school and I have tried to work as as hard as we can to try to keep retention in the middle school, 6th, 7th and 8th because, you know, that's. Yeah, that's the age where the the kids either make they either continue or they don't like the middle schools. That very fragile thing. And if you can get them through middle school and get them into the high school, then. That's just, I don't know. I don't wanna say there's any one particular strategy or anything it's being, you know, open with communication. Umm, we we always have an eighth grade band. We always bring the eighth graders up for one of the football games in the fall and try to make that connection. I try to get the high school kids down every time I go to talk to the 8th graders. When it comes course selection time, I always try to take a

couple of the high school band kids with me, especially those that do play sports and do marching band to, you know, to tell them, hey, this can be done. You can do this. And simply try to keep it fun and and you know, interest interesting for the kids to wanna continue.

Researcher: I appreciate, I mean, hearing what you have to say, especially the non competitive element, you're one of the few I've talked to who is noncompetitive and that's not.

I'm not saying one way or the other

Subject #4: One of the things that I have tried to do with Craig and I've tried to do and then at the elementary level is purchase like the more expensive instruments to rent like baritones and French horns and try to have plenty of School instruments on hand that. Cost isn't a factor in starting an instrument, because I know in our school district that's gonna be a major factor, especially now with the the expense of even how expensive Student instruments are. I mean, it's ridiculous. Like how much more expensive Student you know, starter instruments are now, and so if you want those French horns and those baritones and those obos and stuff like that to continue to have those at the high school level, you gotta start a bunch at the elementary level and you got to kind of entice them by saying, hey, you can play a band instrument and this one free, you don't have to pay anything.

Researcher: Well thank you so much for your time. It is greatly appreciated.

Subject #4: Alright, I'll talk to you later.

Subject #5

Subject #5: Hello.

Researcher: Hey, how are you?

Subject #5: I'm good.

Researcher: I appreciate you taking a few minutes away from your company to help answer a few questions for me and just get a little input from you because I'm just trying to wrap up all this research business. So I just have a couple quick questions and it's gonna be kind of an organic conversation. So I guess the first one I have for you is what do you think are some of the biggest challenges you have faced as a rural Pennsylvania high school band director?

Subject #5: You know, in rural schools, I think what we could all, I bet everybody's saying this, our schools are not large and these days kind of where I am, which is kind of on the cusp of rural. We so badly wanna be what other schools are so? We offer so many things, right? So as far as rural School goes like we don't we we desperately don't wanna be rural, but we can't offer everything the large districts offer because the kids are being pulled in 1000 directions and let alone the fact that we're also small. So we have less resources to pull from. Umm, it's just really challenging to meet those needs. Uh, yeah, that's sort of like the overarching thing, because that really bleeds into like the, you know, the kids, the community pool that we have to choose from. And then those kids, and they're socioeconomic status, aren't the ones going out that are getting lessons that some of these bigger schools do. So there's less of them and we have to educate them. I shouldn't say differently, but we have to consider what we're able to provide them because they're, you know, you don't have those kids that are going out and getting lessons if they can't get to a university brass instructor or whatever, you know.

Researcher: In looking at that, I know like the data has shown, you sent the data in, basically saying that you're seeing growth in the program. For what you've got going there, what do you think some of the either internal within your building or district or external influences are affecting enrollment either in the positive or the negative?

Subject #5: That's a good question. I think one of the one of the biggest factors is. We can't walk into a any band job. This is almost anything, but I'll I'll I'll relay the rural situations. This isn't. I can't walk in here and pretend that this is the same thing I had in high school, and it can't pretend it's gonna be the same thing as the English teacher who rolls in at 7:00 o'clock and leaves at 2:30. I could almost say this for any position, it just isn't the job that you sometimes think it is, right? We think, OK, we're going to be, we're gonna get this all done with school day. Yeah, we'll come in on Fridays and some Saturdays. But, like, this is fine. Like the the job is so much more and eventually like feral schools, especially like until you get like the flywheel going right until you get you've built a program that is well known in the community and it's sort of like it's a natural experience for students to be a part of. I'd like to think of, like in many respects, one of my neighboring high schools. Kind of makes me think of this. I'm sure there's there's a lot more factors, but for for a lot of us who will walk in the rural schools, it's usually gonna be a director who is is younger ohm and just starting and just learning things. And the biggest thing I could say is like, you gotta put the time in to get it. But you have to be willing to put the time and the energy and the longevity in to get to the point where it's gonna have that again, that sort of like good, the great flywheel effect where it runs itself and you'll be eventually be able to step back and say, OK, cool. Ohm.

Researcher: What I'm getting from that is kind of the building the culture within it so that the culture helps breed the future. Is that kind of the direction you're saying with that?

Subject #5: I always preach this. That the quantity of Student participants. Leads to quality, especially in smaller programs, right? So I want to qualify that like the more students you have in the room, the more buy in those students have because they're part of a community. That is,

that they see as as as effective and functioning and something that they can be because it's a home.

It's a family. There's a lot of like layers there. I hesitate and I I'm bad at this too. Like, I'm not gonna come in and say like, hey, this is our chance to play these pieces of Music and we should be playing grade four and five at the high school level. Maybe we're gonna play some, some, some standard stuff that the kids enjoy. So they enjoy the process, so they're there and they need to enjoy being at band so that there's more people. And when there's more people than you have more buy in from students and becomes a legitimate culturally, you know, effective program where you have that culture in place and then you can start again it kind of relates to what I said is like it then you can start doing some of that heavy lifting once you have the people to do it you're constantly going there's this constant we always see band directors doing what sort of like ohh I wish I had blah blah blah or I wish we could do this and I'll do it, too. And then, uh, we have a, you know, pick Music that is like, not the kids aren't going to enjoy. And then kids aren't having fun. And then they don't wanna do it. And then you have less kids and you can't do the music you want to do. And then you have to do this and then it's just like, like right now I'm my concert band. Like we have, we have these rehearsals. I'm like this would be great and it's like I'm listening to be great. I'm like Nope, like and and and it's one of those things where, like, I've got a fairly functional senior class and I was like when I was selecting Music. I was like this would be great and I, you know, not I'm not saying this is a wrong move. I'm fairly disappointed in what we're able to do. I see the kids once every, you know, four days for 40 minutes. Umm and I had a mode where I'm like, we're kind of like sort of driving through this tune. I forget what I was doing and it was like it wasn't getting that much better and I could tell everybody in the room was like kind of like this is spraying this socks and I'm sort of said alright, we're good

and I won the library and I pulled out something else that is just as educational. But you know, I'm not gonna, you know, pull out something terrible. But like, I don't know it's we get the they're gonna enjoy the process more if I do Imaginarium by Randall Standridge. And it sounds pretty good. And I hesitate, you know, like a young director will say, well, or a college director will say. Ohh well, if you if you're, if you're students are Grade 3, make sure they play a grade 3 by the master. I'm not like, yes, we're gonna play Rollo Takes a Walk and the kids are gonna hate band, you know, like, yes, the master's right, you know? So like, again, I'm fostering this. I'm trying my best and sometimes it's not good. Like right now the spring is a bit of a the spring concert is going to be what it's going to be, and I'm gonna smile and then everybody's gonna love it. But it's yeah, that was a lot of things. But like, it's really hard to quantify like I'm just trying, the ultimate goal is let's get the, the, the quantity up, so that quality can come. I am not somebody who is, you know, again working over at our neighbor who has the quantity you would say, well, kids are gonna come and be a part of this because of a quality you need to put on a a good program. And then kids are gonna show up. Well, yes, obviously I don't wanna do Music poorly, but I also need I need buy in more than some of these other directors do so.

Researcher: Quick follow up. Do you feel that the priority would be more culture than performance quality?

Subject #5: If if you forced me to pick between the two like culture is going to be more important, but you're not gonna build a good culture by having a bad, a bad performance, I think what I'm getting at, what I think. There is like sometimes we need to like step aside and say like like I did the other day in rehearsal and say like this is a piece of Music that the students are going to enjoy the process more with. It might not be the tune that I want to do based on my my the likes of Music and it might not also be at the end of the day, I hate to say it might not be the

most educational piece of Music. Like I you know, man, I really want to work on 6/8 and default major so that it can do this, this, this and this. That's cool. But at the same time, I can't be that educator if there's no one in the room.

Researcher: Do you feel that the schedule you have is also, affecting your ability to get what you want to accomplish done?

Subject #5: My schedule sucks like it's bad. The only reason the band can play as well as it does at any given moment, which is you know, OK, like doing some grade threes, that's fine is because we do marching band because the kids love marching. That's so much and they get and I, and I'll preach this to to to my dying day, 90% of us of our students growth is just due to the fact that they have their lips on their instrument, for, for for an amount of time. You know, educationally we haven't come lessons but like I am building anytime for especially from marching band that is this time from this time outside of school hours when they have putting their face on their instrument and on some level that is far better than what they would be getting otherwise. Which again sounds defeatist. So like the kids get that time and they're playing and they and they get and and then we are learning concepts, we're doing technique and things like that during marching band as well. But then during concert band, I see the kids once every four days for 40 minutes and let alone every like I saw I had full band yesterday. Yesterday was a day four and it was the day after the musical and indoor championships. 1/3 of the band, if not 1/2 of the band was not there, right? So in the springtime, it's it's a crapshoot and I always have these high hopes. Like OK, in the spring, we're gonna be able to do this, this, this and this and then slowly but surely it always changes or gets whittled differently.

Researcher: Alright, two more questions and then we'll be able to wrap this. I think we hit on some of these, but are there any other influences you think that are affecting your retention from year to year within the program?

Subject #5: I think what's really important is, is the community that we have as directors and with students, right? Like so we have, I can see this compared to other programs like all of our band directors are all working with each other closely, whether it's like playing in the pit for the musical or doing pit for the musical, or being part of the indoor process and just coming up and giving lessons. That is really important that so we have that, yes, the functional we have that connection from grade level to grade level and we can talk about this kid and that kid, umm, but also we're sharing our knowledge base and what strengths and weaknesses we all have throughout the process. I think that's most important cause a lot of directors say, well, if you're connected with your middle school person, you'll be able to get a list and and track down kids, blah blah blah. Sure. But ultimately, the kids are seeing these interactions and seeing what sort of like family even the OR functional group that we have and it and it just it's it's solidifying their mind that that culture that exists in the program.

Researcher: In looking at this, I mean I think you have had some success with it, but what do you think are some of the strategies that have been really successful to mitigate either negative or declining enrollment or retention within a program?

Subject #5: That's an that's so interesting because I've been thinking about that a lot. Like lately it it's interesting because we're seeing like I've got a strong what? Well, I thought was a strong senior class and junior class and this dip in 9th and 10th grade, right, and that is that's that's that's actually been kind of a problem because uh, you know, the seniors are gonna be seniors. So my current class of seniors are kind of being lazy. They're either checking out or

they're showing some attitude in ways that they haven't before, so they are not necessarily as active in building the community. You know, like when they were juniors, they're all like, yeah, we got a senior year. So you got a smattering of people who are, like, checking out for the year and it's like it's mattering. People who are just sort of like not necessarily being like actively negative, but just kind of a little negative. So I have you have that and then you have a pretty low enrollment 9th grade class and some of the atmosphere and some of that positive vibes have been just a little less lately, right which I think is playing into some of the challenges and it kind of gets you down as the director you're like man we had there's such a role going like what am I doing differently?

Researcher: Do you think do you think some of that ninth and 10th grade challenge might be or result of the pandemic or no?

Subject #5: Yes. Well, that's one of the things we always talk about like I hear a lot of people saying like, man, my group's got known cause of the pandemic and I am sure that this is the pandemic, but on some level, the one of the things that always helped me as a as a director was I hesitate to use that as an excuse. My elementary colleague would always say, well, bands bad because we have an orchestra and I say that fact is probably right, right. The band right now, the 9th grade class is very small, probably because of the pandemic like that. As a fact, on itself is probably correct as long as we tell ourself that and allow that to be the answer. Then we were sort of writing our own destiny. So like I'm just, I'm a little frustrated because I need, like, things have been wildly busy, and I know the 9th grade class is struggling because of the pandemic, but I haven't had a chance and I haven't been able to do what I used to do with like this like I'm just struggling with a culture building which gets again, gets people interested and gets people started. And you know, I start new players a lot. It just hasn't been that as much, right? So

because then again, things again, things have been busy and you've got the senior class that is not necessarily as helpful or making the atmosphere not as you know like go get them as usual and it's a little like uh. This is kind of this gonna sucks and I just got to get back into it and and keep pushing and things will get better. But it's, you know, it's tough.

Researcher: Well, those are my major questions and you gave me a ton of data to process now, which I do appreciate. Thanks for taking the time to talk to me. So, and I'm sure we'll be in touch again soon.

Subject #5: Sure. Alright, good luck with everything man.

Subject #6

Subject #6: Good morning.

Researcher: Good morning. I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me this morning about this research that I am completing for my doctoral work. As you know, you have filled out a survey for me several months back regarding your program and the the enrollment trends and everything else that is occurring within your program. So I just have a few questions for you this morning. The first question I have for you is what are some of the biggest challenges you have faced as a rural Pennsylvania high school band director.

Subject #6: I think some of the biggest challenges would be the fact that we have a small population pool to begin with. Our students are pulled in many directions and it with the opportunities that our school offers, it becomes a difficult thing for them to actually figure out what they would like to be part of. A lot of times our school wants to act as though it's a much larger school than it is knowing we only have a population of about 750 students in the high school alone. We're trying to offer as many opportunities for them as much larger schools, like

some of our neighbors that are double or triple our size. So that really kind of creates a challenge of will these students want to be involved in the program? Will these students want to do other things within the Music program or within the other curriculum in the school? Will they want to participate in activities like our FFA program or in our VOTECH courses as a result of this, it really becomes a what is their priority thing? The challenge then on top of that really is the the fact that the students want to participate in everything they can and by doing that it really creates an issue of are they participating in every activity to the fullest extent or are they pushing their way through it to try to get everything on their resume. And occasionally we do have some of those students.

Umm, I'd say one of the other challenges we face is just where we are in terms of geographically what we have a lot of students that are getting involved in our Music programs, there are less opportunities outside of our School like students who want to take private lessons, they're gonna be traveling 30 or 40 minutes for a lesson versus some of the more populous areas where they may only have a 10 or 15 minute drive where there might even be private instructors in their community.

Researcher: Thank you. That's some great information. My next question is what internal or external external influences are affecting your enrollment?\

Subject #6: I think I touched on a couple of those, the big one being internally, we have a lot going on with the offerings for kids externally, it's our socioeconomic status. A lot of our students are working a lot of our students are are doing other activities within their homes. We are farming communities, so we have a lot of students that are really going to be working on

farms in the evenings or in the early mornings. So I'd say those are a couple of the influences for us.

Researcher: Do you feel that any internal influences involving your Music program itself are affecting what you have?

Subject #6: I would say it's been a challenge to really see some of those, those elements there for a long time. We had a very weak feeder program. Our elementary program was great. Coming out of the pandemic, the last handful of years, our middle school band director really has stepped up his game. It's definitely helped in terms of growth within the band program. We're seeing numbers. We're seeing quality as well as quantity, and it's definitely a noticeable change. We hit our low point probably last year coming out of the pandemic. Our numbers were down. It was the smallest concert band I ever had. Second smallest marching band I ever had and our marching band is an extracurricular it's a competitive group, but it is an extracurricular ensemble. But either way, we saw numbers that were drastically lower than they were prepandemic, and some of that is the class of 2020. I had the largest senior class I ever had was just a bubble, but I think there were 28 kids in my band that were all seniors that year. So we graduated out of town just as we were hitting the worst of the pandemic in terms of like the shutdown and everything else. So recruitment was way down. In terms of the internal influence on that one having a middle school feeder program that's actually making progress and actually growing is really going to help us in our elementary numbers are so much higher than they've been. And now we're to the point where we could actually hire another elementary band director to help offset that because it was just burning out our elementary band person.

Researcher: Well, that's just great news to hear in terms of where things are with their program. We talked about the the internal and external influences that are affecting enrollment.

What about influences that you think are affecting retention from year to year within your program?

Subject #6: Well, I mentioned one of them. Votech is always a challenge for us. Students can actually attend Votech in 9th grade, or they can start it in 10th grade. It's still a three year program either way, but sometimes we have a lot of kids that start the schedule or start with band and 9th grade and then move to votech and there's sophomore years and as a result of that one, I lose kids that way. The other one that affects us big time is scheduling, because being a small school with a ton of course offerings, some of our more honors or Advanced Placement classes might only be a one option per year section.

I know there was a year, a couple years back where the kids had to pick between band or AP Physics because there was one option for AP Physics and the physics teacher wasn't happy because a bunch of them big band. I was good with it because it helped my program, but it creates a challenge there from a schedule standpoint. The other one is going to be as they become juniors and seniors, we offer a lot of uh internship opportunities and Co OP opportunities. So kids can go out in the workforce, kids can intern with career fields that might be something that interests them. I've actually had a couple of interns myself that are we call them. They're like Music department interns that help with with organization, with Music library, with all of that type of stuff. We're on a block schedule here, but we have two skinny periods. 40 minutes each and each of those 40 minute periods, one is band and one is choir. But that's two of their eight credits every year filled up with ensembles, and that leaves lesser room for electives. So occasionally we do have kids that might leave for a year and hopefully come back, but it does happen from time to time.

Researcher: What have you done to successfully mitigate some of your enrollment and retention challenges that you've seen within the program?

Subject #6: I think the biggest thing is just building culture, building a desire for kids to wanna be a part of the band program or part of the Music program as a whole. Anyone that really buys in seems to stick around for all four years, and that's a big part of it. We also have a lot of kids that are like second generation band kids. These parents were in the music program and they were they were part of band when they were in school, so they remember when band was huge, this band and like the 1980s was like 150 or 200 kids. Now our population is smaller than it is for than it was at that time. It's definitely shrunk just because of the rural community, but either way there were kids that were just like their parents that were totally involved and totally invested in the program. I was fortunate for a long time to have a percussion staff member who was a graduate of the program from the 1980s. So he remembers when the band was huge and like his motivation was just to see our band program succeed. You need them to buy in to the program. I throw them a bone from time to time, but really from a culture standpoint, like musically, I've gotten my kids to buy into, like, legit rep and not just not just campy Music. It's educationally sound and the crazy part is, like my band buys into new band Music. Like I've tried to throw, like hosting Grainger at him and they just look at me and they're like, it's what it is. But then I throw like John Mackey or Brian Balmages, Randall Standridge. And they're like, oh, totally.

Researcher: nice.

Subject #6: Yeah. I've also got our band boosters to really buy into it. We've started to support Commission consortiums so that we can basically continue to see new band rep. So I think we've done 7 or 8 consortiums since I've been here and that's over the last 12 years. We did one

back a few years ago, prepandemic. It was actually a holiday piece. Brian Balmages just did it and it was raising funds to help support homeless shelters out in the Baltimore area, and we put the buy in on the kids and the culture of the program supported it to the point where we raised, like, \$500.00 for the buy in. And I mean the buy om was only like 80 bucks, but the kids raised the money so that they would support. So like they they really buy into that stuff, it's that culture that's just huge.

Researcher: Awesome. Well, I appreciate you taking the time this morning. I appreciate you being willing to share all of this with me.

Subject #6: And yeah, if you need anything else, just let me know.

Researcher: Thank you so much.

Subject #6: Alright, thanks bye.

Subject #7

Researcher: Hey, how are you? Can you hear me?

Subject #7: I can. Can you hear me?

Researcher: I appreciate you taking the time this afternoon to meet with me. As you know, I'm working on completing my doctoral research regarding retention and recruitment and uh enrollment within band programs in rural mid sized rural Pennsylvania schools. Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey several months back.

Subject #7: Of course.

Researcher: I look forward to having just a few conversations and questions regarding that just to kind of get a little more information as I go.

Researcher: Just so you know, this is being recorded on teams and I will be redacting all names and personal information, but the information will be published with my final project.

Subject #7: No problem at all.

Researcher: Awesome. Well then I just have a few questions and the goal is to kind of keep this fairly organic. First question I have for you is what are some of the challenges you feel you face as a mid sized rural Pennsylvania high school band director?

Subject #7: I would say one of the biggest things we deal with is just the schedule because our School being smaller with around 600 ish kids. As a result, it's just it's difficult to get the kids, the skin, the classes and the courses they need based on their graduation requirements. Two big things that are affecting us. First of all, is just the growth of our career in tech system, just the Career tech program itself is really going to become a major sticking point this year. They changed our high school Bell schedule drastically and I say that hope it's gonna be good in the long term. We went from a traditional eight period day down to a seven period day, so that's one less class for kids. It's it's one less period of teaching for the teachers and it seems to have affected our numbers. We went from a band of about 86 last year to a band of 54 this year, and those numbers are really down. But I think it's a temporary thing, mainly because at this point those 54 kids are committed to the program. I will say the positive to this is that our program has seen growth in terms of time in front of the Ensemble because the kids are the kids are there every day. So we have band every single day and that's really been a help in terms of the just the Ensemble buy it. Umm, one of the things is though, that kind of turns kids off from our program at times is our marching experience because if you're in band, you're in our marching band. Now we don't do the traditional marching band thing. We do a parade band. We just do 7 or 8 parades a year. So instead of having those typical Friday Night Football commitments, we're just

at parades and it is a time commitment, but it's also a huge fundraiser for the program because we had a Music booster program over time, probably as a result of director apathy, our Music booster program fizzled out. So we lost that part of it, but the fundraiser we make from these parades it just it really helps the program and it's a neat experience without the extreme time commit. Does that answer your question?

Researcher: I think it does. I definitely appreciate that it's definitely a different experience. So talk to me about the parade band versus the football or competitive band. I know that like typically in our schools, we see one of those options is the parade band seems to be a bit of an outlier.

Subject #7: Sure. I just want to say I'm not opposed to competitive bands. I'm not opposed to football bands. Our football program is pretty young. As a district, I think we've only had 12 or 15 years somewhere in that window. So it's really not been our priority. We've done a couple of pep bands there, but otherwise it hasn't been the main thing. Not saying I wouldn't do it and I'd be willing to have the conversation and I'd be willing to see, but the biggest thing is I just don't want it to take the time from the kids. It pulls the kids into another activity and I don't want to make that commitment for them. I want them to be part of the conversation.

Researcher: So what are some of the things you see that are affecting your enrollment in your program, both internal or external factors?

Subject #7: I would say I think the internal factors are the big thing for a long time it was two of us. We were doing all band from 4th to 12th grade and now we've been able to add a third person in the mix and it's really kind of helped us in terms of getting kids to buy in because it gives chance for the high school to be the high school director to be in front of seven to 8th graders from time to time as well. It also just gives us more instruction time, and that's

something that we desperately needed. I mentioned the music boosters being gone. That's definitely an external factor that's affected the program, because losing some of that parent buy in is really changed where we are in terms of time outside the day, I think one of the biggest things is we just we don't have options for kids to do things really outside of the day because our kids are one of those populations where our kids are less likely to do something if it requires a time commitment outside the school day. And that's really been a challenge for years. That's why we don't have a jazz band. That's why we have a parade band. It's why we do our concert band.

Researcher: That's interesting to hear that I've not having those outside ensembles and those extracurricular commitments is definitely a different philosophy for the program. Is it something that you chose to do? Is it something that you feel is best for the community?

Subject #7: It's hard for us because we just don't have the kids to and the ability for the kids to get back and do the things because they're working or being a rural community. There's definitely the farm life now. It's not as much as some areas just because we're still pretty close to some of the more populous areas in our county and we are in that weird spot where we're like, right between two major population centers.

Researcher: So looking at that as well, what do you think are some of the factors that are affecting your retention from year to year?

Subject #7: Yeah, this definitely goes back to the schedule. Looking at the schedule as one thing and trying to get the kids to be in program, I mean, if a kid doesn't want to do band, I'm not gonna say no to them and I'm not gonna be upset about it, but I'm gonna have a conversation to try to figure out where they where we went wrong if we did, or if it's just not what they wanna

do. And that's OK. If they don't want to be a part of it, I just hope we can connect those kids with like classes like our music appreciation class or music theory or our guitar classes, where we can have kids still involved in our program. Our art department is doing something we're trying to model after they've created an art major program. So they have art one, art two, art three, and art four. And by taking those classes, they can ultimately develop a culminating experience in art. And we've been looking at it as a department as something as a way to connect to kids that may otherwise not be in our ensembles, we connect to them so they stay in our Music program in some way.

Researcher: Last question, I really have for you is going to be what are some of the strategies that you've incorporated or you feel are strong in terms of mitigating some of these enrollment and retention things?

Subject #7: One of the areas that I struggle in is just talking to the kids outside of podium time because we're we're guilty as band directors. I stand at the podium and conduct the band and we make the Music, but it's having those conversations. See how that kid is doing and I see it more in the younger grades. I had a trumpet player who was OK in 9th grade at the beginning and just seeing the progress and having those conversations with him about how much growth he's made has really helped him. It's not a kid that's going to be an Allstate musician, and that's OK, but he's one of those kids that just thrives on the positive and I'm one that's 100% guilty of it because I'm so focused on tunnel vision by just looking at my Ensemble, looking at what we're doing in band. And I wanna give them opportunities. We do things like like music in the park, so we try to do that every other year with our younger groups. We do large trips. I've started hinting towards our next big trip, which would be a couple of years from now, just to show the kids that we're considering this as an option because it's something that kids could really be a part of.

We've done the MPAs, we've had kids make honors bands and those are great experiences for them also. But it's just giving those kids the opportunities, the opportunities to grow, the opportunities to be musicians, the opportunities to experience things they might not experience in their regular classes.

Researcher: Well, that's great.

I appreciate this conversation and I definitely appreciate your time. I look forward to digging more into this research and kind of seeing where things are with this and I'm looking forward to sharing the final product with everyone.

Subject #7: Absolutely. I can't wait to read it.

Researcher: Thanks so much for your time.

APPENDIX C: IRB APPROVALS**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 1, 2022

Adam Nobile
Karen Kuehmann

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY22-23-236 Outside Influences on Student Retention in Rural PA Band Program

Dear Adam Nobile, Karen Kuehmann,

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

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

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

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

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

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

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

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 8, 2024

Adam Nobile
Karen Kuehmann

Re: Modification - IRB-FY22-23-236 Outside Influences on Student Retention in Rural PA Band Program

Dear Adam Nobile, Karen Kuehmann,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has rendered the decision below for IRB-FY22-23-236 Outside Influences on Student Retention in Rural PA Band

Program. Decision: Exempt - Limited IRB

Your request to refine your participant criteria to focus on high school band directors in Pennsylvania who work in schools classified as mid-sized rural schools by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and add a follow-up interview has been approved. Thank you for submitting your revised study documents for our review and documentation. For a PDF of your modification 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 Modification under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. If your modification required you to submit revised documents, they can be found on the same page under the Attachments tab. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for complying with the IRB's requirements for making changes to your approved study. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office