

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**Community Partnerships for Music Education in Rural Eastern New Mexico and West  
Texas**

A Thesis Submitted to  
Dr. Nathan Street of the School of Music  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Music Education

by  
Joseph Manuel Flores

Portales, New Mexico

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## **Abstract**

Despite the availability of music education courses in rural America's secondary school setting, the quality and quantity of music education offerings may be in a state of decline due to student retention, lack of collaborations between extra/co-curricular activities and their instructors, scheduling conflicts, or lack of community involvement. Music education opportunities allow students to engage in art forms that further life-long learning and music advocacy. This study will investigate the perspective of music educators in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas as they continue to create high-quality music-band programs. The qualitative phenomenological research study highlights perspectives of rural American music educators that have not previously been explored nor documented; concerns for the following research include student involvement, retention, and attrition rates, collaborative efforts within the community and music programs, and the effects of music education that create music advocates as an adult in rural America. This study will aid the development of high-quality music education programs in rural America by offering data and insight into the sustainability of music programs, collaborative efforts, and community involvement. Deficiency in data collected among rural American music educators limits the study of issues and restricts the quality of music education. Additionally, the study will assist in underscoring music education limitations.

*Keywords:* rural America, music advocacy, collaborations, student retention

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Association of Texas Small School Bands (ATSSB)

King James Version (KJV)

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES)

New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA)

New Mexico Music Educator Association (NMMEA)

Small School Classification (1A-4A)

Texas Music Educator Association (TMEA)

University Interscholastic League (UIL)

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

This chapter identifies the research questions, background and literature, core concepts, and methodology for this study. The following research will investigate collaboration efforts between fine-arts music programs and the communities they serve in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The following will focus on rural music educators' processes of creating an environment of active learning that increases student participation and retention within the band activity of fine arts. The study will follow adult music advocacy within rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas communities regarding student participation. Providing information from music directors in underserved areas of the United States offers insight into successful music programs' development. In addition, the study will examine the relationship between music advocacy as an adult and community involvement within the school district. Chapter one consists of the primary details for the beginning stages of the research and provides an outline that may be replicated for music educators/researchers to continue to conduct personalized research. This research aims to provide detailed accounts of music programs and community involvement from band directors within rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas.

### **Background of Topic**

Collaborations between educational institutions, local organizations, and community members actively provide essential resources, support, and opportunities that may otherwise be unavailable. Historically, community partnerships have enriched music programs by offering financial assistance, facilitating cultural exchanges, and fostering a shared sense of ownership in the educational process. In rural settings, where resources are often scarce, these partnerships play a crucial role in bridging gaps, ensuring sustainability, and promoting inclusivity. Eplus



states:

The value and impact of school-based arts education reverberate through the entire nation's artistic economy and community: Data from the National Endowment for the Arts Survey of Public Participation in the Arts shows that formal, school-based arts education experiences in childhood are strongly associated with later adult arts engagement as creator, performer, patron, or donor/financial supporter.<sup>1</sup>

The significance of music education within the public school system outlined within the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 states that music and the arts are offered as part of a “well-rounded curriculum,” however, research shows that not all school districts within the United States provide a highly-qualified arts program. Elpus indicates that within a sample of 940 high schools, only 78 percent offered any music course, and within this percentage, 73 percent provided band, 69 percent provided choir, 21 percent offered orchestra, 14 percent offered guitar, 13percent offered piano, and 9 percent provided, any other variation of music courses.<sup>2</sup> He does not designate the number of school districts classified into rural or metropolitan areas within the sample. Lastly, the study does not indicate the quality of music programs or other factors, including population size, schedules, extra/co-curricular courses, or dual-enrollment courses, and how they may hinder the participation size or music courses offered within a school district. As Kathleen Thomas et al., state:

The dimension that is perhaps most important in determining whether or not a high school is arts-rich is the engagement of its student body, but viewing arts access only as a participation issue is problematic as well...The Participation Only Index designates much smaller schools in predominately rural areas as being arts-rich because student participation, on average, is much higher in these schools, even if the campus cannot offer a significant number of courses in the arts.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth Elpus, ““Access to Arts Education in America: The Availability of Visual Art, Music, Dance, and Theater Courses in U.S High Schools,” *Arts Educaiton Policy Review* 123, no. 2n (2022): 50.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Elpus, ““Access to Arts Education in America: The Availability of Visual Art, Music, Dance, and Theater Courses in U.S High Schools,” 55.

<sup>3</sup> Kathleen Thomas et al., “Access to High School Arts Education: Why Student Participation Matters as Music as Course Availability,” *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 21 (2013): 7.

Although numbers for “small” classified high schools average higher participants in extra-curricular than surrounding areas, the limitations of student scheduling, extra/co-curricular, and other educational programming hinder the students’ opportunities to participate in multiple activities offered by school districts actively; increased participation in “arts-rich” schools are a result of limited extra/co-curricular activities provided within the school district’s master schedule.

The accessibility of school-related music or extra/co-curricular courses directly affects a student’s opportunity to engage in various courses due to limited scheduling, affecting the retention of musical students. Benham discusses the positive and negative for scheduling formats within the secondary setting including block scheduling which increases students’ time-on-task by increasing the number of minutes per scheduled class period, however, daily instruction is comprised of a rotating A/B scheduling versus six or more, periods a day.<sup>4</sup> Block scheduling may increase conflicts in course scheduling or other co-curricular/extra-curricular activities. Benham states, “Students could potentially have their curricular options in music reduced by 40 percent.”<sup>5</sup> Compared to the six-period day, the seven or eight-period day decreases time on task per class period by 15 minutes per class. The supplementary class periods would increase scheduling flexibility and allow the addition of co-curricular/extra-curricular courses.

Gallo finds that music educators collaborate less with other educators on instructional topics than with other disciplines.<sup>6</sup> Within the music setting, collaborations between staff

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<sup>4</sup> John L. Benham, “Chapter Seven: Crisis Management: Educational Reform,” in *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2016), 113-120.

<sup>5</sup> Benham, “Chapter Seven: Crisis Management: Educational Reform,” 113.

<sup>6</sup> Donna J. Gallo, “Professional Development Quality in U.S. Music Education: An Analysis of the 2011–2012 Schools and Staffing Survey.” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 66, no. 2 (2018): 168.

members, other teaching disciplines, and communities create opportunities for increased learning for professionals and students. Collaboration allows students and staff to have a sense of unity within the school district and increases support and engagement within the school.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The success of music education courses and music programs within the rural United States depends on student retention rates throughout the programs. Students participating in music programs gain knowledge and skills needed for real-world scenarios.

### **Statement of Purpose**

This study investigates the effects of collaboration efforts between fine-arts music programs and the communities they serve in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. Music education is a value beyond the classroom: music education creates opportunities for students to grow into music advocates, creates a sense of unity amongst school districts, and offers community involvement as part of lifelong music learning.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study's core concepts identify community partnerships and the challenges facing music education in rural America, primarily focusing on Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. Issues within the school's identity or community collaborations interfere with the life-long learning of music. Diversity through music education allows for leadership to sustain a voice when creating the identity of a music program: the text edited by Kallio may be used on a school or national level to develop a framework for music education.<sup>7</sup> The study will provide details on the beginning stages that create a sense of belonging for music programs within the school

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<sup>7</sup> Vincent C. Bates, Daniel J. Shevock, and Anita Prest. " Cultural Diversity, Ecodiversity, and Music Education." in *The Politics of Diversity in Music Education*, ed. by Alexis Anja Kallio, Heidi Westerlund, Sidsel Karlsen, Kathryn Marsh, and Eva Saether. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021): 171.

district and community, allowing for a sense of identity within the classroom and providing an opportunity for professional development scenarios for all stakeholders. Lee, Krause, and Davidson state that collaborations and partnerships between the school district and community stakeholders contribute to successful music programs.<sup>8</sup> Student engagement in arts programs increases the skills and abilities of students while promoting the mental well-being of students and the community.

Student engagement within the arts translates to post-secondary arts inclusion and creates an environment of music learning. Teacher-student mentoring promotes independence and growth for music programs, including community, administrative, and professional support. Kenny states that the relationship between musical practice, participation, relationships, roles, and learning processes create meaningful musical experiences that are significant to all stakeholders within the shared learning process.<sup>9</sup> The mentoring process allows teachers and students to develop influential models of music education within the school district while involving community partnerships and practices.<sup>10</sup> Matsunobu emphasizes that music-making partnerships foster a sense of belonging and identity while offering diverse learning content and approaches. These collaborations also highlight the cultural and natural environments of a place, enhancing students' community involvement and providing varied learning experiences.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Juyong Lee, Amanda E. Krause, and Jane W. Davidson, "The PERMA Well-being Model and Music Facilitation Practice: Preliminary Documentation for Well-being through Music Provision in Australian Schools," *Research Studies in Music Education* 39, no. 1 (2017): 73.

<sup>9</sup> Ailbhe Kenny, "Practice through Partnership: Examining the Theoretical Framework and Development of a "community of Musical Practice," *International Journal of Music Education* 32, no. 4 (2014): 406.

<sup>10</sup> Susan A. Davis, "A Circular Council of People with Equal Ideas: The Mentoring Mosaic in a Preservice Teacher Education Program," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 26, no. 2 (2017): 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

Further exploration includes the music educator's approach to collaboration, music training for pre-service educators, student retention within music education courses, and educator retention. Haddock states that themes aiding educator retention are scheduling, administration, and culture, however, lack of communication from administration and community leaders causes factions that hinder unity within the school district.<sup>12</sup> Everts-Matusoff suggests that music education "can be a rocky road constantly curving unexpectedly. That's why we're here to highlight some of the many options for music education--either for formative instruction or ongoing learning--that can accelerate and ameliorate your journey to whichever destinations you've set on your career course."<sup>13</sup> These insights emphasize the need for effective communication and diverse educational opportunities to cultivate a cohesive and supportive environment for both educators and students.

The city of Melbourne created an ArtPlay organization that provides an artistic opportunity for students ages 3-13 to add to the importance of collaboration efforts; the city allows professional musicians and community members to instruct various musical activities/workshops over the summer. The project was a success while stakeholders fully invested in the organization: Neryl and Brown state that challenges arose when community members failed to engage in their administrative duties.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Amy Haddock, "A Narrative of K-12 Rural Tenured Music Teachers: Stories of those Who Stay the Course." ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, (2020): 7.

<sup>13</sup> Samantha Everts-Matusoff, "Planning Your Path to Success: Canadian Musicians' 2018 Focus on Music Education," *Canadian Musician* 40, no. 1 (2018): 49.

<sup>14</sup> Neryl Jeanneret and Robert Brown, "City Beats: A Creative Community Partnership Initiative at Artplay," *Australian Journal of Music Education* no. 2 (2012): 90.

## **Research Questions**

The following will be examined in this study:

RQ1: How does the culture/identity of the school or school district affect student involvement, retention, and attrition rates within fine arts music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas?

RQ2: How does community involvement aid music advocacy or lifelong appreciation in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas?

## **Hypothesis**

H<sub>0</sub>1: School culture does not affect student involvement, retention, and attrition rates within fine-arts music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas.

H<sub>0</sub>2: Community involvement and collaboration with fine arts programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas may aid in music advocacy by applying cultural identity to the music program, incorporating the community's values within the music education framework, and promoting self-worth within the student demographic.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative methodology will be used to gather data from band directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas to uncover issues faced within the school district and community. The research will utilize a qualitative questionnaire issued to band directors within the designated demographic to report on collaboration within the fine arts, collaboration within the community to support life-long music learning, and ways community involvement supports music advocacy. The designated area is defined as Eastern New Mexico and West Texas, which are classified as “small schools,” according to NMAA. In addition, the researcher will conduct

interviews with music directors within the designated areas so that they can express their concerns, collaboration efforts, the direction of the music program as it relates to the topic of study, and the successes of collaboration efforts. The interview process is not limited to music directors but may include fine arts administrators and administration that work directly with community members, however, the primary focus will remain on secondary music directors within the designated counties in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas.

The approach used for data collection within the designated areas will provide a baseline of how band directors provide collaboration opportunities within their respective school districts and communities. Collaborations may include the mutual agreement of values and attitudes between parent-teacher communications: as Ang, Panebianco, and Odendaal state, “key characteristics of effective partnership between parents and professionals, trust was ranked as the highest followed by mutual respect, open communication, and honesty.”<sup>15</sup> These collaborations create a sense of respect and mutual decision-making to achieve shared goals. The methodology will provide the most viable option for showing how music directors within rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas collaborate with the community to create a cultural sense of identity within the school district. In addition, Janet Spring states, “Music programs enhance the relationship that exists between the school community.”<sup>16</sup> By examining the collaborative efforts between music directors and the community, the research highlights how these partnerships actively enrich the educational experience and strengthen community bonds, promoting inclusivity and cultural awareness.

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<sup>15</sup> Kathryn Ang, Clorinda Panebianco, and Albi Odendaal. "Parent-teacher Partnerships in Group Music Lessons: A Collective Case Study." *British Journal of Music Education* 37, no. 2 (2020): 169.

<sup>16</sup> Janet Spring, "The Power of Metaphor in Rural Music Education Research," *Action, Criticism, & Theory for Music Education* 15, no. 4 (2016): 96.

### **Definition of Terms**

Rural Community – Population of under 50,000 residents.

Eastern New Mexico – Includes the following counties: Curry, De Baca, Guadalupe, Lea, Quay, and Roosevelt.

The West Texas region – Includes the following counties: Baily, Dawson, Gaines, Garza, Hockley, Lamb, Terry, Ward, and Yoakum.

Small School Classification – A comprehensive review of member school enrollment numbers is undertaken to determine classification and alignment for all sports/activities. An average of 80-day enrollment count numbers (grades 9-12) for the second and third years before the start of a new block and the 40-day enrollment count numbers just before a new block are utilized to determine the enrollment figure for each school. All member schools are then placed in a classification by their enrollment average. Small School classifications are student populations ranging from 0-1,299.<sup>17</sup>

NMAA – New Mexico Athletic Association defines the student body as classification size.

### **Summary**

Chapter One discusses planning a qualitative phenomenological research project regarding the effects of fine arts and community collaboration on music education within Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The study examines the collaborative efforts between music directors and communities in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas, emphasizing the role of these partnerships in fostering respect, mutual decision-making, and cultural identity within school districts. The research methodology illustrates how these collaborations enhance

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<sup>17</sup> “Section IV Classification and Alignment - NMAA,” accessed July 1, 2022, [https://www.nmact.org/file/Section\\_4.pdf](https://www.nmact.org/file/Section_4.pdf).



community cohesion and establish a shared cultural identity. By highlighting initiatives, the study demonstrates how music education actively enriches the educational experience and strengthens community bonds, promoting inclusivity and cultural awareness. The researcher provides the following hypothesis:

H<sub>0</sub>1: School culture does not affect student involvement, retention, and attrition rates within fine-arts music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas.

H<sub>0</sub>2: Community involvement and collaboration with fine arts programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas may aid in music advocacy by applying cultural identity to the music program, incorporating the community's values within the music education framework, and promoting self-worth within the student demographic.

Information provided by the research will offer insight into student retention and attrition rates in the small school setting and music advocacy opportunities within the communities they serve.

The methodology adopted in this study systematically captures how these collaborative efforts enhance community cohesion, establishing and reinforcing a shared cultural identity that permeates the community. By scrutinizing specific initiatives, the study reveals the multifaceted contributions of music education to the broader educational experience. It demonstrates how music programs not only advance the artistic development of students but also serves as a vital mechanism for community engagement, inclusivity, and the promotion of cultural awareness. Moreover, the research underscores the transformative potential of these collaborations in bridging divisions within the community, thereby strengthening its social fabric. Through rigorous analysis, the study aims to provide critical insights into how fine arts education can function as a catalyst for community development and cultural preservation, ultimately enriching the educational experience for all participants.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

Chapter Two aims to provide an overview of the theoretical framework, background, and literature of this hermeneutic phenomenological study of collaboration efforts between fine-arts music programs and the communities they serve in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The following will focus on rural music educators' processes of creating an environment of active learning that increases student participation and retention within the fine arts, particularly band. Concerning student participation, the study will follow adult music advocacy within Eastern New Mexico and West Texas communities. Epstein states, "Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students."<sup>18</sup> By fostering a sense of collective ownership and accountability, these partnerships strive to create an enriching educational environment, prioritizing continuous improvements, and innovations that develop effective and sustainability towards shared goals.

A methodical review of the literature regarding community partnerships was conducted to gather data and explore the contributions of school-community partnerships and the effects on student participation and retention. This chapter serves as a review of the current literature related to the topic of study; the primary focus of the literature review will remain on rural areas of the United States. The chapter will include the study's theoretical framework, the school's identity and community culture related to fine arts, and community involvement as a form of music advocacy.

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<sup>18</sup> Joyce, L. Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share," *Phi Delta Kappan* 92, no. 3 (2010): 81.

## Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology is the philosophy of focusing on the perceptions of people who have experienced related study topics. The researcher must collect and analyze data regarding the lived experiences through written statements or conversations.<sup>19</sup> While qualitative in nature, the primary focus of phenomenology is the intentionality of lived experiences, subjects, or objects; Guillen states, “phenomenological method admits to exploring in the person’s consciousness, that is to say, to understand the essence itself, the way of perceiving life through experiences, the meaning around them and are defined in the individual’s psychic life.”<sup>20</sup> Researchers use this approach to uncover the underlying structures of consciousness and the subjective realities that shape a person’s worldview.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the study of previous experiences to create an interpretation and textual meaning of themes through data collection. Guillen explains that the term hermeneutics “is an approach that explains behavior, verbal and non-verbal forms of behavior, culture, and systems of organizations and reveals the meaning it contains, but preserving the singularity.”<sup>21</sup> The hermeneutic phenomenology approach will allow for data to be collected and translated to effectively analyze and vet the aspects in which the subject is concerned, resulting in a pedagogical approach to implementing change. This style of research allows members to reflect on their experiences; as Guillen states,

It is a priority that the teacher accepts the importance of the phenomenological method because it leads to deeply reflect on the daily experiences, and to find the meaning of these experiences in the unique way of each individual. All this is in order to have the

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<sup>19</sup> Art Sloan and Brian Bowe, “Phenomenology and Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy, the Methodologies, and using Hermeneutic Phenomenology to Investigate Lecturers’ Experiences of Curriculum Design,” *Quality & Quantity* 48, no. 3 (2014): 1293.

<sup>20</sup> Doris Elida Fuster Guillen, “Qualitative Research: Hermeneutical Phenomenological Method,” *Monographic: Advances on Qualitative Research in Education* 7, no. 1 (2019): 219-220.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

capacity to take actions that lead to the improvement of the pedagogical practice. This practice becomes transcendental because the educational sphere revolves around the subjective dimension of the agents that are part of it, whose understanding of the senses and meanings is fundamental, since it would allow to know it, understand it, reproduce it and, if necessary, transform it.<sup>22</sup>

### **Overlapping Spheres of Influence**

Community partnership is the idea of community and education collaborating to discover and identify shared interests for the betterment of student education. Community-school partnerships band together to create a positive environment for all parties while fostering camaraderie to create constructive opportunities for all parties. Joyce L. Epstein states, “Partnerships can improve school programs and school climate, provide family services and support, increase parents’ skills and leadership, connect families with others in the school and the community, and help teachers with their work.”<sup>23</sup> As described by Epstein, the overlapping spheres of influence include *external* models that influence student learning: (1) the family, (2) the school, and (3) the community. The *internal* model indicates each system’s relationship and influence patterns between the family, the school, and the community.<sup>24</sup> In addition, student success is tangible with the success of the school, family, and community.<sup>25</sup>

The overlapping spheres of influence include the environment of family-like schools, where each child is viewed independently and included. The center of family-like schools consists of the ability to communicate openly with all parents/guardians of students through

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<sup>22</sup> Doris Elida Fuster Guillen, “Qualitative Research: Hermeneutical Phenomenological Method,” *Monographic: Advances on Qualitative Research in Education* 7, no. 1 (2019): 221.

<sup>23</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, “School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 92, vol. 3 (2010): 81.

<sup>24</sup> Epstein, “School, Family, and Community Partnerships,” 82.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

various means of communication so that all stakeholders are well-informed and current on events. The environment of a school-like family creates a sense of learning opportunities at home or through the community to further students' education. Epstein defines a community school as a "place where programs and services for students, parents, and others are offered before, during, and after the regular school day."<sup>26</sup> Collaborations between schools and communities focus on student development and prosper from interworking the spheres of influence. According to Epstein:

Affluent communities currently have more positive family involvement, on average, unless schools and teachers in economically distressed communities work to build positive partnerships with their students' families. Schools in more economically depressed communities make more contact with families about the problems and difficulties their children are having unless they work at developing balanced partnership programs that also include contracts about the positive accomplishments of students. Just about all families care about their children and want them to succeed. They are eager to obtain better information from schools and communities to remain good partners in their children's education. Just about all teachers and administrators would like to involve families. Still, many need to learn how to build positive and productive programs and are afraid to try.<sup>27</sup>

Epstein's Six Types of Involvement, Figure 1 – Six Types of Challenges and Redefinitions, Figure 2, and the Expected Results Figure 3 data representations are the basis of this study in Chapter Two. Informing each party of the partnership responsibility to the students, families, schools, and communities allows for collaborative effort for development, use of communication, and decision-making. However, decision-making results from a plan of action created by educators, administrators, and community leaders. The method of action may result in various outcomes based on decision-making for particular topics, including funding and goals for the partnership.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>27</sup> Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships," 85-86.

Figure 1

## Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Sample Practices

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at Home	Type 5 Decision Making	Type 6 Collaborating with Community
<p>Help all families establish home environments to support children as students.</p> <p><b>Sample Practices</b> Suggestions for home conditions that support learning at each grade level.</p> <p>Parent education and other courses or training for parents (e.g., GED, college credit, family literacy).</p> <p>Family support programs to assist families with health, nutrition, and other services.</p> <p>Home visits at transition points to preschool, elementary, middle, and high school. Neighborhood meetings to help families understand schools and to help schools understand families.</p>	<p>Design effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school communications about school programs and children's progress.</p> <p><b>Sample Practices</b> Conferences with every parent at least once a year, with follow-ups as needed. Language translators to assist families as needed. Weekly or monthly folders of student work sent home for review and comments. Parent/student pickup of report card, with conferences on improving grades. Regular schedule of useful notices, memos, phone calls, newsletters, and other communications. Clear information on choosing schools or courses, programs, and activities within schools. Clear information on all school policies, programs, reforms, and transitions.</p>	<p>Recruit and organize parent help and support.</p>  <p><b>Sample Practices</b> School and classroom volunteer program to help teachers, administrators, students, and other parents. Parent room or family center for volunteer work, meetings, resources for families. Annual postcard survey to identify all available talents, times and locations of volunteers. Class parent, telephone tree, or other structures to provide all families with needed information. Parent patrols or other activities to aid safety and operation of school programs.</p>	<p>Provide information and ideas to families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning.</p> <p><b>Sample Practices</b> Information for families on skills required for students in all subjects at each grade. Information on homework policies and how to monitor and discuss school-work at home. Information on how to assist students to improve skills on various class and school assessments. Regular schedule of homework that requires students to discuss and interact with families on what they are learning in class. Calendars with activities for parents and students at home. Family math, science, and reading activities at school. Summer learning packets or activities. Family participation in setting student goals each year and in planning for college or work.</p>	<p>Include parents in school decisions, developing parent leaders and representatives.</p> <p><b>Sample Practices</b> Active PTA/PTO or other parent organizations, advisory councils, or committees (e.g., curriculum, safety, personnel) for parent leadership and participation. Independent advocacy groups to lobby and work for school reform and improvements. District-level councils and committees for family and community involvement. Information on school or local elections for school representatives. Networks to link all families with parent representatives.</p>	<p>Identify and integrate resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.</p> <p><b>Sample Practices</b> Information for students and families on community health, cultural, recreational, social support, and other programs or services. Information on community activities that link to learning skills and talents, including summer programs for students. Service integration through partnerships involving school, civic, counseling, cultural, health, recreation, and other agencies and organizations, and businesses. Service to the community by students, families, and schools (e.g., recycling, art, music, drama, and other activities for senior or others). Participation of alumni in school programs for students.</p>

Epstein's Six Types of Involvement<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share," *Phi Delta Kappan* 92, vol. 3 (2010): 85-86.

Figure 2

### Challenges and Redefinitions for the Six Types of Involvement

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at Home	Type 5 Decision Making	Type 6 Collaborating with Community
<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <p>Provide information to all families who want it or who need it, not just to the few who can attend workshops or meetings at the school building.</p> <p>Enable families to share information with schools about culture, background, children's talents and needs.</p> <p>Make sure that all information for and from families is clear, usable, and linked to children's success in school.</p> <p><b>Redefinitions</b></p> <p>"Workshop" to mean more than a <i>meeting</i> about a topic held at the school building at a particular time.</p> <p>"Workshop" may also mean making information about a topic available in a variety of forms that can be viewed, heard, or read anywhere, any time, in varied forms.</p>	<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <p>Review the readability, clarity, form, and frequency of all memos, notices, and other print and nonprint communications.</p> <p>Consider parents who do not speak English well, read well, or need large type.</p> <p>Review the quality of major communications (newsletters, report cards, conference schedules, and so on).</p> <p>Establish clear two-way channels for communications from home to school and from school to home.</p> <p><b>Redefinitions</b></p> <p>"Communications about school programs and student progress" to mean two-way, three-way, and many-way channels of communication that connect schools, families, students, and the community.</p>	<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <p>Recruit volunteers widely so that all families know that their time and talents are welcome.</p> <p>Make flexible schedules for volunteers, assemblies, and events to enable parents who work to participate.</p> <p>Organize volunteer work; provide training; match time and talent with school, teachers, and student needs; and recognize efforts of the participants are productive.</p>  <p><b>Redefinitions</b></p> <p>"Volunteer" to mean anyone who supports school goals and children's learning or development in any way, at any place, and at any time not just during the school day and at the school building.</p>	<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <p>Design and organize a regular schedule of interactive homework (e.g., weekly or bi-monthly) that gives students responsibility for discussing important things they are learning and helps families stay aware of the content of their children's classwork.</p> <p>Coordinate family-linked homework activities, if students have several teachers.</p> <p>Involve families and their children in all important curriculum-related decisions.</p> <p><b>Redefinitions</b></p> <p>"Homework" to mean not only work done alone, but also interactive activities shared with others at home or in the community, linking schoolwork to real life.</p> <p>"Help" at home to mean encouraging, listening, reacting, praising, guiding, monitoring, and discussing — not "teaching" school subjects.</p>	<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <p>Include parent leaders from all racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other groups in the school.</p> <p>Offer training to enable leaders to serve as representatives of other families, with input from and return of information to all parents.</p> <p>Include students (along with parents) in decision-making groups.</p> <p><b>Redefinitions</b></p> <p>"Decision making" to mean a process of partnership, of shared views and actions toward shared goals, not just a power struggle between conflicting ideas.</p> <p>Parent "leader" to mean a real representative, with opportunities and support to hear from and communicate with other families.</p>	<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <p>Solve turf problems of responsibilities, funds, staff, and locations for collaborative activities.</p> <p>Inform families of community programs for students, such as mentoring, tutoring, business partnerships.</p> <p>Ensure equity of opportunities for students and families to participate in community programs or to obtain services.</p> <p>Match community contributions with school goals; integrate child and family services with education.</p> <p><b>Redefinitions</b></p> <p>"Community" to mean not only the neighborhoods where students' homes and schools are located but also any neighborhoods that influence their learning and development.</p> <p>"Community" created not only by low or high social or economic qualities, but by strengths and talents to support students, families, and schools.</p> <p>"Community" means all who are interested in and affected by the quality of education, not just those with children in the schools.</p>

Challenges and Redefinitions for the Successful Design and Implementation of the Six Types of Involvement—presents a set of "challenges" to forms of involvement, as well as redefinitions of conventional terms such as workshop, volunteer, or community.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships," 86

Figure 3

### Expected Results of the Six Types of Involvement for Students, Parents, and Teachers

Type 1 Parenting	Type 2 Communicating	Type 3 Volunteering	Type 4 Learning at Home	Type 5 Decision Making	Type 6 Collaborating with Community
<p><b>Results for Students</b></p> <p>Awareness of family supervision; respect for parents.</p> <p>Positive personal qualities, habits, beliefs, and values, as taught by family.</p> <p>Balance between time spent on chores, on other activities, and on homework.</p> <p>Good or improved attendance.</p> <p>Awareness of importance of school.</p>	<p><b>Results for Students</b></p> <p>Awareness of own progress and of actions needed to maintain or improve grades.</p> <p>Understanding of school policies on behavior, attendance, and other areas of student conduct.</p> <p>Informed decisions about courses and programs.</p> <p>Awareness of own role in partnerships, serving as courier and communicator.</p>	<p><b>Results for Students</b></p> <p>Skill in communicating with adults.</p> <p>Increased learning of skills that receive tutoring or target attention from volunteers.</p> <p>Awareness of many skills, talents, occupations, and contributions from parents and other volunteers.</p>	<p><b>Results for Students</b></p> <p>Gains in skills, abilities, and test scores linked to homework and classwork.</p> <p>Homework completion.</p> <p>Positive attitude toward schoolwork.</p> <p>View of parent as more similar to teacher and of home as more similar to school.</p> <p>Self-concept of ability as learner.</p>	<p><b>Results for Students</b></p> <p>Awareness of representation of families in school decisions.</p> <p>Understanding that student rights are protected.</p> <p>Specific benefits linked to policies enacted by parent organizations and experienced by students.</p>	<p><b>Results for Students</b></p> <p>Increased skills and talents through enriched curricular and extracurricular experiences.</p> <p>Awareness of careers and of options for future education and work.</p> <p>Specific benefits linked to programs, services, resources, and opportunities that connect students with community.</p>
<p><b>For Parents</b></p> <p>Understanding of and confidence about parenting, child, and adolescent development, and changes in home conditions for learning as children proceed through school.</p> <p>Awareness of own and others' challenges in parenting.</p> <p>Feeling of support from school and other parents.</p>	<p><b>For Parents</b></p> <p>Understanding school programs and policies.</p> <p>Monitoring and awareness of child's progress.</p> <p>Responding effectively to students' problems.</p> <p>Interactions with teachers and ease of communication with school and teachers.</p>	 <p><b>For Parents</b></p> <p>Understanding teacher's job, increased comfort in school, and carry-over of school activities at home.</p> <p>Self-confidence about ability to work in school and with children or to take steps to improve own education.</p> <p>Awareness that families are welcome and valued at school</p> <p>Gains in specific skills of volunteer work.</p>	<p><b>For Parents</b></p> <p>Know how to support, encourage, and help student at home each year.</p> <p>Discussions of school, classwork, and homework.</p> <p>Understanding of instructional program each year and of what child is learning in each subject.</p> <p>Appreciation of teaching skills.</p> <p>Awareness of child as a learner.</p>	<p><b>For Parents</b></p> <p>Input into policies that affect child's education.</p> <p>Feeling of ownership of school.</p> <p>Awareness of parents' voices in school decisions.</p> <p>Shared experiences and connections with other families.</p> <p>Awareness of school, district, and state policies.</p>	<p><b>For Parents</b></p> <p>Knowledge and use of local resources by family and child to increase skills and talents or to obtain needed services.</p> <p>Interactions with other families in community activities.</p> <p>Awareness of schools' role in the community and of community's contributions to the school.</p>
<p><b>For Teachers</b></p> <p>Understanding families' backgrounds, cultures, concerns, goals, needs, and views of children.</p> <p>Respect for families' strengths and efforts.</p> <p>Understanding of student diversity.</p> <p>Awareness of own skills to share information on child development.</p>	<p><b>For Teachers</b></p> <p>Increased diversity and use of communications with families and awareness of own ability to communicate clearly.</p> <p>Appreciation for and use of parent network for communications.</p> <p>Increased ability to elicit and understand family views on children's programs and progress.</p>	<p><b>For Teachers</b></p> <p>Readiness to involve families in new ways, including those who do not volunteer at school.</p> <p>Awareness of parents' talents and interests in school and children.</p>	<p><b>For Teachers</b></p> <p>Better design of homework assignments.</p> <p>Respect of family time.</p> <p>Recognition of equal helpfulness of single-parent, dual-income, and less formally educated families in motivating and reinforcing student learning.</p>	 <p><b>For Teachers</b></p> <p>Awareness of parent perspectives as a factor in policy development and decisions.</p> <p>View of equal status of family representatives on committees and in leadership roles.</p>	<p><b>For Teachers</b></p> <p>Awareness of community resources to enrich curriculum and instruction.</p> <p>Openness to and skill in using mentors, business partners, community volunteers, and others to assist students and augment teaching practice.</p> <p>Knowledgeable, helpful referrals of children and families to needed services.</p>

Expected Results for Students, Parents, and Teachers of the Six Types of Involvement—provides descriptions of representative outcomes of the six types of involvement for students, parents, and teachers.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships," 87.



The information regarding the overlapping spheres of involvement includes various components that lead to creating partnerships between all parties affiliated within a school district. Figures one, two, and three illustrate the need to reinforce each sphere to create a unique unity within the student-parent-school-community relation rather than depend on spheres independently. Figure 1, “Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement,” provides a comprehensive model for fostering family engagement in education through structured and diverse strategies. The framework outlines six distinct types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Each type encompasses specific practices aimed at enhancing the educational experience and outcomes for students.

Figure 2, “Challenges and Redefinitions for the Six Types of Involvement,” illustrates the challenges and definitions faced within a successful design of building partnerships. Information includes equipping parents with the necessary skills and resources to communicate and support learning at home. The information is particularly useful in under-served communities which results in ensuring diverse parental input in decision-making with a more in-depth approach, adapting collaborations with the community, and being flexible and innovative to support all students, families, and community effectively.

Figure 3, “Expected Results of the Six Types of Involvement for Students, Parents, and Teachers,” expresses the desired outcomes when implementing differentiated involvement. These practices enhance students’ academic achievement while fostering a sense of belonging and motivation. Parents gain increased confidence in supporting students’ education, improve communication skills with teachers/administrators, and build a connection to the school and

community while teachers experience more effective parental support and gain a deeper understanding of students' home environment.

Epstein's "Framework of Six Types of Involvement" for this study will be compared to various school districts' action plans when creating educational partnerships within their community. Although the framework will be used as a basis, the framework does not account for various factors that affect forms of involvement between each entity. By engaging families and communities comprehensively, Epstein's framework creates a collaborative environment supporting student success, strengthening family-school partnerships, and enhancing the educational experience.

In addition to Epstein's *Framework of Six Types of Involvement*, the study will connect ideas from Urie Bronfenbrenner's *Theory of Human Development: Its Evolution from Ecology to Bioecology*<sup>31</sup> regarding the influence of the environment affects human development and the willingness to create relationships. Bronfenbrenner's theory describes social factors that determine the perceptions of emotions, likes, dislikes, and ways of thinking, however, the ideals lie in changing the environment to create change within the school district's identity and the relationship between students, parents, and community. According to Renn and Arnold, the five systems include the following:

- **Microsystem:** Made up of the groups that have direct contact with the immediate environment.
- **Mesosystem:** The relationships between the groups from the first system.
- **Exosystem:** Factors that affect an individual's life, but the elements of this system don't have a direct relationship with the individual.
- **Macrosystem:** Contains those cultural elements that affect the individual and everyone around them.

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<sup>31</sup> Edinete Maria Rosa and Jonathan Tudge, "Urie Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Human Development: Its Evolution from Ecology to Bioecology," *Journal of Family Theory & Review* 5, no. 4 (2013): 246.

- **Chronosystem:** The stage of life that the individual is in regarding the situations they're going through.<sup>32</sup>

Within the context of five systems, Bronfenbrenner states the following:

The ecology of human development is the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life course, between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which, the developing person lives, as this process is affected by the relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.<sup>33</sup>

Meaning that a culture change creates a shift in expectation. When forming partnerships, when the partnership environment is created and established positively, the partnership's products reflect the establishment's status. Issues may arise within the partnership, but the establishment should work collaboratively to correct any problems and align the visions and missions of the organizations. The alignment of visions and missions is created through the change and growth of the collaborative efforts of the partnerships.

Positively creating an environment of collaboration offers a sense of belonging within the organizations and results in acceptance and value. El Zaatari and Maalouf state, "Once students feel supported when they are struggling and congratulated for their accomplishments, their well-being and sense of belonging to school will also improve. A feeling of belonging strongly predicted youth life satisfaction and well-being and positively correlated with positive affect and self-esteem."<sup>34</sup> The framework based on the design of Bronfenbrenner and Epstein informs on the importance of adapting and creating a positive environment for the growth of positive educational partnerships. Although each framework offers insight into the ideals of the *Six Types*

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<sup>32</sup> Kristen Renn and Karen D. Arnold, "Reconceptualizing Research on College Student Peer Culture," *The Journal of Higher Education* 74, no. 3 (2003): 268.

<sup>33</sup> Kristen and Arnold, "Reconceptualizing Research on College Student Peer Culture," 267.

<sup>34</sup> Wafaa El Zaatari and Imad Maalouf, "'How the Bronfenbrenner Bio-Ecological System Theory Explains the Development of Students' Sense of Belonging to School?'" *SAGE Open* 12, no. 4 (2022): 2.

of *Involvement* and the *Theory of Human Development*, the frameworks do not account for variables within a particular area. For this study, the site of focus will remain on rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas and account for socioeconomics, racial and ethnic diversity, and engagement of the arts within the community.

### **Educational Partnerships**

Amy Cox Petersen's *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community* describes effective educational partnership practices<sup>35</sup>. The practices of partnerships are designed around three goals, "(a) creating, assessing, and sharing effective partnership strategies, (b) enhancing the education of teachers and teacher education programs to encourage more community involvement; and (c) conducting research on community partnerships and best practices."<sup>36</sup> With these goals in mind, leaders of these partnerships must communicate clearly and effectively to meet the parties' needs while supporting growth in education, school culture, and community building. As Cox-Petersen states in the following section:

In reality, partnerships are created for a variety of reasons that include enhancing public relations, seeking additional funding, and working towards a particular cause or issue... after multiple parent sessions and the development of partnership programs, she [principal] and teachers started to observe better academic progress for all students, a higher motivation for learning, and a more positive school atmosphere.<sup>37</sup>

A thriving school atmosphere results in a higher quality school-community partnership, increasing production throughout the parties. Benefits for schools may include the following:

- Increased/improved communications between all parties
- Increased focus and discipline within the school

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<sup>35</sup> Amy Cox-Petersen, "The Importance of Educational Partnerships," in *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community*, (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publication Inc., 2011): 3-24.

<sup>36</sup> Amy Cox-Petersen, "The Importance of Educational Partnerships," in *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community*, (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publication Inc., 2011): 3-24.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

- Heightening understanding of diversity within the school-community culture
- Heightened understanding of educational concepts between families and schools
- Improved community support
- Increased collaboration efforts between home-school, school-home, home-community, and school community.
- Higher motivation towards learning and increased attendance
- Increased usage of resources<sup>38</sup>

The benefits provided allow for an increase in opportunities for success for students, teachers, administration, parents, and the community. Concerning school functions, schools need the community to provide resources that may be available outside of school funding codes. The community may also need educational outreach programs that school districts may provide. Benefits created through a positive educational partnership provide a shared vision for learning expectations and educational outcomes for all parties involved. Through the help of educational partnerships, parents, educators, administration, and community leaders may examine each party's strengths, knowledge, and experience to further collaborative efforts for future endeavors.

Collaboration efforts, however, may aim to improve the quality of school-home community relations: each party must recognize shared and separate responsibilities held to other relationships. Responsibilities may be created in an individual setting at home, within an educational environment, or in the community. These responsibilities benefit the student, educator, administration, or community member by working together for each party's betterment. Shared responsibilities focus on each party's collaborative effort that benefits the student. Shared responsibilities may include a mentoring process between community leader-administration, administration-educator, and educator-families, however, allowed within the school district, shared responsibilities must have a direct learning outcome and be agreed upon by all partnership members.

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<sup>38</sup> Amy Cox-Petersen, "The Importance of Educational Partnerships," 5-6.

## History of Educational Partnerships

Educational partnerships have been part of educational reform since the early 1900s. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, families, schools, and churches created a common goal for student learning. Between the 1920s-40s, teachers became experts in education and curriculum design based on the publications of John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Jean Piaget.<sup>39</sup> The works of John Dewey stated that children need more than basic educational skills: children need more cognitive and developmental rather than the need for memorization or repetitive/rote aspects of education. Dewey believed that effective methods of educational instruction relied on the meaningful ability to communicate through social interactions.

Maria Montessori designed a detailed child-centered focus of education involving child-led activities and independent practice. The Montessori educational design includes a hands-on independent learning style that allows students to choose what/how they learn; the technique allows for enhanced social interaction, independence, and a passion for learning.<sup>40</sup>

Jean Piaget's theories of learning/teaching practices included a child-centered philosophy and pedagogy that instruction alone could not enhance. Still, that education needed appropriate experience to stimulate student learning. The Piaget theory of learning includes student-centered teaching, formative assessments, active learning, discovery learning, and peer-to-peer social interactions.<sup>41</sup>

The works of Dewey, Montessori, and Piaget set the framework for experiential education that aided the educational curriculum, educator training, and instructional strategies.

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<sup>39</sup> Amy Cox-Petersen, "History of Educational Partnerships," in *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community*, (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publication Inc., 2011), 35-36.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

The shift to learning theories allowed the educator to become a professional and set the tone for instructional method delivery within the classroom.

The introduction of the G.I Bill in 1944 allowed service members to attend universities or further their students as part of their acts of service. Throughout the 1960s, educational reform was based on the launching of the Soviet Union's *Sputnik*, which led to the federal government focusing funds on math and science courses within public education in public schools and universities. In addition, the publications of Lev Vygotsky's *Thoughts and Language* and the "Zone of Proximal Development"<sup>42</sup> furthered research into school-aged children's developmental and educational processes and learning styles. Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" expresses that providing students with the appropriate aids allows students to gain the tools necessary to complete tasks independently. According to Hanna Kuusisaari, "The crucial foci of Vygotsky's ZPD theory are (1) collaboration between capable peers, (2) fruitful interconnection of theoretical concepts and everyday experience, and (3) meeting the goal of change in a collaborative process."<sup>43</sup> The "Zone of Proximal Development" allows students to use collaborative mechanisms to understand instructional concepts beyond their average cognitive measures. Collaborations between peers or student-teachers increase social interactions resulting in collective learning.

The 1980s reformation included increased federal funding for a higher-quality education system due to the National Commission on Excellence in Education's *A Nation at Risk* findings. Throughout the 1990s, the *Nation at Risk* report guided school mandates and reformation,

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<sup>42</sup> Lev Vygotsky, Eugenia Hanfmann, Gertruda Vakar, and Alex Kozulin, "Thought and Language," Revised and expanded ed. (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press), 2012.

<sup>43</sup> Hanna Kuusisaari, "Teachers at the Zone of Proximal Development – Collaboration Promoting or Hindering the Development Process," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 43, (2014): 48.

leading to the creation of well-defined educational standards, the inclusion of families within educational decision-making, and after-school programs. The 2000s era in education with the *No Child Left Behind Act* and the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (2015) which, according to the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, requires each state to maintain an accountability plan to the Department of Education, maintain accountability goals, provide school interventions for low-performing school, require student testing, and follow state standards.

For educational partnerships, collaboration efforts must engage in a social and cultural capital that furthers learning within the school context and creates a camaraderie atmosphere with the community. Cox-Petersen states, “Social Capital within a community includes the diversity of interactions and relationships including participating in community activities, service, and volunteering... Cultural capital is the advantage the majority group gains from understanding and living the lifestyle congruent with the dominant culture in schools.”<sup>44</sup> The building of social capital is engaged by the ability to communicate with community leaders or school administration/leadership regarding expectations within the groups.

Social capital is comprised of relationships between organizations that can be “embodied, objectified, and institutionalized.”<sup>45</sup> Cultural capital is the advantage gained by becoming active within the home-school community. According to Edgerton and Roberts, “cultural capital includes adaptive cultural and social competencies such as familiarity with relevant institutional contexts, processes, and expectations, possession of relevant intellectual and social skills and a more strategic concept of agency.”<sup>46</sup> Communications within the organizations allow for

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<sup>44</sup> Amy Cox-Petersen, “History of Educational Partnerships,” in *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community*, (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publication Inc., 2011), 33.

<sup>45</sup> Jason Edgerton and Lance Roberts, “Cultural Capital or Habitus? Bourdieu and Beyond in the Explanation of Enduring Educational Inequality,” *Theory and Research in Education* 12, no. 2 (2014), 195.

<sup>46</sup> Edgerton and Roberts, “Cultural Capital or Habitus?,” 196.



improved collaboration which increases social capital. Hooge et al. state that “the social capital theory posits that social relationships provide access to resources, such as advice, support, and information, which can be exchanged, borrowed, and leveraged to achieve individual and collective goals.”<sup>47</sup> The school district's social capital allows information to flow from party to party so that transparency in communication is allotted and clarity and organization are present. “Research has shown that social capital can contribute to the performance and innovation of organizations by adding significantly to value creation.”<sup>48</sup> By facilitating trust, collaboration, and the exchange of knowledge and resources among members, social capital significantly contributes to the creation of value within organizations. This, in turn, leads to more effective problem-solving, the generation of new ideas, and the improvement of overall organizational outcomes. Through these mechanisms, social capital becomes a key factor in the sustained success and competitive advantage of organizations.

By prioritizing cultural awareness and inclusivity, educational institutions play a critical role in breaking down barriers and promoting a more harmonious society. Through curriculum design, experiential learning opportunities, and community engagement, educators and students collaboratively work to create an environment that values diversity and actively combats prejudices. Cox-Petersen states, “Education and experiences that relate to understanding various cultures and individual differences can contribute to the reduction of stereotypes that exist within families, schools, and the community.”<sup>49</sup> A study completed by Anthony Provenzano et al. finds

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<sup>47</sup> Edith Hooge et al., “The Role of District Leaders for Organization Social Capital.” *Journal of Educational Administration* 57, no. 3 (2019), 299.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>49</sup> Amy Cox-Petersen, “Barriers to Partnerships,” in *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community*, (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publication Inc., 2011), 188.

that students who engage in musical community partnership reported an increased sense of belonging within their community and significant improvements in “feelings of acceptance” within the home and school culture.<sup>50</sup> With an increased feeling of acceptance within the home, school, and community, the study indicates that stronger connections were built in the understanding of cultures of a diverse community, which resulted in enhanced learning within the school district.

Rosa Sheets discusses that students must be understood as individuals and culturally in addition to mutual communal respect for language and race within the classroom and the school district's identity.<sup>51</sup> Taking an interest in the culture of the community creates a bond between educators and students/families while developing a sense of trust. Trust, through partnerships, is created by strategies that encourage family and community involvement; these strategies, as defined by Epstein, include “parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community.”<sup>52</sup> Adding value to participants’ cultures creates a sense of unity within all organizations. Unity allows for partnerships to be created equally with student development in mind. Understanding barriers provide an in-depth planning process to minimize mistakes or intolerance and enable the student to be the program's center. Along with unity throughout the community, partnerships between schools and the community are allowed to develop and adapt to meet the student’s needs.

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<sup>50</sup> Anthony Provenzano et al., "Effects of a University–School Partnered After-School Music Program on Developmental Health, Social, and Educational Outcomes," *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research* 11, no. 3 (2020), 456.

<sup>51</sup> Rosa Sheets, “Students and Teachers Perceptions of Disciplinary Conflicts in Culturally Pluralistic Classrooms,” Doctoral Dissertation, University of Washington, Seattle, (1995).

<sup>52</sup> Amy Cox-Petersen, “Building Family-School Partnerships,” in *Educational Partnerships: Connecting Schools, Families, and the Community*, (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publication Inc., 2011), 115.

## Music Education Advocacy and Community Partnerships

Dr. Benham describes the purpose and effects of music advocacy within his book *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*.<sup>53</sup> As John L. Benham states,

Advocating for music education? Just having to think and worry about defending something so valuable to every child can make us feel helpless and indignant in the same breath. But if you're a parent of a young person who enjoys making music, you may have already experienced first-hand the necessity of becoming involved; and if you're a community member who loves music, you know how much music education has enriched your life... As an advocate of music education, you already know that the participation in music is vital to a young person's academic and social development: now it's up to you to make sure that music education programs in your community continue to flourish.<sup>54</sup>

Following the ideals of Dr. Benham, music advocacy is best made when decisions regarding music programs are agreed upon by educators, administrations, and community leaders while staying within the framework of a student-centered philosophy. A student-centered philosophy may begin with the value of music education for all students, high standards and expectations in both academia and performances, and the development of lifelong music learners.<sup>55</sup> As Lee, Krause, and Davidson state, "Collaboration and partnership between students, teachers, and staff in schools, and local people in the community such as parents, local entrepreneurs, and musicians were repeatedly identified as a highly significant contributing factor in the success of the music program."<sup>56</sup> Student engagement within fine arts programs improves life skills, cognitive growth, and mental wellness for all parties involved.

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<sup>53</sup> John L. Benham, "Chapter One: Music Cuts: Politics, Budgets, and Reform," in *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, (Chicago: GIA Publications Inc., 2016), 5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>55</sup> John L. Benham, "Chapter Four: The Profession," in *Music Advocacy: Moving from Survival to Vision*, (Chicago: GIA Publications Inc., 2016), 67.

<sup>56</sup> Juyong Lee, Amanda E. Krause, and Jane W. Davidson, "The PERMA Well-being Model and Music Facilitation Practice: Preliminary Documentation for Well-being through Music Provision in Australian Schools," *Research Studies in Music Education* 39, no. 1 (2017): 73.

Collaboration between educators and students creates relationships that translate to an environment of trust, increasing student engagement and retention. Student's willingness to participate in musical activities is based on the personalized partnership offered within the course. Increased student engagement creates valued experiences that allow for the lifelong learning of music, resulting in increased student learning in the post-secondary setting. The mentoring process will enable teachers and students to develop meaningful models of music education within the school district while involving community partnerships and practices.<sup>57</sup> Once a partnership of culture and community is established within the school district, the transition to community partnership may begin by creating relationships with community leaders and expressing needs between schools and the community. Sara K. Jones writes about creating part-time music programs in urban cities as part of a community partnership to further the needs of students<sup>58</sup>; Jones states that the partnership led to the creation of a .3 FTE music teacher for the following school year within the district and provided visibility of the music program within the community by implementing donated instruments from the local music store.<sup>59</sup> The creation of this particular partnership began as a project to service the needs of the students. Once requirements were established, dialogue between organizations furthered the ideas by offering materials for student development.

Partnerships allowed the school district to hire a music educator so that the collaboration continues evolving for students and the community. Community partnerships regarding business

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<sup>57</sup> Susan A. Davis, "A Circular Council of People with Equal Ideas: The Mentoring Mosaic in a Preservice Teacher Education Program," *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 26, no. 2 (2017): 35.

<sup>58</sup> Sara K. Jones, "Making Music: A Community-School Music Partnership," *Arts Education Policy Review* 121, no. 2 (2020): 70.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

may promote an equitable sense of arts learning that fosters confidence and self-efficacy rather than creating goal-oriented skills and training that meet the skills necessary for workforce activities.<sup>60</sup> Hunter, Broad, and Jeanneret claim that industry influences positively impacted student engagement, voice, social learning, created skills, arts-related knowledge and skills, and active participation in designing and making artworks.<sup>61</sup> Community and industry partnerships allow students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to create lifelong learning opportunities and musical involvements.

Through the evolution of these collaborations, the school district strengthens the community's identity and vice versa. Matsunobu writes that the music-making partnership created a "sense of dwelling, identity, and provides a variety of learning contents and approaches."<sup>62</sup> Matsunobu goes on to state that "collaboration also highlighted the cultural and natural environments of the place, which contributed not only to students' involvement in the community but also ensured diverse learning experiences."<sup>63</sup> Matsunobu suggests that instructional, administrative, and community support allow for a new framework for music education. New frameworks for music education further relations between schools and the community, adding to the identity of all parties involved. Identity collaborations between schools and communities offer insight into the relationships between community members and educators.

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<sup>60</sup> Mary Ann Hunter, Tina Broad, and Neryl Jeanneret, "SongMakers: An Industry-Led Approach to Arts Partnerships in Education," *Arts Education Policy Review* 119, no. 1 (2018): 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>62</sup> Koji Matsunobu, "Music Making as Place Making: A Case Study of Community Music in Japan," *Music Education Research* 20, no. 4 (2018): 498.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

This aspect may be valuable for educator recruitment and student retention rates within the fine arts.

Anita Prest states that community collaborations often provide intrinsic value for music education by providing a setting where students benefit from “the community” by promoting social and personal responsibilities, appreciation for music education, and skills that enable real-world problem-solving.<sup>64</sup> Community collaborations may focus beyond the classroom to provide skills that are necessary for authentic scenarios. These collaborations include values that are visible by teachers collaborating for the advancement of student learning. Within authentic designs, the application of music education promotes community identity and support for arts programs, however, community music-making maintains the power to encourage music education beyond the classroom in a manner that develops unity while providing activities to the community.<sup>65</sup> Although community music-making may be performed informally, the art of community music-making expresses the community’s identity, ideas, and culture and promotes lifelong musical learning experiences.<sup>66</sup> The act of community music-making encourages the enhancement of living within the community.

Community partnerships not only surround educational experiences. Ang, Panebianco, and Odendall state that collaborations between community and music education programs rely on trust, respect, appreciation, and cooperativeness between all parties.<sup>67</sup> Negative values

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<sup>64</sup> Anita Prest, "Cross-Cultural Understanding: The Role of Rural School–Community Music Education Partnerships," *Research Studies in Music Education* 42, no. 2 (2020): 223.

<sup>65</sup> Alexandra Kertz-Welzel, "Daring to Question: A Philosophical Critique of Community Music," *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 24, no. 2 (2016): 116.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>67</sup> Kathryn Ang, Clorinda Panebianco, and Albi Odendaal. "Parent–teacher Partnerships in Group Music Lessons: A Collective Case Study," *British Journal of Music Education* 37, no. 2 (2020): 173.

discourage partnerships and create experiences that could be more beneficial to the development of the community or school district, however, open communication allows collaboration to understand the program's needs to benefit the community and vice versa. The community and school district must develop joint goals, plans, activities/instruction, and an implementation method to create an effective partnership.<sup>68</sup> These ideals are made through open communication and a willingness to cultivate a sense of unity and culture so that community and music programs develop advocates for the arts. The school's commitment is a fundamental need for thriving community partnerships.

A study by Mark Bailey from Texas Tech University finds that community partnerships factor towards the success and progress of music programs in West Texas.<sup>69</sup> The most significant element of musical support is the community's socioeconomic status: communities with high poverty rates have lower parental and community support for music programs.<sup>70</sup> The authors note that "a 2012 report by the United States Department of Education found that schools with higher enrollments of students receiving free or reduced lunch had lower percentages of music instruction in their schools."<sup>71</sup> The study also found that schools with a lowered socioeconomic status offer fewer music courses. An alternative study by Mark Bailey found that within 11

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<sup>68</sup> Leone Wheeler, Jose Roberto Guevara, and Jodi-Anne Smith, "School-Community Learning Partnerships for Sustainability: Recommended Best Practice and Reality," *International Review of Education* 64, no. 3 (2018): 321.

<sup>69</sup> Mark Bailey, "Examination of the Relationships Between Socioeconomic Status and Music Student Achievement in State-Level Performing Groups," *Texas Music Education Research*, (2018): 4.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 4.

years, students who participated in musical classes within low socioeconomic school districts represent, on average, 10% of all-state participants.<sup>72</sup>

The financial restraint that music programs face in low socioeconomic areas creates an obstacle for families and students; Daniel J. Albert states, “Low socioeconomic status parents may value school activities such as instrumental music programs, but the associated costs may prohibit their children from participating... Monetary investments necessary to participate in an instrumental program include obtaining and maintaining an instrument and purchasing supplies such as reeds, oil, strings, and sheet music.”<sup>73</sup> The importance of investments in music education is the focus of the study due to the low socioeconomic status of many school districts within rural New Mexico and West Texas. The relation of socioeconomics and community partnerships within music education for Eastern New Mexico and West Texas will be the focal point of the research as it relates to the success of music programs within the selected rural areas. Although applicable for many country regions, data will be collected from band districts within the designated areas.

### **Music Education Advocacy and Cultural Partnerships**

Cultural Partnerships within music education create unity and development for the community and support student identity. As Sacha Kagan states, “the experience of music on the individual level, cultures of sustainability can be fostered through a musical aesthetics of complexity that opens up to the ambiguities, ambivalences, contradictions and creatively chaotic

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<sup>72</sup> Mark Bailey, “Examination of the Relationships Between Socioeconomic Status and Music Student Achievement in State-Level Performing Groups: 8.

<sup>73</sup> Daniel J. Alberts, “Socioeconomic Status and Instrumental Music: What Does the Research Say About the Relationship and its Implications?” *Applications of Research in Music Education*, 25 (2006): 39.



dimensions of a transformation towards sustainability.”<sup>74</sup> In so doing, implementing cultural music education allows for development in the following areas: trust, togetherness, and cooperation.<sup>75</sup> Anshel and Kipper researched the relationship between musical activities and trust, which increased participation levels when engaged in a musical activity rather than those not actively involved.<sup>76</sup> The study shows that cooperation and trust levels were higher than those who did not engage in musical activities or those who only listened to music rather than actively engaged: the authors note that “earlier findings show that involvement in musical experience increased communication among the participants. Some manifestations that contributed to better communication were greater group cohesion, trust, and positive self-image.”<sup>77</sup> Musical activities significantly enhance cooperation and trust compared to merely listening to music or not participating. The research asserts that engaging in music activities strengthens communication, leading to greater group cohesion, increased trust, and a more positive self-image among participants.

Cultural-based approaches to pedagogy include a sense of belonging by allowing students to express languages, historical knowledge, and beliefs reflecting their cultures and applying them to their educational values. Kate R. Fitzpatrick discusses the application of cultural-based approaches to music education in a manner that increases “language values, norms, knowledge,

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<sup>74</sup> Sacha Kagan and Volker Kirchberg, “Music and Sustainability: Organizational Cultures Towards Creative Resilience – a Review,” *Journal of Cleaner Production* 135, (2016): 1487.

<sup>75</sup> Kagan and Kirchberg, “Music and Sustainability,” 1499.

<sup>76</sup> Anat Anshel and David Kipper, “The Influence of Group Singing on Trust and Cooperation,” *Journal of Music Therapy* 25, no. 3 (1988): 150.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 152

beliefs, and practices”<sup>78</sup> during musical instruction. The cultural-based approach finds positive effects in areas such as “academic achievements, socioeconomic development, and an increased sense of belonging within the school district.”<sup>79</sup> Incorporating the community's values within the music education framework creates a sense of identity within one’s culture, which may increase the need for music education within the community and school district. An article by Verhoeven, Poorthuis, and Volman discusses that meaningful learning experiences contribute to identity within the school district by creating a space that allows for previous cultural knowledge and experiences to be expressed or related within their educational experiences.<sup>80</sup> The review indicates that “meaningful learning experiences may make it easier for adolescents to link their already present self-understandings to the learning contents and activities in school and vice versa.” It may reflect within the culture of the community’s identity. Jessie Vallejo found that students who engage in a cultural-based music pedagogy have increased relationships with peers, educators, and the community while supporting student self-esteem and positive attitudes toward community engagements.<sup>81</sup>

Cultural partnerships begin with understanding student background and diversity; building relationships based on experience and culture supports student belonging and identity development.<sup>82</sup> By acknowledging diverse cultures, students connect with peers, educational

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<sup>78</sup> Kate R. Fitzpatrick, ““Finding the Other Half of Me”: Culture-Based Approaches to Music Education in Hawaii,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 70, no. 1 (2022): 41.

<sup>79</sup> Kate R. Fitzpatrick, “Finding the Other Half of Me,” 24.

<sup>80</sup> Monique Verhoeven, Astrid M.G. Poorthuis, & Monique Volman, “The Role of School in Adolescents’ Identity Development. A Literature Review,” *Educational Psychology Review* 31, no. 1 (2019): 52.

<sup>81</sup> Jessie M. Vallejo, “Revitalising Language through Music: A Case Study of Music and Culturally Grounded Pedagogy in Two Kanien’Ke:Ha (Mohawk) Language Immersion Programmes.” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 28, no. 1 (2019): 109.

<sup>82</sup> Saskias Casanova, et al., “Cultural Knowledge as Opportunities for Empowerment: Learning and Development for Mexican Indigenous Youth,” *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education* 15, no. 3 (2021): 200.

leaders, and instructors, improving communication and musical skills. As Casanova et al. state, “it is important for educators to learn more about the students they serve. Without acknowledging students’ cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity, it makes them invisible.”<sup>83</sup> Cultural awareness fosters a learning environment rooted in mutual understanding and respect, which is crucial for effective collaborations. Moreover, engaging with a variety of cultural influences broadens students’ musical perspectives, enabling them to develop more sophisticated and versatile skills. This approach cultivates musicians who are not only adaptable but also capable of integrating different musical traditions into their practice, leading to an inclusive and comprehensive music education.

Patricia Shehan Campbell writes about community involvement in music making which offers the right and ability to perform and create their music.<sup>84</sup> As Campbell explains, the use of intercultural musical studies creates a “culturally responsive pedagogy, authentic learning, and situated learning, and with the general shift in education and schooling from teaching to learning, and from teacher to learner.”<sup>85</sup> Music education’s cultural reform brings identity and authentic learning opportunities for all parties involved. Authentic learning provides insight to students regarding cultures and heritage; contribution within the area supports music programs within the school district while promoting the community’s identity through education.

Culturally responsive teaching recognizes that students’ cultural backgrounds are not just relevant to their educational experiences and leverages these identities to enhance teaching effectiveness. With culturally relevant content and teaching methods, educators create an

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<sup>83</sup> Saskias Casanova, et al., “Cultural Knowledge as Opportunities for Empowerment,” 207.

<sup>84</sup> Patricia Shehan Campbell, “At the Nexus of Ethnomusicology and Music Education: Pathways to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” *Arts Education Policy Review* 121, no. 3 (2020): 106.

<sup>85</sup> Patricia Shehan Campbell, “At the Nexus of Ethnomusicology and Music Education”, 110.

inclusive and engaging classroom environment where students see their own cultures reflected and respected. Culturally responsive teaching “uses ethnically diverse students' cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives as conduits for teaching them more effectively.”<sup>86</sup> Eric Shieh states, “‘Effective,’ here, is understood broadly and includes academic competence, self-efficacy, social critique, and the freedom to be “ethnically expressive.”<sup>87</sup> Cultural responsive teaching encourages educators to be culturally competent and continuously seek professional growth. This involves understanding and addressing potential biases, being open to new cultural insights, and adapting teaching practices to meet the diverse needs of students. By doing so, educators not only enhance academic achievement but also promote equity and inclusivity within the educational setting.

Culturally responsive teaching is a dynamic and evolving practice that empowers students by using their cultural strengths as assets in their education. It prepares students to thrive in a diverse and interconnected world, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in various cultural contexts. Constance McKoy states, “The definition implies an ability to affirm diverse cultural characteristics, perspectives, and experiences and to use these multiple perceptions of reality and ways of knowing to form bridges to new learning and ideas.”<sup>88</sup> McKoy states that musical instruction related to cultural knowledge and responsiveness improves students’ mental well-being and achievement.

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<sup>86</sup> Julia Shaw, "Alleviating Praxis Shock: Induction Policy and Programming for Urban Music Educators," *Arts Education Policy Review* 119, no. 1 (2018): 28.

<sup>87</sup> Eric Shieh, “Culturally Responsive Teaching in Music Education: From Understanding to Application by Vicky R. Lind and Constance L. McKoy (Review),” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 26, no. 2 (2018): 211.

<sup>88</sup> Constance L. McKoy et al., “The Impact of an In-Service Workshop on Cooperating Teachers’ Perceptions of Culturally Responsive Teaching,” *Journal of Music Teacher Education* 26, vol. 2 (2017): 51.

The ability to connect to culturally responsive teachings creates focal points that allow students to connect ideas towards community and growth process while establishing an educational culture within the school district. Geneva Gay states the following concerning culture being in direct relation to teaching and learning:<sup>89</sup>

Teachers need to know (a) which ethnic groups give priority to communal living and cooperative problem solving and how these preferences affect educational motivation, aspiration, and task performance; (b) how different ethnic groups' protocols of appropriate ways for children to interact with adults are exhibited in instructional settings; and (c) the implications of gender role socialization in different ethnic groups for implementing equity initiatives in classroom instruction.<sup>90</sup>

Understanding the needs presented by Gay allows educators to create an environment that promotes a stimulating learning environment for culturally diverse students within the community they serve. Gay states, "Teachers genuinely believe in the intellectual potential of these students and accept, unequivocally, their responsibility to facilitate its realization without ignoring, demeaning, or neglecting their ethnic and cultural identities. They build toward academic success from a basis of cultural validation and strength."<sup>91</sup> Understanding the needs and values of student demographics allows music educators to encourage self-worth and identity rather than scripted curricula that focus on performance-based identity. "Culturally responsive teachers help students to understand that knowledge has moral and political elements and consequences, which obligate them to take social action to promote freedom, equality, and justice for everyone."<sup>92</sup> Culturally responsive teachers actively guide students to recognize that

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<sup>89</sup> Geneva Gay, "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching," *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 2 (2002): 107.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Geneva Gay, "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching," 109.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

knowledge is inherently intertwined with moral and political dimensions, carrying significant societal implications. By emphasizing this connection, educators challenge students to view learning as more than just the acquisition of information; they highlight the ethical responsibilities that accompany knowledge. Culturally responsive teaching not only enhances students' academic experiences but also equips them to engage thoughtfully and responsibly as active members in their communities and the broader world.

Cultural partnerships comprise the following three points: the partnership should extend beyond school-home; the parties involved should understand various cultural views; and community-school partnerships are used to empower members of the community.<sup>93</sup> Students should be allowed to perform the music of various cultures along with a rich understanding of background and context to promote identity and self-awareness, however, these processes must actively engage students throughout the music-learning process. As Miller states, "Community cultural wealth embodies the strength and diversity of culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and communities."<sup>94</sup> Through these strengths of cultural partnerships, the school district, or art program, provides value to the community it serves, placing a higher value on the educational system.

Partnerships should focus on student advancement, unity, self-worth, and community value while occurring in and out of the classroom. This advancement should develop relationships between students and educators, educators and administrators, and administration and community leaders. The collaborates should create bonds encouraging student learning that

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<sup>93</sup> Pamela Costes-Onishi, "Diffusing and Sustaining Ground-Up Arts Partnership Initiatives in a de/centralized Education System: The Case of Singapore," *Arts Education Policy Review* 122, no. 4 (2021): 241.

<sup>94</sup> Amanda L. Miller, "(Re)Conceptualizing Family-School Partnerships with and for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families," *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 22, no. 6 (2019): 746.

benefits the community and vice versa. Developing culture and partnerships requires an ever-evolving high-volume work ethic through collaboration and professional dialogue. A high-volume work ethic includes the ability to perform professionally regardless of the situation, create an environment of organization and productivity, allow and accept negative/positive criticism, be determined to reach professional goals, and produce high-quality work for all parties involved. Collaboration between parental associations should correlate with the structure and culture of the school district. Zeldin et al. state in the following:

The ultimate goal of any educational setting, formal or informal, is to engage young people and reinforce their desire to learn more... Community organizations maximize youth voice in decision-making as an effective strategy for sustaining engagement while also promoting supportive and reciprocal relationships with adults. When youth and adults create shared goals on common ground, settings of voice become settings of partnership.<sup>95</sup>

Community collaborations involving music education elicits a relationship between the administration, local businesses, and parental figures. Through these collaborations, parents/guardians voice support or hinder music education and fine arts programs at the local level.

### **Music Education in Rural America**

Current data underscores the importance of understanding the distinctive challenges present in rural areas. Rural areas often face limited resources, lower funding, and difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified teachers. According to Bates, "The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) shows that 18.4% of all students live in rural areas and 11.4% live in towns, with 5% percent of all students living in places considered remote about metropolitan

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<sup>95</sup> Shepherd Zeldin et. al, "How High Schools Become Empowering Communities: A Mixed-Method Explanatory Inquiry into Youth-Adult Partnership and School Engagement," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 61, no. 4 (2018): 358-371.

centers. It might be surprising at first to know that of all 13,491 school districts in the United States, a vast majority are either rural (7,156) or town (2,486) districts.”<sup>96</sup> Within New Mexico, 11% of the population are Native People residing on reservations, 54% are of Hispanic or Spanish heritage, 36% are Anglo, and undocumented persons are on the rise. According to Arlie Woodrum, “There are 89 school districts in New Mexico, with the majority located in small towns and rural communities. Hispanic students drop out of school at 50.5%, the highest in the state. There are 89 school districts in New Mexico, with the majority in small towns and rural communities. Hispanic students drop out of school at the rate of 50.5%, the highest in the state.”<sup>97</sup> Within Texas, 12.7 % of the population are African American, 52.9% are Hispanic or Spanish heritage, 26.5% are Anglo, and 7.9% are other, according to a 2021 survey. Of the student population, 60.3% are economically disadvantaged, and 49.2% are at-risk. According to the Texas Education Agency, Texas has more than 2000 schools in rural areas and more rural schools than any other part of the country.

Small school band directors in 1A through 4A schools typically maintain other duties outside of their primary roles of secondary music. These other duties may include instructing elementary music, teaching non-music related courses, and may include, but are not limited to, teaching choir. These directors adapt, or further, their musical pedagogy to prepare students to find immediate success on various instruments. Additionally, band directors adjust their approach to properly correct technical issues, produce a fundamental tone quality, and maximize instructional time in a limited setting. According to Juliet Hess, educators maintain the

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<sup>96</sup> Vincent C. Bates, “Thinking Critically about Rural Music Education,” *Visions of Research in Music Education* 32, (2018): 2.

<sup>97</sup> Arlie Woodrum, “Cultural Identity and Schooling in Rural New Mexico,” *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 24, no. 8 (2009): 3.



knowledge of classroom successes and the obstacles that may occur; “centering their perspectives and experiences in the philosophical inquiry of practice creates the possibility for research and practice perspective to merge, to speak powerfully to pedagogical issues.”<sup>98</sup> This fusion of theory and practice not only enhances the relevance and impact of research but also empowers educators to actively shape and refine pedagogical approaches.

The challenges that hinder music education include scheduling conflicts, extra/co-curricular courses, or student absences. Within the small school setting in rural America, secondary band courses are typically scheduled with heterogeneous instrumentations with limited instructional time due to master scheduling, various school activities, or mandated state testing. A heterogeneous instrumentation setting within the instruction refers to a classroom with a mixed configuration of instrumentation rather than a homogeneous classroom with a design of students playing the same instrument. The directors need to utilize instructional time accurately and efficiently. Jellison informs that educators may need to maintain complete control over scheduling or school activities/functions, but the educator does retain control over the direction of student learning.<sup>99</sup> By controlling student learning, educators control the information delivered and how the information is presented for various learning styles.

In the heterogeneous setting, directors become aware of the curriculum design that fits students’ current needs but focuses on the director’s adaption of the curriculum rather than students’ adaption. With proper training, future music educators may become aware of the student’s learning styles, needs, and characteristics of appropriate teaching styles in the

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<sup>98</sup> Juliet Hess, “Critiquing the Critical: The Casualties and Paradoxes of Critical Pedagogy in Music Education,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 25, no. 2 (2017): 175.

<sup>99</sup> Judith Anne Jellison, “It’s About Time,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 52, no. 3 (2004): 199.

heterogeneous music setting.<sup>100</sup> Adequate instructional time, group spacing, pedagogical structure, and a well-developed curriculum and processes are also needed for students to develop significant musicianship and technical skills crucial to the secondary band setting. Skill development includes recognizing pitch and tone, literacy, aural skills, music notation, and performing in an organized ensemble with various repertoires. In addition, students are to develop the skills described within the National Arts Standards in Music Education. As students advance their musicianship, music pedagogy consistently evolves to fit the demographics' needs in heterogeneous classrooms. Within the classroom, music educators collaborate with the surrounding musical community to discover advances for successful musical practices for students and music programs.

Daniel Isbell discusses issues experienced in rural areas ranging from isolation, low enrollment, a limited number of performance venues, facilities, or performances, inadequate instrument qualities, or limited funding for performing arts programs.<sup>101</sup> These issues are common for music education and educators across the country, however, Isbell provides a checklist that may aid in the development of rural music education. Her checklist is as follows:

- Combine two or more existing music groups.
- Encourage experienced students to mentor, direct rehearsals, and give private lessons.
- Form small ensembles to perform traditional and nontraditional music.
- Foster a good relationship with the school administration.
- Encourage music students to give extra performances for the school and community.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Mojca Pecek and Klara Skubic Ermenc, "Educating Teachers to Teach in Culturally and Linguistically Heterogeneous Classrooms," *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies* 62, no. 2 (2016): 14.

<sup>101</sup> Daniel Isbell, "Music Education in Rural Areas: A Few Keys to Success," *Music Educators Journal* 92, no. 3 (2005): 30.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

The checklist provides a sense of security in music education in rural America, however, the list is meant as a partial solution to issues but includes improvement in several musical activities in rural areas. Daily music activities must be flexible to allow for the culture of the students/community to continue throughout the school district. Musical activities and the community's culture, nevertheless, must blend to develop the school district's identity. Although the information provided applies to many areas of the country, the study will focus on Eastern New Mexico and West Texas due to the lack of literature on music education or community partnerships provided by previous research. Music educators will provide the data collected for the study in several counties of Eastern New Mexico and West Texas that fit within the definition of rural areas. Interviews and pre/post surveys will be conducted with music educators, administration, community members, and students regarding collaboration efforts within the school district that offer identity and support from the community.

### **Summary**

Music education in rural areas is in a state of decline for most of the country considered rural areas. The literature for Chapter Two expresses the current state of music education throughout the country, explicitly focusing on rural areas. The data collected and research have shown that educational partnerships, musical collaborations, performing collaborations, and school culture/identity factor into the success of music programs. Increased activity between the school district, music programs, and community strengthens the bonds between organizations and increases support, financial needs, and opportunities for musical performances and exposure. Data also provide insight into the lack of collaborations and support leading to attrition rates for students within the programs and educators who relocate or leave the profession.

The purpose is to study music education programs in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas to provide data regarding the status of music education as it relates to community partnerships within the designated area. The study will focus on data collected from music directors and their perspectives on collaborative efforts within their districts that further music education advocacy based on the high percentage of rural school districts within the designated area, cultural diversity, and limited literature regarding community partnerships. The study will be based on Epstein's Framework of Six Types of Involvement and will apply a hermeneutic phenomenological design to discover a more detailed understanding of music directors' perspectives toward educational partnerships and music advocacy efforts within their community. Interviews, follow-up interviews, and pre/post-surveys between music directors, administrations, and community members will be conducted to gather data from an unbiased perspective. The hermeneutical phenomenology research approach will be used to determine the experiences of band directors, administration, and community leaders regarding the effectiveness of educational partnerships and collaborative efforts to produce descriptions of that phenomenon. Neither literature nor research has yet to be presented regarding Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. Collaborative efforts, including educational partnerships, aid in developing music advocacy and student engagement in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to examine the lived experiences of band directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas regarding collaborative efforts between fine-arts music programs and the communities they serve within the secondary setting to further understand community partnerships as it relates to music education advocacy. Chapter Three describes the research design, the participant selection process, researcher positionality and motivation of study, philosophical assumptions, instrumentation, procedures and interpretation of framework, data analysis, and trustworthiness and credibility. Lastly, Chapter Three will summarize the research design, data collection and strategies, and an overview of future considerations regarding community partnerships.

### **Research Design**

Previous research on community partnerships in music education applies a qualitative approach. These studies focus on the engagement of music educators, students, administration, and community leaders regarding collaborative efforts that increase engagement and activities between music programs and the communities they serve. Although studies include community partnerships, limited studies focus on music education in the areas of rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. With the focus of this study aiming to investigate music educators' experiences regarding community partnerships in rural America, the study will investigate and monitor the types and styles of community partnerships that further musical experiences and music education in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. For this study, the qualitative phenomenological research approach is best suited to understand music educators' perspectives on community partnerships in rural areas. Concerns for the following research include student involvement,

retention, and attrition rates, collaborative efforts within the community and music programs, and the effects of music education that create music advocates as adults in rural America.

Literature pertaining to the designated area informs on musical opportunities including the “Single Reed Celebration” held at Eastern New Mexico University.<sup>103</sup> The article features information on Dr. Richard Schwartz, professor of saxophone studies, and Dr. Pamela Shuler, professor of clarinet studies, offering musical experiences for students of all ages as a form of music advocacy and community involvement within Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The event “featured guest artists: Cheyenne Cruz, assistant professor of clarinet at the University of Texas at Arlington, and Otis Murphy, professor of saxophone at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. The day's festivities consisted of master classes, clinics, recitals, and performances by the ENMU Festival Clarinet and Saxophone Choirs.”<sup>104</sup> The purpose of the event was to provide the community, students, and music educators, with a high-quality musical education that would typically not be accessible within the given area or demographic. Informative research offered within the designated area pertained to student experiences offered within the events solely focusing on musical experiences and not community partnerships. Other informative research does not provide data on the effect of events on building community partnerships.

Data on community partnerships within rural music programs is extensive, however, limited studies of community partnerships within Eastern New Mexico and West Texas were discovered. With the aim of this study being centered on community partnerships within Eastern New Mexico and West Texas, the research will examine participants' lived experiences in

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<sup>103</sup> Daniel Jimenez, “2022 Eastern New Mexico University Single Reed Celebration,” *The Clarinet* (Pocatello, Idaho) 49, no. 4 (2022): 14.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

creating community partnerships within the designated areas. The examination and data collection will focus on relations with students, administration, and community members to ascertain a better understanding of factors that may create, or hinder, community partnerships within rural areas. As a form of data measurement, the qualitative approach was selected.

Phenomenology focuses on the perceptions of people who have experienced related issues, imprints, views, and states of mind. Thomas Groenewald states, “The aim of the researcher is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon, refraining from any pre-given framework, but remaining true to the facts. The phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved.”<sup>105</sup> The perspectives of people are the focus of this study. Previous literature examines the relations between rural and urban schools and the communities they serve, however, limited research has been produced or examined regarding community partnerships between rural school music programs within Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. This study will address the gap in the literature of knowledge regarding this topic and designated area.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is the study of previous experiences to create an interpretation and textual meaning of themes through data collection. Guillen explains that the term hermeneutics “is an approach that explains behavior, verbal and non-verbal forms of behavior, vulture, systems of organizations and reveals the meaning it contains, but preserving the singularity.”<sup>106</sup> This approach is to study the lived experiences of music directors who have established relationships with administration and community members. The data collection was

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<sup>105</sup> Thomas Groenewald, “A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3, no. 1. (2004): 44.

<sup>106</sup> Doris Elida Fuster Guillen, “Qualitative Research: Hermeneutical Phenomenological Method,” *Monographic: Advances on Qualitative Research in Education* 7, no. 1 (2019): 219-220.

performed through interviews with music directors, administrators, and community leaders as well as journal entry analysis regarding community partnerships or the establishment of community partnerships. The research is designed to produce descriptive experiences of phenomena where deeper understandings of meanings are pursued. As Doris Guillen states, “phenomenology leads to finding the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, which is present in each instant of human experience. Transcendence is not reduced to the simple fact of knowing the stories or physical objects; on the contrary, it tries to understand these stories from the perspective of values, norms, and practices in general.”<sup>107</sup> Regarding hermeneutical phenomenology, Guillen states, “hermeneutical phenomenology is a procedure that leads the educational agents to reflect on their personal experience and professional work to analyze the essential aspects of this experience, giving them the required sense and importance to these phenomena.”<sup>108</sup> This reflection allows for an analysis of the essential aspects of these experiences, attributing appropriate significance and meaning to them. As a result, hermeneutical phenomenology becomes a crucial tool in the ongoing professional development of educators, fostering a more thoughtful and introspective approach to teaching and learning.

In 2001, Judy Bowers provided a journal entry regarding the need for partnerships and participants between inner-city school music programs.<sup>109</sup> Bowers states that shared experiences resulted in varied goals being met for all participants while stating research that provides support that collaborative efforts provide ample teaching/learning opportunities, provide assistance to

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<sup>107</sup> Doris Elida Fuster Guillen, “Qualitative Research: Hermeneutical Phenomenological Method,” *Monographic: Advances on Qualitative Research in Education* 7, no. 1 (2019): 220-221.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.* 221.

<sup>109</sup> Judy Bowers, “A Field Experience Partnership for Teacher Education with University, Public School and Community Participants,” *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, no. 148 (2001): 3.



local school music programs, and improve music education curriculum while providing a positive impact on student/teacher learning.<sup>110</sup> Bowers finds that community partnerships increased funding for local music school programs, increased opportunities for performances within the school district and community it served, and created a social connection between “at-risk” students and members of the community which increased academic progress.

Sara Jones writes on the creation of a community-school music partnership, *Making Music*, that fills the gaps in the music curriculum within an urban school district.<sup>111</sup> Goals for the program include the following: “(a) new musical knowledge, (b) increased skills, (c) changed attitudes and values, (d) significantly modified and improved behavior, (e) pathways for future musical pursuits, (f) understanding of being part of a larger community, (g) understanding of the importance of education, and (h) engaging in social justice.”<sup>112</sup> Data were collected by observations, interviews, and examination of artifacts to find that students’ musical needs were met, provided additional performance opportunities, allotted classroom community, and created positive community engagement. In addition, the community partnership created the financial opportunity that was utilized for the creation of a new teaching position for after-school musical programming.

Victoria Kinsella, Martin Fautley, and Adam Whittaker investigate the influence of contextual, structural, and political boundaries on partnerships between schools and external music providers.<sup>113</sup> They reveal how these boundaries can shape and sometimes impede effective

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<sup>110</sup> Judy Bowers, “A Field Experience Partnership for Teacher Education with University, Public School and Community Participants,” 4.

<sup>111</sup> Sara K. Jones, “Making Music: A Community-School Music Partnership,” *Arts Education Policy Review* 121, no. 2 (2020): 63.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>113</sup> Victoria Kinsella, “Re-thinking Music Education Partnerships Through Intra-Actions, 299.

collaborations. By highlighting these challenges and opportunities, they emphasize the need for strategic planning and effective communication to navigate these boundaries. Their work underscores the potential for enriching music education through well-managed partnerships that operate both within and beyond the school setting. The discussion program had two aims, “(1) to support young people at risk of disengagement, low attainment or exclusion from school to achieve the best musical, educational and wider outcomes through participation in the music-making projects. (2) To develop new models of partnership working between schools and out-of-school music providers.”<sup>114</sup> The researchers employed observations, interviews and perception surveys, and attainment and attendance to find that “a partnership is not about situating different approaches to music education against another, but rather a careful reading of ideas through and with each other, leading to new and inventive provocations.”<sup>115</sup> Blending various perspectives and strategies in music education partnerships generates new insights and approaches that benefit both students and educators. When diverse educational philosophies and methodologies converge, they create a rich, multifaced learning environment. This collaborative approach fosters innovation, as educators draw from a wider pool of ideas and practices. Educators benefit from the exchange of knowledge and expertise, leading to professional growth and improved teaching practices.

### **Limitations**

Applying the hermeneutic phenomenological approach in this study allows music directors in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas to provide details on their accounts regarding

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 308.

community partnerships established over time or details pertaining to current relationships being built. Limitations for this study may include limited funding for music programs in rural areas or increased turnover rates for music directors. All research approaches have their pros and cons, including hermeneutic phenomenology; one potential critique could be its limited number of participants and lack of context in data collection, however, these limitations do not necessarily detract from the value of the method but rather highlight the importance of considering the strengths and limitations of any research approach when choosing and conducting a study.<sup>116</sup> Hermeneutic phenomenological researchers must acknowledge the limitations of the approach, including the necessity of prolonged immersion in research in order to extract meaningful values from data collections.<sup>117</sup>

### **Setting and Participants**

This section identifies the research setting, the rationale for the selection groups, and the selection process. A study description of the participants is also offered. The setting comprises two musical regions, according to their governing entities. The New Mexico musical governing power is the New Mexico Music Educator Association (NMMEA), however, the NMMEA follows the guidelines established by the New Mexico Athletic Association (NMAA) which defines the classifications for each school district. The Texas musical governing power is the Association of Texas Small School Bands (ATSSB) which is a sub-group of the Texas Music Educator Association (TMEA). The ATSSB governs classifications 1A-4A while collaborating with TMEA which oversees musical activities; The ATSSB and TMEA entities follow the

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<sup>116</sup> Helen Stephenson, David Giles, and Kerry Bissaker, "The Power of Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Restoring the Centrality of Experiences in Work-Integrated Learning," *Work-Integrated Learning Research Methodologies and Methods* 19, no. 3 (2018): 270.

<sup>117</sup> Helen Stephenson, David Giles, and Kerry Bissaker, "The Power of Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Restoring the Centrality of Experiences in Work-Integrated Learning, 270.

guidelines established by the University Interscholastic League (UIL) which defines the classifications for each school district.

The participants for this study were selected from the Southwest District of the New Mexico Music Educators Association small school classification (1A-4A) as defined by the New Mexico Athletic Association; see Table 1 below.

**Table 1**

*Eastern New Mexico School Districts as Defined by NMMEA*

<b>School Name</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Student Population</b>	<b>Band Members</b>
Cloudcroft HS	2A	126	28
Dexter HS	3A	255	21
Goddard HS	4A	1133	62
Lovington HS	4A	664	129
Portales HS	4A	828	75

The West Texas participants for this study were selected from Region 16 of the Association of Texas Small School Bands as defined by the University Interscholastic League; see Table 2 below.

**Table 2**

*West Texas School Districts as Defined by ATSSB and UIL*

<b>School Name</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Student Population</b>	<b>Band Members</b>
Morton HS	1A	350	48
Petersburg HS	1A	274 (k-12)	58
Bovina HS	2A	127	49
Farwell HS	2A	151	82
Hale Center HS	2A	155	85
Post HS	2A	202	65
Ralls HS	2A	144	87
Seagraves HS	2A	519 (k-12)	50
Tahoka HS	2A	169	64
Abernathy HS	3A	238	112
Brownfield HS	3A	446	90
Lamesa HS	3A	496	115
Littlefield HS	3A	354	71

Muleshoe HS	3A	370	52
Roosevelt HS	3A	335	90
Seminole HS	4A	760	75
Levelland HS	4A	721	107

The sampling procedure is based on data collection from rural small school classifications in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The procedure to gather data will remain in open/closed-ended surveys regarding partnerships within music directors' respected communities. Pre- and post-surveys regarding community partnerships, along with interviews and open communication will be the format for gathering data throughout the study. As Sabrina Zirkel et al., state, "Researchers from this phenomenological tradition focus on subjective experience, typically asking participants to complete brief open-and/or closed-ended surveys at either random or specified times...to illuminate the connections between subjective experience and other outcomes."<sup>118</sup>

The selected participants of this study are music educators who teach in rural areas in either Eastern New Mexico or West Texas. Given the area of research, participants of NMMEA's Southeast Region and UIL's Region 16 are as follows: 56% male, 44% female, 48% have a Bachelor of Music Education or equivalent, 36% have a Masters of Music Education or equivalent, and 16% are unknown with a minimum of a BME. 60% are Caucasian, 20% are Hispanic, 8% are African American, and 12% are unknown. 16% have taught 1-5 years, 28% have taught 6-10 years, 12% have taught 11-15 years, 8% have taught 16-20 years, 4% have taught 21-25 years, 4% have taught 26-30 years, 12% have taught 30+ years, and 20% are unknown.

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<sup>118</sup> Sabrina Zirkel, Julie A. Garcia, and Mary C. Murphy. "Experience-Sampling Research Methods and Their Potential for Education Research." *Educational Researcher* 44, no. 1 (2015): 8.

### **Researcher Positionality**

Motivations for the study are grounded in the successful creation of community partnerships within rural school districts. In the current environment of budget reallocations, limited performance opportunities, and lack of community involvement within music programs, it has become important to connect historical evidence-based data along with current positions so that music directors in rural and urban areas collaborate with community leaders to create positive musical experiences for students, music educators, administration, and community. This research study was designed to provide detailed accounts of the results of creating community partnerships so that music educators, students, administrators, and community leaders may actively engage in activities to create a positive environment of musical engagement. The approach originates from an ontological and epistemological philosophical perspective that incorporates Epstein’s Framework of Six Types of Involvement and Sample Practice and the Expected Results of the Six Types of Involvement for Students, Parents, and Teachers<sup>119,120</sup> while integrating and discussing participants’ perspectives, attitudes, and lived experiences while engaging in community partnerships.<sup>121</sup>

As it relates to the research questions and purposes, each music director experiences community partnerships or the creation of community partnerships in different manners. Experiences vary from creating a positive environment for all parties to limited engagement between music programs and community leaders. The diversity regarding relationships of lived

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<sup>119</sup> Joyce, L. Epstein, “School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 92, no. 3 (2010): 81.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>121</sup> John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, “Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches,” Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications (2018).

experiences between music directors and community partnerships is needed to bridge the gap in the literature for rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas.

The researcher-as-instrument model also leverages the insider perspective of the researcher, providing valuable context and insight. With personal knowledge of the community and its members, the researcher can pose more relevant and pointed questions, facilitating a deeper understanding of community dynamics and the effectiveness of partnership efforts. According to Anne E. Pezalla et. al, “the phrase researcher-as-instrument refers to the researcher as an active respondent in the research process. Researchers ‘use their sensory organs to grasp the study objects, mirroring them in their consciousness, where they then are converted into phenomenological representations to be interpreted.”<sup>122</sup> The researcher-as-instrument allows for data to be collected through meaningful conversations that explore the lived experiences in creating community partnerships and the results that have occurred within the community. The relationship between participants and researchers varies between personal friends, colleagues, mentors, and former students who are now teachers. School districts that have agreed to participate in the study are willing to work with the researcher based on past relationships and further understandings of community partnerships for rural counties. The role at the research sites is to communicate with music directors, students, and administration to access the thoughts and feelings of participants regarding community partnerships.

### **Data Collection Plan**

The interview process is utilized as a data collection tool for qualitative research. The interview process allows the researcher to converse professionally with multiple individuals

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<sup>122</sup> Anne E. Pezalla et. al., “Researching the Researcher-as-Instrument: An Exercise in Interviewer Self-Reflexivity,” *National Library of Medicine* 12, no.2 (2015): 165-185.

throughout the process.<sup>123</sup> Qualitative research allows for data to be collected via interviews, observations, and documentation throughout the process; the process allows the researcher to examine intrapersonal processes while engaging in various interpersonal relationships/communications with all parties. The data collection allows the researcher to understand the lived experiences of all parties and their thought processes to engage within community partnerships. The additional application of arts-based research will be integrated to, in the words of one author, “establish a relaxed and communicative atmosphere during the meetings”<sup>124</sup> so that students, educators, and administrators remain in an environment that is the daily norm. The purpose is to create an environment that remains normal so that observations and data collection remain as transparent as possible.

A semi-structured interview and questionnaire process was selected for this qualitative study. The semi-structured process allows for the strengths of structured and unstructured interviews which creates reliable data that allows for follow-up questioning. The open-ended nature allows for predetermined questions to remain within the scope of the study. As Megan Sharp states, “such an interview format provides a space where reflection and building interpretation can take place. To achieve that kind of interview data, it is necessary to talk with the informant in a manner that represents personal lived experiences.”<sup>125</sup> In this data collection method, the researcher actively gathers narratives, descriptions, and interpretations from all

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<sup>123</sup> Michael A. Alsop, “Fundamentals of Qualitative Research in Music Education: An Introduction,” *Qualitative Research in Music Education*, 4, no. 1 (2022): 12.

<sup>124</sup> Karin Johansson, “Organ improvisation – Activity, Action and Rhetorical Practice”, doctoral dissertation, Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University, Malmö, available at: <http://lup.lub.lu.se/record/1022426> (2008): 74.

<sup>125</sup> Megan Sharp, ““Insighters”” The Complexity of Qualitative Methods n Youth Music Research,” *Journal of Youth Studies* 24, no. 6 (2021): 805-806.



participants. They analyze and compile this information into a cohesive narrative that accurately represents the participants' reality.<sup>126</sup> Conversing and observing in a relaxed environment with music directors regarding their approach to maintaining, building, or defining community partnerships creates a space where lived experiences are truthful and transparent. Kelly Becker states, "Music also seemed to help build relationships and change the power dynamics between the researcher and researched to create a comfortable and conducive 'in-between space' with which to encourage open and honest dialogue."<sup>127</sup> This observation emphasizes music's unique role in qualitative research, serving as a bridge that fosters mutual understanding and respect. Music shifts traditional power dynamics, creating a more egalitarian environment where participants feel valued and heard. This 'in-between space' provides an ideal setting for genuine dialogue, enabling researchers to gain deeper insights into participants' experiences and perspectives.

The interview process will be conducted in a manner that allows the researcher to attain details of accounts regarding community partnerships from music educators, students, administrators, and community leaders starting with a pre-questionnaire, interviews and observations, and a follow-up questionnaire that will allow parties to elaborate on key concepts of building, maintaining, and understanding community partnerships. As described by Creswell and Creswell, the qualitative research process is outlined by the following: purposefully selected

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<sup>126</sup> Kevin Wayne Spencer, "A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Graduate Occupational Therapy Students Using a Magic Trick-Themed Intervention," (PhD diss., Liberty University, 2022), 85.

<sup>127</sup> Kelly Mancini Becker, "Beyond Researcher as Instrument: Researcher with Instrument: Musicking in Qualitative Data Collection," *Qualitative Research Journal* 19, no. 4 (2019): 430-431.

participants, design, qualitative interviews/observations, documentation or transcription, data analysis, interpretation/validity, and reporting.<sup>128</sup>

### **Interview Questions** (see Appendix F)

A pre-questionnaire is designed to collect the perspectives of music directors in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas regarding their beliefs on community partnerships within their school district.

### **Pre-Questionnaire** (see appendix F)

1. Which of the following best defines a community partnership in the context of music education?
2. How do you think community partnerships can benefit music education programs in this region?
3. In your opinion, what are the most important factors for successful community partnerships in music education programs?
4. Which of the following best describes the role of community leaders in developing successful community partnerships with music education programs?
5. How can music education programs effectively communicate their needs and goals to community organizations when developing partnerships?

### **Interview Questions:**

1. How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?
2. How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?
3. How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?
4. What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

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<sup>128</sup> John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, "Chapter Nine: Qualitative Methods," in *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* 5<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2018). 179-213.

5. What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

### **Transcription Process**

The purpose of the transcription process is to collate data into the text to further qualitative analysis regarding the topic of study. The study followed the intelligent edited style of transcription that will translate audio recordings into texts while removing unintelligible words. In addition, the researcher recorded notes and comments. As Nicholas Loubere states, “Transcription relies primarily on the interviews that can be recorded in good quality and transformed into usable text documents. In practice, this often means that interviews put forward a clear and coherent narrative.”<sup>129</sup> The research will utilize the Otter.ai transcription software to transcribe the interview process. In addition, the researcher will maintain notes, comments, and transcription corrections to aid in the validity of the transcription process. Data, transcriptions, and interview recordings will be stored on a private hard drive that will be protected by the researcher and locked in a secure location. The concept of data saturation is defined by Guest et al., as “the point in data collection and analysis when new incoming data produces little or no new information to address the research question.”<sup>130</sup> Gest et al., offer the following summary of the approach and process regarding the saturation process within a qualitative study:

Operationalize saturation as a proportion: the number of identified themes at a given point in analysis divided by the total number of themes identified in the entire sample. Level of saturation reported as the point at which, post facto, 80% or 90% of themes in a dataset are identified. Findings additionally validated by determining the point during analysis when the most prevalent themes were identified.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Nicholas Loubere, “Questioning Transcription: The Case for the Systematic and Reflexive Interviewing and Reporting (SRIR) Method,” *Forum, Qualitative Social Research* 18, no. 2 (2017): 8.

<sup>130</sup> Greg Guest et al., “A Simple Method to Assess and Report Thematic Saturation in Qualitative Research.” *PloS One* 15, no. 5 (2020): 2.

<sup>131</sup> Guest et al, “A Simple Method to Assess and Report Thematic Saturation in Qualitative Research,” 4.

Guest et al. find that “6–7 interviews will capture the majority of themes in a homogenous sample... 11-12 interviews reach higher degrees of saturation.”<sup>132</sup> To ensure saturation is achieved, the research will complete interviews with 21 participants.

### **Procedures**

The following section will provide a detailed explanation of the required procedures, processes, and permissions of the study site, participants, data collection, and analysis and credibility of the findings. The researcher will complete the CITI Training and the application process required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Once approved, all approved materials will be identified in the Appendix section of this research.

### **Permission**

Participants selected for this study have a collegial relationship with the research. Although participants have agreed to be part of the study, permission must be granted by the administration of the participants. Once the IRB process has been approved, the researcher will communicate with the administration departments for each participant to ensure their willingness to participate in the study; a letter of support will be included in the IRB proposal when granted.

A questionnaire was sent to the participants before the interview process (see Appendix F). The questionnaire will be reviewed to determine a baseline understanding of community partnerships between music programs and the community they serve. In addition, the questionnaire will be submitted to administrative members and community leaders to gather information regarding their understanding of community partnerships. The idea of gathering

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 13-14.

information from administrators and community leaders is to find a connection between ideas and beliefs on community partnerships and if they aid in the success of the music programs they serve.

The researcher will proceed with the interview process once a baseline has been established. The interview process will be held online or in person depending on the participants' schedule. Interviews will be held within the participants' natural setting so that the researcher can evaluate the directness and comfort of the participants (interview questions above). The idea is to have the participants respond truthfully without implications from the researcher. Data would then be recorded for transcription and evaluation purposes.

Once data is recorded and transcribed, the researcher will follow up on participants with a post-questionnaire (listed above). The idea of the post-questionnaire is to determine participants' positionality on community partnerships after their interviews and to determine whether or not the relation of the community partnerships affects the success of music programs.

### **Data Analysis**

Coding thematic analysis actively identifies and interprets patterns within qualitative data, particularly in exploring community partnerships. By systematically capturing the recurring concepts and beliefs expressed by participants, this method enables researchers to uncover the key themes that reflect the collective experiences and perceptions of individuals within a community. According to Julie Ayre and Kirsten McCaffery, "the most appropriate approach to thematic analysis will depend on the research goals, desired outputs, and practical constraints."<sup>133</sup> Coding thematic analysis captures familiarities and frequencies of concepts and

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<sup>133</sup> Julie Ayre and Kirsten J. McCaffery, "Research Note: Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research," *Journal of Physiotherapy* 68, no. 1 (2022): 78.

beliefs from the participants regarding community partnerships within their area and the communities they serve; “This approach inherently assumes that objective facts are ‘in’ the data, uncovered by the researcher.”<sup>134</sup> All data will be transcribed to uncover common themes between participants regarding community partnerships.

As Richard H. Rogers states, “Coding connects the qualitative data collection phase with the data analysis phase of a study. It is important to note that coding is not an exact science with right and wrong answers.”<sup>135</sup> Within the first round of data analysis, the researcher will uncover patterns within participants’ responses to “increase the trustworthiness (or validity) of the data.”<sup>136</sup> Common themes will then be used as a basis for data analysis of the interview process. According to Rogers, “The qualitative analytic process is cyclical, and first cycle coding occurs during the initial coding of the data.”<sup>137</sup> Coding within the pre-questionnaire will then be used as a basis for the interview coding process. During the second round of coding, each interview within the sample will then be coded and compared to uncover themes across participants.

The Delve Tool will allow for interviews to be uploaded and transcribed and utilize the in vivo coding. Second-round coding shall use deductive and inductive codes based on responses from the pre-questionnaire and analysis of data. Categories may include the community’s willingness to actively engage with music programs through partnerships. Subcategories will

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>135</sup> Richard H. Rogers, “Coding and Writing Analytic Memos on Qualitative Data: A Review of Johnny Saldaña’s the Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers,” *The Qualitative Report* 23, no. 4 (2018): 889.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 889.

<sup>137</sup> Rogers, “Coding and Writing Analytic Memos on Qualitative Data,” 890.

include the type of engagement including finances, performance availability, attending performances, and promoting the music programs.

### **Data Synthesis**

Data synthesis refers to the systematic process of combining and analyzing multiple sources of data to draw conclusions or generate new knowledge based on research questions and sub-questions. As Elaine Barnett-Page and James Thomas state, “The method was developed out of a need to conduct reviews that addressed questions relating to intervention need, appropriateness, and acceptability without compromising on key principles developed in systematic reviews...Free codes of findings are organized into 'descriptive' themes, which are then further interpreted to yield 'analytical' themes.”<sup>138</sup> The data synthesis “followed a four-phase process as outlined by Vaismoradi et al.: (a) initialization, (b) construction, (c) rectification, and (d) finalization. Phrases one through three occurred during data analysis.”<sup>139</sup>

#### **Initialization**

All data collected via interviews, questionnaires, observations, and field notes may be transcribed by the researcher through the initialization process to have a deep understanding of the data collected throughout the process. As Vaismoradi et al. state, “Through reading and rereading transcripts, researchers reach an overall understanding of data and also the main issues in the phenomenon under study. This understanding prepares them to focus on the most

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<sup>138</sup> Elaine Barnett-Page and James Thomas, “Methods for the Synthesis of Qualitative Research: A Critical Review,” *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 9, no. 59 (2009): 2-3.

<sup>139</sup> Kevin Wayne Spencer, “Chapter Three: Methods,” in *A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Graduate Occupational Therapy Students using a Magic Trick-Themed Intervention* (PhD diss. Liberty University, 2022): 97.

important constructs recognized and presented in data.”<sup>140</sup> The initialization process allows the researcher to create a theme and organize the data in a format that highlights meaningful-reoccurring ideas presented through the data collection process. As Vaismoradi et al. state, “They [researcher] must be careful not to be too much influenced by their stance as they might risk losing important data.”<sup>141</sup> A strict data focus during the initialization process creates meaning for theme development during the coding sessions. Coding allows for the researcher to “reduce the amount of raw data to that which is relevant to the research question, break it down into manageable sections, and takes researchers through the transformation of raw data to higher-level insights or abstractions as the development of themes.”<sup>142</sup> Researchers systematically categorize and label data segments, uncovering patterns, relationships, and underlying meanings. This process reveals recurring concepts that are central to the study, ensuring that the analysis remains tightly aligns with the research objectives.

### **Construction**

Reflecting on the construction process allows the researcher to view similarities and differences within the coding process so that groupings be easily identified and grouped in a manner that is best suited for each research question. This phase includes refining themes by classifying codes to “give a common meaning to a group of codes”<sup>143</sup> while comparing codes “to reveal links and nominate themes,”<sup>144</sup> labeling by “sorting codes of similar meaning that give a

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<sup>140</sup> Mojtaba Vaismoradi et al., “Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis,” *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice* 6, no. 5 (2016): 103.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>142</sup> Mojtaba Vaismoradi et al., “Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis,” 104.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.



sense of the main ideas developing from them,”<sup>145</sup> and defining and describing “themes already established and how they were identified.”<sup>146</sup> Once themes are organized, labels are given to each category to convey the main ideas concisely. Once labeling is complete, researchers are to define and identify how themes are abstracted step by step; each definition represents the description of the main concept of the theme.

### **Rectification**

In the rectification process of coding, researchers actively refine and adjust codes to ensure they accurately represent the data. This process involves systematically reviewing initial codes to assess their alignment with the data and refining categories that may be too broad or vague. During this phase, themes are verified by having the research “‘ distance’ themselves from the data for some time to increase their sensitivity and reduce any premature and incomplete data analysis”<sup>147</sup> while immersing within the research to find underlying themes within the coding process. This stage in the process is the verification point where themes and subthemes are related to established knowledge through an immense literature review.

Vaismoradi et al. state, “To enhance transparency and truthfulness, and facilitate transferability of findings to readers, attention is given to data saturation, description of the original context of data, and provision of material for reflection on data analysis in the appendices of the study report.”<sup>148</sup> Throughout this process, researchers continuously revisit the research questions to maintain focus and relevance, making necessary adjustments as new insights emerge. This

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<sup>145</sup> Mojtaba Vaismoradi et al., “Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis,” 105.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 107.

rigorous approach enhances the credibility and validity of the research, ensuring that the final set of codes truly reflects the data and supports the development of reliable themes.

### **Finalization**

The last phase allows for a narration that connects themes and answers research questions that offers a holistic view of the research topic. This allows for, in the words of one researcher, the “creation of a “storyline” that provides an opportunity to review the entirety of the process of data analysis, promotes further ideas and collects even more data to improve saturation of theme.”<sup>149</sup> The theme development in qualitative research is an ongoing process, but the use of a “storyline” can help establish theoretical data saturation. The finalization process persuades both researchers and readers to finalize data collection and analysis, which is a conventional principle in research. Researchers use storytelling as a creative approach to explore themes that are psychologically, culturally, and socially relevant. The aim is to present a coherent narrative that connects different ideas and themes; this involves carefully choosing and arranging data and settings in a way that engages the reader. Importantly, the use of storytelling enables researchers to present complex ideas in a way that is more accessible and engaging to both academic and non-academic audiences.

### **Trustworthiness**

The purpose of trustworthiness is based design and replication of the study with such clarity during the research process. As Roberto Forero et al. state, “In establishing trustworthiness, Lincoln and Guba created stringent criteria in qualitative research, known as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, also known as the “Four

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<sup>149</sup> Mojtaba Vaismoradi et al., “Theme Development in Qualitative Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis,” 107.

Dimensions Criteria.”<sup>150</sup> This section outlines the steps and procedures to ensure the credibility of the research.

### **Credibility**

Credibility refers to the validity of qualitative research: data collection is to reflect the participants’ perspectives and positions within the research. Strategies for credibility include “prolonged and varied engagement with each setting, interviewing processes, collecting of referential adequacy materials, and peer debriefing.”<sup>151</sup> Interviews with band directors, administration, and community leaders along with group observations will be utilized to collect data and information that may identify patterns in community partnership building, however, familiarity with organizations, administration, and community leaders regarding community partnerships is based on the population and classification of the school district. The focus of the study is primarily on small school districts in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas that as classified by NMAA or Texas UIL/ATSSB. The focus area of the study is based on the area in which the researchers actively engage in musical activities through musical performances, clinics, and colleague relationships.

### **Triangulation**

Multiple methods of triangulation, or data source collection, are used to uncover common themes produced by participants. Interviews and surveys will be reviewed throughout the process to uncover common themes for coding concepts. Once coded and categorized, the interview transcripts and observation records will be revisited to ensure that the experiences lived by participants hold validity in data finding. This ensures that data collection sessions only involve

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<sup>150</sup> Roberto Forero et al., “Application of Four-Dimension Criteria to Assess Rigour of Qualitative Research in Emergency Medicine.” *BMC Health Services Research* 18, no. 120 (2018): 2.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

willing and free participants; encouraging participants to share data freely is also important to ensure the accuracy and usefulness of the data collected. Overall, ethical considerations should be a top priority when conducting research and collecting data.<sup>152</sup>

### **Debriefing Sessions**

Shenton states that regular debriefing sessions between a researcher and their supervisors, such as a project director or steering group, can broaden the researcher's vision through discussion and the sharing of experiences and perceptions.<sup>153</sup> These collaborative sessions can be used by the researcher to gain new insights and perspectives, refine their research goals, and think critically about their approach. Regular communication and feedback can help to ensure that the research stays on track and achieves its objectives.<sup>154</sup>

### **Peer Scrutiny and Member Check**

Peer scrutiny in research projects is important for maintaining high standards and identifying potential flaws. Colleagues, peers, and academics should be invited to provide feedback, which should be welcomed and integrated. Presentations at conferences provide an opportunity for researchers to receive fresh perspectives on their work, and feedback should be incorporated into future iterations of the project. Data accuracy checks can occur during and after data collection through spot checks and informant review of transcripts. The focus should be on whether participants agree with the recorded dialogue.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Andrew K. Shenton, "Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects," *Education for Information* (2004), 66-67.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

## Transferability

Transferability refers to the ideals in which the research can be transferred to other contexts or settings. This may be achieved by “purposeful sampling to form a nominated sample and data saturation.”<sup>156</sup> By doing so, the needs for sufficient data collection and information must be provided by the researcher to ensure that the research is transferable to other areas of study; this allows the reader to compare the phenomenon described in the study to their own experiences and allows for the reader or future researchers to understand the phenomenon under investigation. As Shenton states, “This additional information must be considered before any attempts at transference are made. Thus, information on the following issues should be given at the outset:

- a) the number of organizations taking part in the study and where they are based;
- b) any restrictions in the type of people who contributed data;
- c) the number of participants involved in the fieldwork;
- d) the data collection methods that were employed;
- e) the number and length of the data collection sessions;
- f) the time period over which the data was collected.”<sup>157</sup>

Researchers often emphasize transferability, yet it is essential to acknowledge that the outcomes of qualitative study are closely tied to the specific characteristics of the organization in which the research occurs. To better assess the applicability of these findings in other contexts, conducting similar studies with the same methodologies in different settings can provide valuable insights.

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<sup>156</sup> Roberto Forero et al., “Application of Four-Dimension Criteria to Assess Rigour of Qualitative Research in Emergency Medicine,” 3.

<sup>157</sup> Andrew K. Shenton, “Strategies for Ensuring Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research Projects,” *Education for Information* (2004), 70.

## **Dependability**

Dependability ensures that findings may be repeatable within the context of the research; strategies for dependability include a “rich description of study methods, establishing an audit trail, and have a stepwise replication of the data.”<sup>158</sup> To improve dependability, it is important to report study processes in detail, allowing for potential replication by future researchers. This may not necessarily result in identical results, but it will help ensure that the methods used are consistent and transparent. By providing comprehensive reporting of study processes, researchers can increase the accuracy and reliability of their findings, which in turn enhances the credibility of their work and contributes to the advancement of knowledge in the field.

## **Confirmability**

Confirmability occurs when findings can be replicated by other researchers through a well-documented research method and coding systems and may identify similar patterns within the process. Confirmability occurs through “reflexivity and triangulation.”<sup>159</sup> Triangulation plays a crucial role in promoting confirmability by reducing investigator bias. It ensures that multiple sources of data are used to validate findings, minimizing the influence of a single perspective. By triangulating data from different sources and methods, researchers can enhance the reliability and validity of their research, thereby increasing the credibility and trustworthiness of their conclusions. This approach encourages transparency, promotes reflexivity, and fosters the development of more robust and reliable research practices.

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<sup>158</sup> Roberto Forero et al., “Application of Four-Dimension Criteria to Assess Rigour of Qualitative Research in Emergency Medicine.” 3.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 3.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations include securing IRB approval from Liberty University which allows for permission to start the data collection. In addition, permission from the study site along with consent from all participants was needed prior to data collection. All private information, including information identifying participants, will be protected and confidential; access to such information will be held by the researcher at a secure location. Any information released to the researcher will be stored on an encrypted password-protected hard drive that will be stored in a private secure location for a three-year period and will be deleted/destroyed after the duration of the study.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to examine the relationships and community partnerships between rural music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas and the communities they serve to find an in-depth understanding of the successes or failures of music programs within these rural areas. Areas under study include the relationship status between these rural schools and the community regarding performance opportunities, financial support, cultural identity, the identity of the school district within the community, engagement within the community, and community engagement within the music programs. This chapter provides a thorough description of the hermeneutic phenomenological research design that guides the study, describes the areas within the research, and identifies the participants and their respective communities. This chapter includes the researcher's positionality, the framework of the study, research procedures, data collection, analysis, synthesis of data descriptions, descriptions to reflect trustworthiness, and ethical considerations prior and post-data collection for the research.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to examine the lived experiences of band directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas regarding collaborative efforts between fine-arts music programs and the communities they serve within the secondary setting to understand community partnerships further as it relates to music education advocacy. Chapter four begins with a detailed description of the study participants, reporting the findings in several areas. The first section identified themes from participants' pre-interview questionnaire transcripts related to their beliefs on community partnerships. Second, the researcher identified themes regarding their beliefs on community partnerships within their area. Third, themes identified within the post-interview questionnaire transcripts regarding their beliefs on community partnerships within their area. Lastly, this section will allow the participants to respond to their beliefs about the need for community partnerships.

### **Participants**

The researcher introduced the study to music educators who teach in rural areas within Eastern New Mexico and West Texas and were classified as 1A – 4A by the New Mexico Activities Association or the University Interscholastic League. Of the 23 music programs presented, 15 music directors requested information and a consent form to engage in the study. Participants were 80% male and 20% female; 65% have earned a Bachelor of Music Education or equivalent, while 35% have earned a Masters of Music Education or equivalent. This is seen in Table 1 below.



**Table 1****Research Participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Current Degree</b>	<b>School Classification</b>	<b>Members of HS Band</b>
Cole	M	24	Caucasian/White	1	Eastern New Mexico	Bachelor of Music Education	2A	28
Ken	M	38	Caucasian/White	16	Eastern New Mexico	Master of Education	4A	50
Sara	F	36	Caucasian/White	9	Eastern New Mexico	Master of Music	4A	129
Smith	M	29	Caucasian/White	6	Eastern New Mexico	Bachelor of Music Education	4A	65
John	M	51	Caucasian/White	26	West Texas	Bachelor of Science in Music	1A	48
KDM	F	27	Caucasian/White	4	West Texas	Bachelor of Music Education	1A	58
Riq	M	23	Hispanic/Latino	1	West Texas	Bachelor of Music Education	2A	49
BJ	M	39	Caucasian/White	16	West Texas	Bachelor of Music Education	2A	82
Rog	M	31	Caucasian/White	8	West Texas	Bachelor of Music Education	2A	85
Kim	F	32	Caucasian/White	10	West Texas	Master of Music Education	2A	65
Wal	M	41	African American	10	West Texas	Master of Music Education	2A	87
Ranger	M	52	Hispanic/Latin	25	West Texas	Master of Music	2A	50
Cris	F	37	Hispanic/Latino	14	West Texas	Bachelor of Music	2A	64
AJM	M	54	Caucasian/White	31	West Texas	Bachelor of Music Education	3A	112
Burk	M	61	Caucasian/White	39	West Texas	Master of Music Education	3A	82
Carr	F	36	Hispanic/Latino	10	West Texas	Bachelor of Music Education	3A	115
Nie	F	68	African America	45	West Texas	Master of Music Education	3A	71
May	F	33	Caucasian/White	9	West Texas	Master of Music	3A	52
JP	M	26	Caucasian/White	3	West Texas	Bachelor of Music Education	3A	90

Participant	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Years of Service	Location	Current Degree	School Classification	Members of HS Band
JB	M	29	Caucasian/White	6	West Texas	Bachelor of Music Education	4A	75
Teo	M	41	Hispanic/Latino	11	West Texas	Masters of Music	4A	107

The focus of the study is to examine a potential correlation between successful music programs in rural areas and the willingness to engage in community partnerships. Community partnerships are relationships developed on mutual respect, agreement, and rapport through time. Shahzad Pashaeypoor et al. state, “The process of adopting innovations has been studied for over 30 years and one of the most popular adoption models is described by Rogers. Therefore, it is essential to use models that can predict the factors influencing the adoption of evidence-based practices.”<sup>160</sup> The diffusion of innovation theory states the following:

The process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among the members of a social system. An innovation is an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or another unit of adoption...Rogers believed that the individual’s decision to adopt or reject an innovation depends on receiver variables, social system variables and perceived characteristics of innovation (relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability).<sup>161</sup>

Music educators’ ability to communicate and collaborate with community leaders forms the basis of the diffusion of innovation theory within community partnerships, fostering further success within rural music education classrooms. For this study, the researcher recruited participants after discussions regarding the positive and negative effects of community partnerships and involvement within the music classroom in rural areas of knowledge. After reviewing whether

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<sup>160</sup> Shahzad Pashaeypoor et al., “Predicting the Adoption of Evidence-Based Practice using “Rogers Diffusion of Innovation Model,” *Contemporary Nurse : A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession* 52, no. 1(2016): 86.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

community partnerships were actively engaged throughout the school district in activities outside of music education, the researcher determined the persuasion and decision stages of diffusion for the participants. The data analysis focused on implementation and confirmation. Implementation "occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) puts an innovation into use."<sup>162</sup> Confirmation "occurs when an individual (or other decision-making unit) seeks reinforcement of an innovation-decision already made, but he or she may reverse this previous decision if exposed to conflicting messages about the innovation."<sup>163</sup> From this perspective, a hermeneutic phenomenological analysis considered the participants' knowledge of community partnership involvement, how it changed, and how participants' interpretations of community partnerships adapted after a better understanding of community partnerships.

## Results

Transcripts were analyzed to identify words, phrases, and sentences that described the participants' knowledge and involvement in community partnerships regarding music programs within the "small school" setting. The analysis used a coding system that identified the main attributes of the participants' use of community partnerships within their respective communities. Then, the coding system revealed themes between participants and their beliefs about community partnerships. The coded results are presented in two sections: the first section analyzes participants' interview transcripts, followed by a discussion of additional themes from the follow-up interviews relevant to their interpretations of their experiences within community

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<sup>162</sup> Shahzad Pashaeypoor et al., "Predicting the Adoption of Evidence-Based Practice using "Rogers Diffusion of Innovation Model," 87.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

partnerships, and the second section presents the participants' responses to the central research questions and each sub-question, followed by a chapter summary.

### **Themes Explored in Interviews**

The data collected revealed twelve main themes confirmed within interview discussions. The main concept headers then deducted themes based on qualitative data analysis technique where codes, or labels, are assigned to data segments based on the content. Unlike deductive coding, which relies on pre-existing categories or theories, inductive coding allows for the emergence of new categories or themes directly from the data. The coding captured data segments that identified a specific concept, opinion, or impression expressed by participants during the interviews. Each theme connects to the core attributes or concepts under investigation in the research; this connection ensures that the analysis remains focused on the research objectives and contributes to a deeper understanding of the studied phenomena.

The researchers identified and coded 27 main concepts within the first twelve interviews during the initial analysis, with an additional concept emerging within two. The confirmation of themes identified was consistent throughout the twelve interviews. The saturation assessment was determined by applying a base size of four and a new information threshold of  $f \leq 5\%$ , resulting in thematic saturation at 4<sup>+1</sup> interviews. This is seen in Tables 2 and 3 below.

**Table 2**

*Thematic Saturation*

<b>Interview Numbers</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
New themes per interview	20	2	2	2
# of base themes				26
Interview Number		5		6
New themes per interview		1		0

**Table 3**

*Thematic Saturation*

# of new themes in run				<b>1</b>
# of new themes per run	=	$\frac{1}{26}$	=	3.8%
Interview Number	7	8	9	10
New Themes per interview	0	0	0	0
# of new themes in run				0

*Note.* A Simple Method to Assess and Report Thematic Saturation in Qualitative Research<sup>164</sup> (Guest et al., 2020).

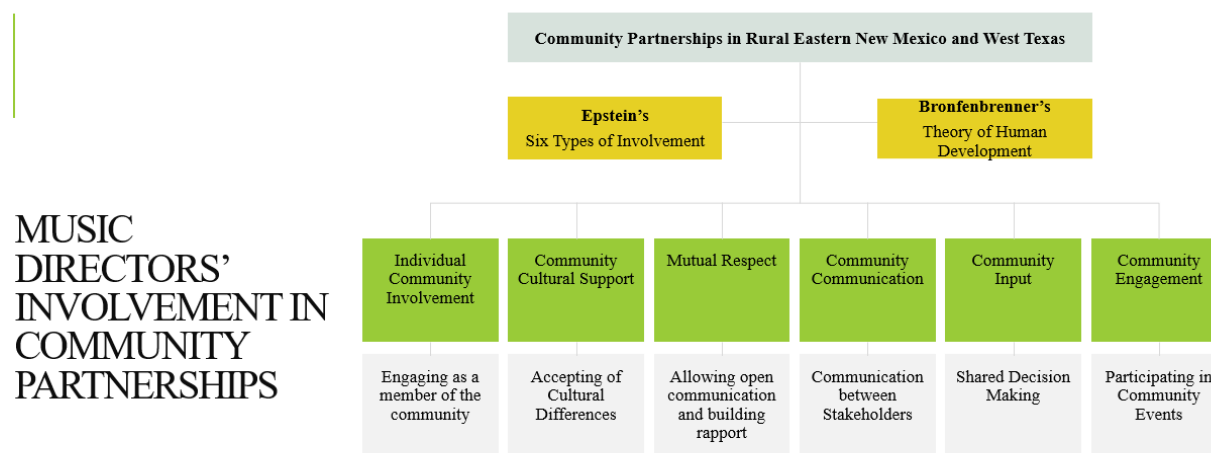
Applying the hermeneutic circle, which is the idea that understanding a text as a whole is based on individual parts, the researcher identified and merged initial findings to create more detailed interpretations of the participants' beliefs and experiences with community partnerships within their respective communities. The researcher combined and reduced the 27 identified concepts to seven significant themes. For instance, "feedback" and "community input" were merged into the theme of "community input." Another example incorporates "community celebrations" and "community engagement" under the theme of "community engagement."

Emerging themes identified community identity as a focal point, with participants frequently discussing the importance of a strong community identity in driving innovation. This theme highlighted the sense of belonging and collective identity shared among community

<sup>164</sup> Greg Guest, et al., "A Simple Method to Assess and Report Thematic Saturation in Qualitative Research," *PloS One* 15, no. 5 (2020): 8.

members, which served as a foundation for collaborative efforts toward innovation. Figure 1 shows the themes of music directors' involvement in community partnerships.

**Figure 1**



### Individual Community Involvement

Participants emphasized the significance of individual community members actively participating in innovation initiatives; this collaborative ethos encourages creativity, strengthens community bonds, and cultivates a sense of shared ownership over the community's progress and development. This theme underscored the role of personal commitment and contributions from community members in driving forward innovative projects. Carr stated the following:

Being involved within the community helps the students feel valued because we get multiple opportunities to be seen. They feel a sense of pride that they are wanted at community events; our band program is first in the lineup in our local parades because the community has asked us to participate. The music director's role is to give students the opportunity to perform in the community at multiple events.

Kim, similarly, wrote the following words:

Our kids still have generational supervision, great morals, and values because in a small town, everyone knows each other, takes care of each other, and lets parents know if they see their kiddos doing something wrong. We may not always have full instrumentation, but the support, dedication, and fun the community brings to the table makes every second worth the challenge. There have been times over the years when program cuts

have taken place, but the music program has never been touched because of the support from the community. We had a couple of times that we didn't have the money for away games, and the community stepped up and made sure we attended because it means that much to the teams and community.

Despite potential limitations and resource constraints, the close-knit community dynamic fosters significant values for the music programs and guides them through the community's efforts to provide support in various ways. Through multiple forms of support and dedication, including volunteerism, fundraising efforts, and collaborative partnerships with local organizations, community members work together to overcome challenges and ensure the success and sustainability of the music programs. Furthermore, the exposure to diverse musical experiences and interactions with community members from different backgrounds broaden students' perspectives and enhance their cultural awareness.

### **Community Cultural Support**

Participants actively emphasized the critical themes of cultural support within the community, highlighting the importance of preserving and integrating cultural values and traditions into innovation efforts. The participants actively underscored the necessity for innovations to align with community cultural norms and values to gain acceptance and support.

Riq stated the following in this regard:

As a high school music program, lots of what we do is for community entertainment...When selecting repertoire for these ensembles, there are many different factors that contribute to the final decision. We have to make sure that the students are going to enjoy what they are doing, with that being said, community input is also taken into consideration as they are the people supporting our students. Students participating in different activities and events held by community organizations provide a learning environment that is different from what they are accustomed to. Having students participate in community bands/ensembles gets them in from of a different director with different experiences and teaching strategies. It is a way that may not necessarily seem like it is a class for them.

This proactive stance emphasizes the community's active role in ensuring innovative initiatives resonate with and respect its members' cultural heritage and identity. Moreover, participants

actively engaged in discussions and initiatives to address the gap between innovations and cultural preservations, actively seeking ways to leverage traditional knowledge and practices to drive innovative projects while maintaining cultural integrity. John stated as much in the following section:

A lot of times, the music director is the only one guiding students and the community in anything educationally musical. Teaching music in a rural area where the arts do not exist takes an understanding of what the community is looking for and what is important to them. If you are not fostering community with your largest stakeholders, the parents and the community at large, it does not take long for a program to die. This goes with understanding your community and what it is they desire for their children to learn. In rural areas, communities will look at your program as their own and everyone will have their own opinion on how it should be run and what should be taught. Once you can start incorporating community expectation you can then start adding your expectations to have a full service music program. If you do it well, you will be able to incorporate your ideas and make it look like it is what your community wanted the whole time. Incorporating community ideas and suggestions, within reason, gives the community investment and ownership in your program which leads to greater support and involvement in your program.

This proactive approach reflects the community's commitment to fostering harmonious relations between innovation and cultural heritage, actively embracing both as essential components of community development and identity.

### **Mutual Respect**

Community members and stakeholders identified mutual respect as a crucial factor in facilitating innovation. They actively underscored the importance of fostering an environment of mutual trust, understanding, and appreciation, encouraging open collaboration and idea-sharing. This active emphasis on mutual respect highlights the proactive efforts of community members and stakeholders to cultivate a culture of respect and inclusivity, actively valuing diverse perspectives and contributions. Prioritizing mutual respect fosters a conducive environment for innovation, strengthens relationships, and promotes unity within the community. Burk shows this in the following:



While it is not feasible to perform at every gas station opening, there are myriad opportunities to put your program in a good light throughout the year. Beginning of the year open house at the school, incoming student tours at the school, and playing at the local senior center for Christmas all come to mind. If there is a local spring, summer, or fall festival, that is a great place to show up and play a couple of tunes. Nobody will remember what you played or for how long, but they will remember that the band showed up.

Engaging in respectful dialogue and interactions, community members work together to overcome challenges, generate creative solutions, and catalyze positive change. Burk added the following:

We perform at community events like business openings and parades, and we have students play at the retirement home during the holidays. Our community likes to support our students in all of their pursuits. The leaders of these organizations are the movers and shakers in the community. Get their support and you will have improved relationships with administrators at the campus and district level without special effort from you. They will notice that you are out and about and will say something in passing to the superintendent. That's the best support you can get. The more active answer is more elusive, but not unreasonable to accomplish. Visit with those folks around town. You tell them about the support you get from administration so that they will parrot that back to your principal or superintendent. The take-away on this question to me is just this. NEVER criticize your administration publicly. ALWAYS brag about the support you get. Be grateful for the support you have if you would like it to grow.

This active commitment to mutual respect contributes to the community's collective growth and progress, fostering a dynamic ecosystem where innovation thrives and flourishes.

### **Community Communication**

Participants highlighted effective communication within the community as essential for successful innovation; they discussed the significance of clear and transparent communication channels, facilitating the exchange of ideas, feedback, and information among community members and stakeholders. PT stated the following to this effect:

I had a band program in three schools; the school district encompasses approximately 425 square miles and includes about six rural communities. Over the years, I made a point to reach out to each organization. After a performance, I would send a thank you note for the opportunity to perform. I would make a phone call or send 'thank you' notes for the support of our bands. I would also write newspaper or social media articles heralding the bands' successes and listing supporting entities. Communication is key! Again,

communication is key. If there was a certain type of performance requested, I would prepare a performance to suit the need. Example: Christmas music for a church Christmas Program. Patriotic music for Veteran's Day programs. The type of performance drove my curriculum and became integral to my lesson planning. Sometimes, a performance would be with a whole band, but most often, a brass choir or small woodwind ensemble would play.

Sara stated the following in agreement:

When I started at my current school, the community opinion was very strong and community members were not even a little bit shy about sharing their opinions about the band I was inheriting. This gave me a good gauge of what the community liked and disliked and allowed me to plan for the upcoming season with a good plan in place to make positive change. I had my own ideas, and those are very different than what I walked into. I have been able to input my plans for the good of the program and the community feedback now is very positive. For me, I do a lot of social media outreach and also utilize my booster organization to make connections. We reach out to local companies for sponsorships and this allows us to get the message out about what we do and why it is important. I am also very active on the band's social media account and share as much as possible about what the students are doing through the band program. I self-promote!

The emphasis on effective communication highlights the proactive efforts to ensure information flows freely, fostering collaboration and synergy. Clear communication channels promote understanding and alignment and empower community members to contribute their insights and perspectives. Engaging in open dialogue and transparent communication, community members collaborate to identify opportunities, address challenges, and drive forward innovative initiatives. This commitment to effective communication strengthens bonds within the community, fostering a culture of trust, cooperation, and a shared vision for collective progress and development.

### **Community Input**

Community input actively emphasizes the significant role of seeking and integrating input from diverse community stakeholders throughout the innovation process. Participants stressed the crucial involvement of community members in decision-making and problem-

solving to ensure innovations address evolving community needs. AJM stated the following in this regard:

No other organization in school works with such a diverse group of students. Music Programs bridge the gap between the different interest groups. If the music director is a member of the community, people from all walks of life can be included in the director's circle in turn allowing the music organization access to all of these groups and the benefits/support that comes with that.

This emphasis reflects a proactive approach to fostering inclusive participation and collaboration among community members, ensuring innovative solutions are relevant and responsive to community challenges and aspirations. AJM added the following in agreement:

The community supports what they feel involved in. If the band performs on Friday night at the football game, "everyone" can lay claim to "our band." If the band performs music appealing to the fans in the stands, those same fans will vocally and financially support the program. If the director steers the performing group into the role of "hierarchical" performance and does not meet the community where it is, the community will not feel a part or take any ownership in the organization. If community members feel welcome when attending events and comfortable approaching the director, they will be more likely to support bonds, fundraising programs, travel, etc. It is absolutely necessary to get the community involved in the local music programs or they will eventually be starved of support. Continuity with the director, bringing in alumni, promoting opportunities for people to reminisce about when they were the ones performing, programming of music to highlight the culture/interests of the community all allow people to be part of something larger than themselves; everything from providing desserts for the fundraiser to the banker sponsoring travel shirts.

By actively engaging residents, local businesses, and community leaders in meaningful dialogue and co-creation processes, the community can harness collective insights to drive impactful, sustainable innovations that positively affect stakeholders. This collaborative approach cultivates shared responsibilities and commitment, ensuring the integration of all stakeholders' diverse perspectives and expertise into the development of music programs. By prioritizing inclusive participation, the community can identify and address critical issues more effectively, creating initiatives that meet immediate needs and contribute to long-term resilience; this engagement cultivates a strong sense of ownership and empowerment among participants, leading to positive

outcomes. Through these concerted efforts, the community can transform collective aspirations into actionable strategies, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for all members and establishing a model for others to follow.

### **Community Engagement**

Engagement of community members in innovation activities emerged as a central theme, highlighting the active involvement of individuals and groups in innovation-related initiatives. This theme emphasized the significance of fostering meaningful engagement and participation opportunities, which empowered community members to contribute to the innovation process.

BJ stated the following in this regard:

I have found that the easiest way to establish these relationships is to simply get involved in the community as an individual first. Frequenting local businesses, working with the local paper, and helping in community events. Most members of the community will take those opportunities to introduce themselves and learn about your program. I have some of my best community conversations in the order line at the local restaurant.

By actively involving community members in various stages of innovations, from ideation to implementation, the community cultivates a culture of collaboration and ownership, fostering a sense of responsibility and investment in the outcomes. This approach ensures the consideration of diverse perspectives, enriching the innovation process. Engaging community members strengthens the social fabric by building trust and mutual respect. As participants see their contributions materialize into results, their commitments to the community's goals deepen. Embedding these collaborative practices into the community's framework establishes a sustainable and self-reinforcing cycle of innovation and improvement. BJ added the following:

We perform at community events like business openings, parades in our city, and have students play at the retirement home during the holidays... We have had community groups who have donated to help purchase contest and solo and ensemble music. They are also willing to help support travel for these contests. We have community members who are interested in how we diversify our music program.

Music directors who promote engagement ensure the consideration of perspectives and insights, resulting in more comprehensive and impactful innovations that address the needs and challenges of the community and stakeholders.

### **Research Question Responses**

This study, guided by two central research questions, aimed to investigate the usage of community partnerships as they relate to the success of secondary music education courses (band) in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The aim was to determine what factors may influence the usage of community partnerships to promote music education in rural areas. In the previous section, the data identified six themes from interviews and discussions; the following section associates the emerging themes with the appropriate research question.

#### **Central Research Question One**

*How does the culture/identity of the school or school district affect student involvement, retention, and attrition rates within fine arts music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas?*

Music education is often intertwined with local traditions, values, and heritage, serving as a program for cultural expression and community cohesiveness. The music programs that serve rural areas become a place for musical, educational, or expressive artistic development and a reflection of the identity of the rural community itself. Students are more likely to engage and connect to music programs when they resonate with their cultural background and experiences; the involvement of the community and community members, such as local businesses, musicians, parents, and partners, can provide invaluable support and resources for the program, fostering a sense of ownership and pride among students. By embracing and celebrating the

cultural identity of the school and community, music programs in rural areas enrich the educational experiences and promote local traditions, strengthening the community's values.

### **Central Research Question Two**

*How does community involvement aid music advocacy or lifelong appreciation in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas?*

Community involvement is essential for music advocacy in rural areas as it provides crucial support and resources for the sustainability and growth of music programs. In rural communities, where access to arts education resources may be limited, community members' active participation becomes more crucial. Music programs gain support and visibility by engaging parents, local businesses, community leaders, and various organizations that advocate the importance of music education within the school district. Community involvement not only provides financial and logistical support but also fosters a sense of pride, dedication, and ownership among the community and identity of the school, which leads to increased advocacy efforts and initiatives to ensure the continuation of music programs. Community partnerships offer unique opportunities for students, such as performances, mentorship programs, and access to local resources and expertise that enrich musical and education experiences; community involvement catalyzes music advocacy in rural areas by reinforcing the values of music education as an integral part of the identity of the school and community.

### **Summary**

Chapter Four describes the study participants and reported the findings in three sections. Initially, the discussion revolves around themes extracted from participants' pre-interview questionnaire transcripts, focusing on their perspectives regarding community partnerships. Subsequently, the researcher explored themes observed within the transcripts of participant

interviews. Thirdly, attention is directed towards themes identified within the post-interview questionnaire transcripts, delving into the participants' beliefs concerning community partnerships within their respective areas. Lastly, this section provided an outlet for participants to discuss their views regarding the necessity for community partnerships.

The study assesses the usage of community partnerships for music educators in rural areas. Through interviews and thematic analysis, several key themes emerged regarding the participants' beliefs and experiences with community partnerships; themes such as community identity, individual community involvement, community cultural support, musical respect, community communication, community input, and community engagement were identified and discussed. These themes reflected the significance of community involvement and support driving success for music education initiatives in rural areas.

Chapter Four also addresses the central research questions, highlighting the influence of school culture and community involvement on student participation and retention in music programs and the role of community engagement in music advocacy in rural areas. By examining these dynamics, the findings reveal that fostering vigorous community partnerships is essential for the success of music education in rural areas. The research highlights that when educators and community stakeholders collaborate effectively, they create enriched educational experiences that enhance student engagement and instill a lifelong appreciation for music. This collaboration involves educators, administrators, community members and leaders, parents, and cultural organizations working together to support and promote music education. The findings suggest that such partnerships can provide resources, create performance opportunities, and generate community support, vital for sustaining and advancing music programs. Moreover, these collaborative efforts develop a significant sense of community identity and pride,

motivating students to participate and persist in music education. Ultimately, Chapter Four emphasizes that strategic and intentional community engagement is a cornerstone for cultivating thriving music education programs in rural areas, advocating for a model where shared responsibilities and mutual investments drive educational success and cultural enrichment.



## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

### Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to examine the lived experiences of band directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas regarding collaborative efforts between fine-arts music programs and the communities they serve to understand community partnerships further as they relate to music education advocacy. There are currently 13,491 school districts in the United States, a vast majority of which are either rural districts, comprising 7,156, or town districts, comprising 2,486.<sup>165</sup> Within New Mexico, 11% of the population are Native People residing on reservations, 54% are of Hispanic or Spanish heritage, 36% are Anglo, and undocumented persons are on the rise. According to Arlie Woodrum, “There are 89 school districts in New Mexico, with the majority located in small towns and rural communities.”<sup>166</sup> The study aimed to ascertain factors that may influence the use of community partnerships in music education and their effects on music education advocacy. Chapter Five begins with a summary of the findings, presented from the perspective of the themes that emerged during data analysis. It also discusses the theoretical and empirical implications; finally, the chapter ends with a discussion about the delimitations, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

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<sup>165</sup> Vincent C. Bates, “Thinking Critically about Rural Music Education,” *Visions of Research in Music Education* 32, (2018): 2.

<sup>166</sup> Arlie Woodrum, “Cultural Identity and Schooling in Rural New Mexico,” *Journal of Research in Rural Education* 24, no. 8 (2009): 3

## Discussion

Studies have examined the benefits of incorporating community partnerships within the arts; the data collection of community partnerships and music education advocacy in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas was limited. With the limited data collection in this rural area, few studies have investigated this methodology, especially within music education. In addition, few studies have considered factors that may influence an educator's decision to implement community partnerships as part of their music education advocacy practice. As community partnerships in music education are not new, few studies have explored music educators' perceptions, attitudes, knowledge, or experience with community partnerships in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. Understanding the music educator's perspective is crucial for a deeper and more meaningful insight into the factors that motivate them to integrate community partnerships into their teachings and music advocacy efforts. This study aimed to address the gap in the literature.

After thematic analysis of three data sources of interviews, journal entries, and follow-up interviews, five main themes aligned with the attributes of a successful innovation as outlined in Rogers' diffusion of innovation theory.<sup>167</sup> The following sections will interpret these themes and examine their implications for practice and their theoretical and empirical implications. The researcher provided recommendations for future research based on the delimitations and limitations of this study.

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<sup>167</sup> Ismail Sahin, "Detailed Review of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory and Educational Technology-Related Studies Based on Rogers' Theory," *TOJET the Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology* 5, no. 2 (2006): 15-16.

## **Interpretation of Findings**

This section begins with a summary of the six main thematic findings from the analysis of each data source. Next is an overview of the significant interpretations of themes, the importance of the innovation-decision process, and the core attributes outlined by Rogers in diffusion theory.<sup>168</sup> The data addressed the research questions through each participant's experiences with community partnerships in their respective areas.

### **Summary of Thematic Findings**

The following sections summarize the interpretations of the research findings. The first section interprets diffusion theory's value in examining band directors' experiences in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas regarding their experiences in community partnerships. Second is the interpretation of the themes discovered within the research data.

### **Value of Diffusion Theory**

This study applied the diffusion of innovation theory as the theoretical framework. It explored community partnerships from the perspective of music educators in rural areas based on Rogers' diffusion of innovation.<sup>169</sup> The interpretation of the study's findings confirmed two essential aspects of this theory. The first was the participants' awareness of the five stages of the innovation-decision process through their community partnerships.

The five stages of the innovation-decision process are knowledge, learning about the innovation and seeking information regarding benefits and implications; persuasion, beliefs towards the innovation; decision, engagement that leads to the acceptance/rejection of the

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<sup>168</sup> Shahzad Pashaeypoor et al., "Predicting the Adoption of Evidence-Based Practice using "Rogers Diffusion of Innovation Model," 87.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 86.

innovation, implementation, the application of the practice, and confirmation, evaluation of the innovations' influence and effectiveness throughout the research process magnified the importance of participants' knowledge and implementation of community partnerships within their respective areas as they relate to music education.<sup>170</sup> The experiences of the participants' involvement within their communities aided in the success of the musical experiences of students, staff, administration, and the community.

### **Themes**

Epstein's framework of the six types of involvement sets a framework that outlines six key areas through which schools can engage families and communities to support student learning and development.<sup>171</sup> The involvement includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community; Epstein's framework underscores the critical role of collaboration among schools, families, and communities in creating an environment that enhances students' educational experiences and outcomes. Epstein states, "Partners recognize their shared interests in and responsibilities for children, and they work together to create better programs and opportunities for students."<sup>172</sup> Implementing the six types of involvement enables music programs and school districts to build stronger relationships with families and communities, resulting in improved student achievement and overall school success. The data analysis uncovered the following themes through the lived experiences of music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas.

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<sup>170</sup> Shahzad Pashaeypoor et al., "Predicting the Adoption of Evidence-Based Practice using "Rogers Diffusion of Innovation Model," 86.

<sup>171</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share," *Phi Delta Kappan* 92, vol. 3 (2010): 85-86.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

### **Individual Community Involvement**

Refers to the music director being part of the community as a member rather than an instructional leader. Music directors learn the importance of becoming integral members of their communities by actively engaging in local activities and daily interactions. This engagement strengthens community bonds and fosters a sense of shared ownership and pride in the music programs. Music directors can better understand local needs and values by immersing themselves in the community creating more meaningful and impactful programs. This approach ensures that the music directors and the community members feel valued and recognized, leading to more successful and sustainable partnerships. This active involvement helps music directors build trust and rapport, which are crucial for the long-term success of community-based initiatives.

### **Community Cultural Support**

Participants emphasized the critical role of cultural support within the community, underscoring the importance of preserving and integrating cultural values and traditions into innovation efforts. The alignment of community cultural norms adds value and support to the growth and success of music programs in rural areas. Embedding cultural values into music programs fosters a sense of pride and ownership among residents, leading to increased participation and enthusiasm. This approach reflects the community's commitment to fostering a harmonious relationship between education and cultural heritage, embracing both as essential community development components. This approach to community development strengthens the community fabric and promotes a more inclusive and sustainable growth model.

**Mutual Respect**

Participants emphasized the importance of fostering an environment of mutual trust, understanding, and appreciation as encouragement for all stakeholders. The focus on mutual respect demonstrates proactive efforts to cultivate a culture of inclusivity, valuing diverse perspectives, and strengthening relationships to promote unity between music education and the community. This approach ensures that every individual feels heard and respected, which fosters a sense of belonging and engagement, strengthening relationships within the community and promoting unity between music education and the community.

**Community Communication**

Participants emphasized effective community communication efforts as essential for music programs' success. Clear and transparent communication facilitates the exchange of ideas, feedback, and information for all stakeholders, establishing clear communication channels for understanding and alignment, and it empowers all stakeholders to contribute insights and perspectives to strengthen bonds between education, culture, and community. Clear communication strengthens the bond between education, culture, and community, ensuring that music programs are developed within the community context by aligning the goals and activities of all stakeholders. Participants stressed the importance of using diverse communication strategies to reach the community, including social media, newsletters, and social events.

**Community Input**

Participants stressed the involvement of community members in decision-making and problem-solving to address the needs of music programs in rural areas; incorporating community inputs harnesses collective insights for impactful and sustainable innovations. By actively engaging community members in these processes, music programs can better reflect the

community's unique needs, preferences, and values. This involvement ensures that the programs are more relevant and likely to be embraced and supported by community members. Participants noted that this collaborative approach motivated community members to contribute actively to the success of the music programs. Participants emphasized that community involvement is beneficial and essential for music programs' long-term viability and success in rural areas.

### **Community Engagement**

Highlighting the active involvement of music programs within the community empowered all stakeholders to contribute to the innovative process. Cultivating collaboration and a sense of ownership for all stakeholders creates a sense of responsibility and investment, which leads to comprehensive and impactful innovations that address the needs and challenges of music programs in rural areas. Active community engagement helps develop substantive, lasting relationships between the music programs and the community. These relationships maintain support and ensure that the programs continue to evolve in ways that benefit all stakeholders. Epstein states, “A professional teacher knows how to work effectively with students, parents, other family members, community partners, and colleagues to promote student learning, positive attitudes, attendance, and other important outcomes.”<sup>173</sup> This proactive approach ensures that all families and communities can meaningfully contribute to and benefit from the educational process, ultimately enhancing student success and overall partnership effectiveness.

Music programs must actively cultivate and maintain diverse community partnerships to align goals and resources effectively, improving support for students, music programs, and the community.<sup>174</sup> Epstein states, “Teacher education on partnerships must take future teachers

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<sup>173</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, “Schools, Family, and Community Partnerships in Teachers' Professional Work.” *Journal of Education for Teaching: JET* 44, no. 3 (2018): 401.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

beyond routine communications with parents and learn to design and conduct goal-linked engagement activities for student learning in specific subjects.”<sup>175</sup> Following the themes through data collection, enforcing strong communications through the partnerships created mutual relationships where all stakeholders remain informed and engaged to improve educational outcomes.

Implementing Epstein’s Six Types of Involvement has several beneficial outcomes for stakeholders. Students experience improved academic performance, higher attendance rates, and enhanced motivation. At the same time, parents and community members become confident in supporting local education and music programs through effective communications and stronger ties within the community. These practices create a supportive, collaborative environment that builds stronger community partnerships in underserved areas. Masa Durisic and Mila Bunijevac state the following in this regard:

Effective parental involvement programs are built upon careful consideration of the unique needs of the community. In order to build trust, effective approaches to parent involvement rely upon a strength-based approach, emphasizing positive interactions. Though specifics may vary, all parent involvement programs share the goal of increasing parent-school collaboration in order to promote healthy child development and safe school communities.<sup>176</sup>

The common goal is to enhance collaborations between stakeholders to promote the development of music programs in rural areas. Epstein states, “Lack of attention to the requirements, documented and discussed throughout this issue, leaves future teachers unprepared to connect

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<sup>175</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, “Schools, Family, and Community Partnerships in Teachers’ Professional Work.” *Journal of Education for Teaching: JET* 44, no. 3 (2018): 402.

<sup>176</sup> Masa Durisic and Mila Bunijevac, “Parental Involvement as an Important Factor for Successful Education.” *CEPS Journal* 7, no. 3 (2017): 149.



with parents and community partners in goal-linked ways that contribute to student success in school.”<sup>177</sup>

### **Research**

This study, guided by two central research questions, aimed to investigate the usage of community partnerships as they relate to the success of secondary music education courses (band) in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The aim was to determine what factors may influence the usage of community partnerships to promote music education in rural areas.

#### **Central Research Question One**

*How does the culture/identity of the school or school district affect student involvement, retention, and attrition rates within fine arts music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas?*

Through conversation and data collection, participants determined that the culture and the identity of the surrounding community affected student involvement, retention, and attrition rates within music programs in rural areas. Participants found that the community’s identity, traditions, and collective values significantly affect students' retention in music programs. In communities where music forms an integral part of the community’s identity, students experienced a stronger sense of belonging and motivation to continue involvement in music education. The sense of identity fostered a supportive environment where music programs received encouragement from community members/leaders and enhanced opportunities for success. Communities that provided additional services for music programs, such as financial support in any capacity, created opportunities for students to engage in musical activities, which

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<sup>177</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, “Schools, Family, and Community Partnerships in Teachers' Professional Work,” 404.

provided local administrations with data regarding the importance of music education within the school system and respective communities.

Participants, however, stressed upon further discussion the previous experiences of the community not engaging in music programs. In such cases, attrition rates increased due to the limited resources provided by the school district or the community. The provision of limited resources by the school district and the respective community critically affects the sustainability and effectiveness of music programs. When school districts lack adequate funding for music materials, it becomes a challenge to maintain music programs. This impacts the student's ability to engage in the music curriculum.

### **Central Research Question Two**

*How does community involvement aid music advocacy or lifelong appreciation in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas?*

Participants stressed through data collection that community involvement is essential to music advocacy in rural areas. They also informed that community involvement that provides crucial support and resources leads to the sustainability and growth of music programs. In rural communities where arts education resources are often limited, active participation from community members and leaders is vital to the visibility of music programs. Community involvement offers financial and logistical support, pride, dedication, and ownership within the music programs, leading to increased advocacy efforts and initiatives. Community partnerships provide unique opportunities for students, including performances, mentorships, and access to local resources and expertise, enriching their musical and educational experiences. Community involvement catalyzes music advocacy in rural areas by reinforcing the values of music education as an integral part of the school and community identity.

## **Overlapping Spheres of Influence**

Community partnerships in rural areas involve collaboration between music organizations and the communities they serve to identify and pursue enhanced musical enrichment for students. These partnerships create a positive environment and foster camaraderie for all stakeholders. Epstein emphasizes that partnerships can improve school programs, provide family services and support, and enhance parental skills and leadership while connecting with the community.<sup>178</sup> Her model of the overlapping spheres of influence includes three primary external influences on student learning: family, school, and community. The model illustrates the relationships and success closely connected within these influences. Epstein's overlapping spheres of influence framework highlights the crucial role of community partnerships in rural areas. Partnerships create a supportive and enriched music program that promotes communication, mutual support, and engagement, supports learning beyond the classroom, and provides value to music education.

## **Theory of Human Development**

Bronfenbrenner's work highlights the importance of examining multiple environment layers and their interactions to understand development.<sup>179</sup> It demonstrates that development is a dynamic process influenced by various factors across different contexts and longevity. The framework illustrates how various environmental layers from various settings influence development; integrating these perspectives allows music directors in rural areas to interconnect music programs with the community to enhance success for all stakeholders.

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<sup>178</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share," *Phi Delta Kappan* 92, vol. 3 (2010): 81.

<sup>179</sup> Kristen Renn and Karen D. Arnold, "Reconceptualizing Research on College Student Peer Culture," *The Journal of Higher Education* 74, no. 3 (2003): 268.

Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development and Epstein's theory on six types of involvement stress the importance of relationships and the need to evolve; he focuses on the reciprocal relationships within and among environmental systems and examines how particular events affect development, whereas where Epstein highlights the significance of positive connections for robust community engagement.<sup>180,181</sup> Both theories stress the importance of collaboration and strong relationships in fostering educational success. Community partnerships reflect these principles by bringing together stakeholders to create an environment of success. By integrating insights from both theories, community partnerships can better address the diverse needs of students and enhance the overall well-being and academic success of music programs in rural areas.

### **Implications for Practice**

The research and results of the study provided significant evidence that community partnership aids in the success of secondary music programs and bands within rural areas of Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. Future studies should include previous research regarding rural schools within the designated area, the number of students within the school, the percentage of those students involved in music programs, and information regarding community commitment to create a questionnaire/survey to provide to music directors. According to Bates, "The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) shows that 18.4% of all students live in rural areas and 11.4% live in towns, with 5% percent of all students living in places considered remote about metropolitan centers."<sup>182</sup> Based on national information on rural areas and their

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<sup>180</sup> Edinete Maria Rosa and Jonathan Tudge, "Urie Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Human Development: Its Evolution from Ecology to Bioecology," 246.

<sup>181</sup> Joyce L. Epstein, "School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Caring for the Children We Share," *Phi Delta Kappan* 92, vol. 3 (2010): 85-86.

<sup>182</sup> Vincent C. Bates, "Thinking Critically about Rural Music Education," 2.

commitments to music course availability within secondary schools, future practice and studies should compare national averages to areas of study. The results and details could further data collection and understanding of the effects and implications of community partnerships within rural areas as they relate to different aspects of music education.

### **Limitations**

According to the initial research topic proposal, the research focused on data collection based on factors that create successful music programs in rural areas in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. Limitations of the study may include the sample size within the selected region, unintentional biases from participants' responses, and time constraints. Out of the 300 surveys that were initially released, only twenty-two responded and participated. In addition, the data did not reflect on monetary funding sources provided by the school district or those provided by community partnerships.

Each participant shared their lived experiences concerning community partnerships in rural areas. All participants were allowed a follow-up interview to add information or change their perspective on the original questionnaire; no participant wished to change or further their responses. Lastly, all participants exceeded the age of eighteen.

The researcher distributed surveys and questionnaires to 300 school music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The data reflects twenty-two respondents with no response on whether or not the schools were considered Title I districts. In addition, the study should have included the population of the school's student body and the population of the community it serves. Researchers recognize that every approach has its strengths and limitations, representing variations. The challenges inherent to a hermeneutic phenomenological study include the sample size, lack of context in participants' narratives, and emphasis on

phenomenological themes over emergent participant-specific themes. Researchers accept these distinctions and argue that perceived limitations result from perspectives misaligned with phenomenological principles.<sup>183</sup>

### **Recommendations**

Researchers who seek information regarding community partnerships in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas will find that limited resources are available, however, information regarding the topic of community partnerships in rural areas is widely available. Researchers, therefore, must expand the field of knowledge through further research to increase the sample size, including all rural schools in New Mexico and West Texas. There are limited studies regarding music programs and community partnerships in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas to bridge the gap in research. In addition, opening the literature to include bands, choirs, orchestras, and other performing ensembles in elementary and secondary courses and their participation in community partnerships within low and high-socioeconomic school districts should offer more insight into data collection.

Elpus and Abril state that the U.S. Department of Education reveals that 94% of elementary and 91% of secondary schools nationwide offer music education, however, the availability and access to music programs vary significantly among communities. Schools in high-poverty areas are less likely to provide music instruction, with only 81% of the lowest socioeconomic status schools offering instruction, compared to 96% of the highest socioeconomic schools providing instruction.<sup>184</sup> Researchers found that the “presence,

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<sup>183</sup> Helen Stephenson, David Giles, and Kerry Bissaker, “The Power of Hermeneutic Phenomenology in Restoring the Centrality of Experiences in Work-Integrated Learning,” *International Journal of Work – Integrated Learning* 19, no. 3 (2018): 270.

<sup>184</sup> Kenneth Elpus and Carlos R. Abril, “Who Enrolls in High School Music? A National Profile of U.S. Students, 2009-2013,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 67, no. 3 (2009): 324.

prevalence, and funding” of music programs differ based on a school’s status as a public, private, or charter, the socioeconomic status of the school community, and the student body’s demographics.<sup>185</sup> Researchers should significantly examine how rural school districts obtain and allocate funding and identify the types of funding sources accessed for purchasing and fulfilling FTE positions. Lastly, further studies should include the retention rate of students as they reflect on the FTE of music teachers or music course availability. Expanding knowledge of school source funding, retention/attrition rates, and community partnership commitments for larger rural areas should close the gap in the literature.

### Summary

Research has provided details on community partnerships related to the successes and longevity of music programs in rural areas. Community partnerships create a connection between music programs and the culture/identity of the surrounding community, enhance creativity collaborations, and increase dedication to music education, ensuring that all stakeholders have an opportunity to thrive. Students deepen their understanding of social responsibilities by engaging in a musical community. The involvement empowers students and community members/leaders to benefit from shared responsibilities. However, there is a gap in the literature that addresses community partnerships in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas; consistent superior ratings and community involvement from the designated areas provide details on the successes of these music programs in band, choir, orchestra, and mariachi. Lesniak states, “Low socioeconomic students and schools face many issues, including lack of access, resources, and

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<sup>185</sup> Kenneth Elpus and Carlos R. Abril, “Who Enrolls in High School Music? A National Profile of U.S. Students, 2009-2013,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 67, no. 3 (209): 324.

supplemental enrichment required for students to gain equity in music education ensembles. Community organizations can help support access growth within public schools through strategic partnerships to create new community support networks for programs in the highest need communities and schools.”<sup>186</sup> These collaborations advocate for policy change and potentially increase funding at local and state levels, ensuring recognition of music education as a vital component of the curriculum. Through these efforts, community partnerships bridge the gap to cultivate a music appreciation and education culture that empowers all stakeholders involved.

The research question examined how the school district’s culture and identity influence student involvement, retention, and attrition rates in fine arts music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. This study aimed to determine how community cultural values impact the success and sustainability of music education programs. The collected data indicated that community culture directly reflects the importance of music programs within the respective areas. In communities that highly value music education, student participation in music programs increased. The involvement stems from the community’s active support of music education, fostering pride and belonging. The data revealed that communities emphasizing music education experience higher retention rates within their music programs; students are more likely to continue participation, benefiting from consistent and enriching music education. This continuity is essential for developing advanced skills and fostering long-term commitments to the arts.

Additionally, the research showed that communities prioritizing music see significantly lower attrition rates within their music programs due to the support and motivation provided by peers, administration, and community leaders. The study highlighted the influence of community cult, identity, and school culture and identity on the success of fine arts music programs. By

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<sup>186</sup> Melissa Lesniak, “Establishing String Outreach Programs for Long-Term Success and Impact.” *American String Teacher* 67, no. 4 (2017): 23.



recognizing cultural values that support music education, school districts can implement strategies to enhance student involvement, improve retention rates, and reduce attrition. As Reist states, “The era of advocacy is just ginning for supporters of the arts, and it must be the responsibility of all members of the music profession along with their colleagues in the other arts to do everything possible to ensure that future generations be allowed to ‘grow up complete.’”<sup>187</sup> The research question also examined how community involvement aids music advocacy or lifelong appreciation in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. Data collected from participants identified the critical role of community engagement in supporting music advocacy in rural areas. Participants emphasized that active community involvement provides essential support and resources, ensuring the sustainability and growth of music programs.

Community involvement offers a range of benefits, including financial and logistical support through various means, including fundraising, donations, and volunteer activities. Collective investments enhance advocacy efforts and initiatives to promote and improve music education. Communities that reinforce the value of music education within the community identity send powerful messages about the importance of the arts; this cultural reinforcement ensures that music education is valued and prioritized, encouraging students to develop a lifelong appreciation for music.

For the music director who wishes to understand community partnerships within their area further, understand that the task may be daunting and demands strategic planning, effective communication, and sustained collaboration. Building these partnerships involves engaging with stakeholders and clearly articulating the mutual benefits of cooperation. Successful partnerships leverage shared resources, including funding, venues, expertise, and feedback. By fostering

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<sup>187</sup> Joan Reist, “Music in the Community,” *The American Music Teacher* 42, no. 6 (1993): 50.

strong community partnerships, music educators create a supportive network that enriches students' musical experiences and cultivates values that support the arts. As scripture states in Ezra 10:4-5 (King James Version), "Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: be of good courage, and do it. Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel swear that they should do according to this word."

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: IRB Approval

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

## INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

November 29, 2023

Joseph Flores  
Nathan Street

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-591 Community Partnerships for Music Education in Rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas

Dear Joseph Flores, Nathan Street,

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

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

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

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

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

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

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

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP**  
*Administrative Chair*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix B: Consent Form

**Consent****Title of the Project:**

Community Partnerships for Music Education in Rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas

**Principal Investigator:**

Joseph Manuel Flores,  
 Doctoral Candidate,  
 School of Music, Liberty University

<b>Invitation to be Part of a Research Study</b>
--

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be:

- must hold a teaching license in music or a minimum of a bachelor of music degree from an accredited university.
- must teach secondary band in a rural area.
- must be a head band director or assistant band director.
- must teach secondary band (7th-12th grade) in Eastern New Mexico or West Texas.
- must be classified as a "small school" (1A-4A) by the New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA) or the University Interscholastic League (UIL).

Participants ineligibility criteria include:

- must not be a long-term substitute or education assistant.
- must not teach in a school classified as 5A/6A as designated by their respective accrediting association.
- must not hold a primary teaching license or degree in music.

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

<b>What is the study about and why is it being done?</b>
--

The purpose of the study is to investigate collaboration efforts between fine-arts music programs and the communities they serve in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas. The following will focus on rural music educators' processes of creating an environment of active learning that increases student participation and retention within the fine arts (band).

<b>What will happen if you take part in this study?</b>
---

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

1. Complete a pre-questionnaire (word document) provided by the researcher: 15 minutes
2. Complete an audio- and video-recorded or an interview questions word document provided by the researcher: 45 minutes
3. Review interview transcript for accuracy, if needed
4. Post-questionnaire (word document) provided by the researcher: 20 minutes

#### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study may include learning benefits that may help in the understanding of how to build and maintain community partnerships, the ability to analyze personal stance on community partnerships, the effects of community partnerships, and reflect on the need for community partnerships.

Benefits to society include public knowledge on building and maintaining community partnerships in rural areas. Improved identity outcomes regarding community partnerships in rural areas.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

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

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

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Participant responses to the pre- and post-interview questionnaires will be kept confidential. Participant responses in interviews will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

Data collected from you may be used in future research studies and shared with other researchers. If data collected from you is reused or shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed beforehand. Data will be stored on a private encrypted hard

drive that will be locked away in a secure location that is only accessible to the researcher. Data will be retained for three years before being destroyed.

Interview recordings will be stored on a private encrypted hard drive that will be locked away in a secure location that is only accessible to the researcher. Data will be retained for three years. The researcher and members of the doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

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

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

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

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

The researcher conducting this study is: **Joseph Manuel Flores**. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, **Dr. Nathan Street**, at [REDACTED].

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

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

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

**Your Consent**

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

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

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

## Appendix C: Verbal Recruitment Form

Hello Participants,

As a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Music at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate of Music Education. The purpose of my research is to understand how the culture/identity of the school or school district affects student involvement, retention, and attrition rates within fine-arts music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas and how community involvement aids music advocacy or lifelong appreciation in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, must hold a teaching license in music or a minimum of a bachelor of music degree from an accredited university, must teach secondary band in a rural area, must be a head band director or assistant band director, must teach secondary band (7th-12th grade) in Eastern New Mexico or West Texas, and must be classified as a "small school" (1A-4A) by the New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA) or the University Interscholastic League (UIL). Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a pre-questionnaire Word document provided by the researcher (15 minutes), complete interview questions Word document or verbal interview (45 minutes), and complete a post-questionnaire Word document (20 minutes). If needed, participants will be asked to review the transcripts of their interviews for accuracy. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

Would you like to participate?

Great, can I get your email address so that I can send you the consent document? Can we set up a time for an interview?

No, I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document will be sent to you shortly. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me via email.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

## Appendix D: Email Recruitment Form

Dear Participants:

As a Doctoral Student in the School of Music at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Music Education degree. The Purpose of my research is to understand how the culture/identity of the school or school district affects student involvement, retention, and attrition rates within fine-arts music programs in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas and how community involvement aid music advocacy or lifelong appreciation in Eastern New Mexico and West Texas, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, must hold a teaching license in music or a minimum of a bachelor of music degree from an accredited university, must teach secondary band in a rural area, must be a head band director or assistant band director, must teach secondary band (7th-12th grade) in Eastern New Mexico or West Texas, and must be classified as a "small school" (1A-4A) by the New Mexico Activities Association (NMAA) or the University Interscholastic League (UIL). Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete a pre-questionnaire Word document provided by the researcher (15 minutes), complete interview questions Word document or verbal interviews (45 minutes), and complete a post-questionnaire Word document (20 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please complete the attached consent form and return by emailing it to me (Joseph Manuel Flores). Contact me at [REDACTED]. For more information or to schedule a video/phone interview.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,  
Joseph Manuel Flores  
Doctoral Candidate, School of Music, Liberty University

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



## Appendix E: Preliminary Screening Process

## Screening Process:

1. Name:
2. Years of Teaching:
3. Current Degree or Teaching License Level:
4. Are you a Head Band Director or an Assistant Band Director:
5. Do you teach in a secondary band setting:
6. Do you teach in a rural area:
7. Do you teach in Eastern New Mexico or West Texas:
8. Age:
9. Ethnicity:
10. School Classification as stated by your respective organization:
11. Number of Members in High School Band:

## Appendix F: Director Pre-Questionnaire and Interview Questionnaire

### **Pre-Questionnaire:**

1. Which of the following best defines a community partnership in the context of music education?
2. How do you think community partnerships can benefit music education programs in this region?
3. In your opinion, what are the most important factors for successful community partnerships in music education programs?
4. Which of the following best describes the role of community leaders in developing successful community partnerships with music education programs?
5. How can music education programs effectively communicate their needs and goals to community organizations when developing partnerships?

### **Interview Questions:**

1. How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?
2. How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?
3. How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?
4. What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

5. What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

## Appendix G: Transcripts

### Interview Questions: Burk

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- For me there are several very easy ways to develop that relationship. Almost every large company has water bottles with their name on them. Asking them to donate enough water for the band for a game (or more than one game) is the easiest method I've run across. In return, announce the name of the business and the name of the manager as Corporate Sponsors of the XYZ Band this week. Same works with snacks for after the half. In our area, United Supermarkets is a great partner for these. Gebos is willing to support as well. Another great way is to sell small vinyl banners to local businesses. The banners are relatively expensive and if you revisit the same vendors who purchased in year 1, you have no expense in year two. Hang the banners on the chain link fence either in front of the band or on the way to the concession stand. Be sure that the banner reads that these businesses are sponsoring the band.

How can music directors successfully incorporate input and feedback into their music education program?

- The very best way is to put out a digital feedback form. Ask the questions that YOU want the answers to. Ask a question about areas for improvement but limit the answer choices to items that are feasible and affordable. This sort of feedback is best gained by posting a QR code at every concert or booster meeting. You won't get all positive feedback, and that's OK. Read the negative comments and give them their due diligence but focus on things that will truly jump start student performance.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- This is a little harder to make a case. One great way is to make yourself available to the local radio station for their "around town" programming. Every station has a program like this. In my community it is called town talk. Any time you have an upcoming event, call them for a chance to be on the radio. In that medium, you can talk about how important local businesses are in supporting the curriculum. If you purchase a piece of software, let the community know that XYZ business donated money that went to that use.

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- While it is not feasible to perform at every grocery store or gas station opening, there are myriad opportunities to put your program in a good light throughout the year. Beginning of the year open house at the school, incoming student tours at the school, playing at the local senior center for Christmas all come to mind. If there is a local spring, summer, or fall festival, that is a great place to show up and play a couple of tunes. Nobody will remember what you played or for how long, but they will remember that the band showed up.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education?

- The passive answer is that the leaders of these organizations are the movers and shakers in the community. Get their support and you will have improved relationships with administrators at the campus and district level without special effort from you. They will notice that you are out and about and will say something in passing to the superintendent. That's the best support you can get. The more active answer is more elusive, but not unreasonable to accomplish. Visit with those folks around town. You tell them about the support you get from administration so that they will parrot that back to your principal or superintendent. The take-away on this question to me is just this. NEVER criticize your administration publicly. ALWAYS brag about the support you get. Be grateful for the support you have if you would like it to grow.

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- This is the most important question you have asked. In urban communities, this is not really a factor because people are loyal to THEIR high school and its students. In rural communities, the school is the center of the community identity. The band needs to be the heartbeat of the community. You want people to refer to your program as OUR BAND. OUR BAND always supports the community. OUR BAND always plays Song XYZ at the beginning of the fourth quarter. OUR BAND always stays after the game and plays while folks leave the stadium at home games. OUR KIDS LOVE BAND. Some easy ways to foster that support: Give every family two car window stickers to put on their cars. You will lose money on this, but the return is incredible. It has always been my goal to have a Band Decal on every car in town. Give parents a few to sell for \$5. Ask local businesses if you can put a band decal in their window. Branding and selling your program are more important now than ever in the history of public school band. OUR BAND is the best!

## Appendix G: Transcripts

### Interview Questions: Carr

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- We participate with a local car club who organizes an annual car show that's promotes our band program. Part of their proceeds goes directly to our band booster organization another portion goes towards 2 graduating seniors (one being specifically a band student.) Our students are also involved in optional church performances, parades, and performances at the local Boys and Girls Club.

How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?

- Our boosters come up with feedback on how to fundraise for the band program. We have multiple fundraisers that help promote what we are doing throughout the year.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- The car club car show scholarships help encourage students that band is an important part of their education. The band performs a concert for the community the opening day of the car show promoting the band students.  
We have also had performances at the local Boys and Girls Club. The students get excited when they know they are going to show off their skills to students younger than they are. This helps the students practice and prepare for a purpose. In our local parades our band program is first in the lineup because our community has asked us to participate. This creates a sense of community because the students feel important that they are the ones that will lead the community event.

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- The music director's role is the giving the students the opportunity to perform in the community in multiple community events. Our students have met and seen many important people in our community by being involved in the car show performances, community parades, and church performance events.

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- Being involved within the community helps the students feel valued because we get multiple opportunities to be seen. They feel a sense of pride that they are wanted at community events.

## Appendix G: Transcripts

### Interview Questions: John

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- Being that I am in a pretty rural area, there really are not many community organizations here let alone community organizations to partner with. We have a mutually beneficial relationship with the Morton Lion's Club for the Christmas Concert. The Lion's Club holds an annual pancake supper in conjunction with the K-12 Christmas Concert. The student's get a free meal since they are the entertainment for the supper. It brings in an audience for the concert and it brings in people to help support the Lion's Club.

How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?

- This goes with understanding your community and what it is they desire for their children to learn. In rural areas, communities will look at your program as their own and everyone will have their own opinion on how it should be run and what should be taught. Once you can start incorporating community expectation you can then start adding your expectations to have a full service music program. If you do it well, you will be able to incorporate your ideas and make it look like it is what your community wanted the whole time. Incorporating community ideas and suggestions, within reason, gives the community investment and ownership in your program which leads to greater support and involvement in you program.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- For me, partnering with community organizations can lead to better funding or performance opportunities. As for driving the curricula, it really does not for me.

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- In rural areas, the band director is probably the only or one of a very few music experts in that area. A lot of times the music director is the only one guiding students and the community in anything educationally musical. Teaching music in a rural area where the arts do not really exist takes an understanding of what the community is looking for and what is important to them. You have to have buy-in from not just the students and the school but also the parents and the community at large. This is a big factor in the success or failure of a music program. If you are not fostering community with your largest stakeholders, the parents and the community at large, it does not take long for a program to die.

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- Community involvement makes or breaks a program. Yes, you can try to be successful without the community behind you and supporting you but it will be an uphill battle the entire way and at the end of the day you still may not be successful. In a rural area, the

community has to feel and believe you are one of them and want the same things they do. If they feel you are an outsider, they are resistant to help because they feel you are changing things without their approval.



## Appendix G: Transcripts

### Interview Questions: BJ

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- Music directors throughout the area work with their communities through programs such as the Chamber of Commerce, Lions Club, Rotary Club, or Salvation Army to further music education by providing performance opportunities for ensembles. These community entities or others like local businesses, banks, etc. will sometimes support the ensemble by providing donations of volunteer work, supplies, or other fundraising opportunities. West Texas and New Mexico communities have several traditions around certain times each year where music directors and ensembles will work to provide entertainment around their communities--football games, Veteran's Day, Christmas caroling, and holiday concerts.

How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?

- Music directors can incorporate feedback from the community by listening to input on what repertoire to perform for various events. A director could have the student body vote on what selections the pep band would play for a sporting event.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- These partnerships with the community provide extra performance opportunities that expose students to music they wouldn't normally get to play in a scholastic band setting. I have had small student groups perform as brass quintets, tuba choirs, drumline, and once as a jazz combo for a community event. These types of performances are usually not too far off from what a professional level gig would be like. I have seen how student skill level develops the more often they are put in performance situations like this.

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- I believe that since most music ensembles are run through local school districts that music directors should seek out these types of community partnerships. I view providing music for the community as the band or choir's way of giving back. These music performances also serve as a way for students to get connected to their communities in unique ways. Music directors play a role in maintaining these events as yearly traditions, or seeking out new opportunities to serve their community with music.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- These partnerships can also benefit music education curricula through financial donations. For example, the band booster parent organization could collect donations from local businesses for advertisements at marching band performances. These financial donations go on to provide further opportunities through funding performance trips or the purchase of new instruments.

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- The community has the responsibility of advocating for the success of music programs in their community. The community furthers the quality of music education by offering those unique performance opportunities for students. The community also plays a role in supporting the longevity of programs like small school bands. This area has several music education programs that have history going back decades, and the community should work to ensure that these opportunities continue to be available for their students. Community members can advocate to school boards or other school leaders on behalf of their music directors to show their support.

## Appendix G: Transcripts

### Interview Questions: Kim

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- We perform when/wherever asked in the community. We have performed for the SE district superintendent conference held in Dexter, rural ag extension/co-op meetings, town celebrations, youth league athletic programs, state fair parades, etc... This has always been in an effort to promote our program and give back/partner with the community.

How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?

- Being a rural school/community we are very tight knot. We listen to each other, support each other's business' and programs, in return when they offer suggestions or specific music or ways I can help them through my program I respond positively. We fundraise in our community, so I tell my kids we owe it to the community to help out where we can. I require my music students to perform community service as well.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- Because of their support I am able to purchase the music and equipment I need for our music department.

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- Again, by playing everywhere and anywhere asked if possible. Primarily through our concerts, and performances at school games/activities. When we have a state playoff game we will run a parade through town for the whole community to participate in, community bonfires with the fire department at the helm/band/cheer/and the team. We treat our town and programs like they are our family.

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- By being as visible in the community as possible, our community is very supportive in the success of our program. There have been times over the years when program cuts have taken place, but the music program has never been touched because of the support from the community. We had a couple of times that we didn't have the money for away games and the community stepped up and made sure we attended because it means that much to the teams and community. It isn't easy being a director in a small school, you teach multiple classes (when I first started I had 1-12 grade music, band, and choir. Through a grant we hired a second teacher for the elementary music program. I have taught Drama, Driver's Ed, and now have 2 Crafting classes in addition to MS-HS Band and Choir. You do what you need to do for the students, but as long as you have the community supporting you like ours do, you can't ask for anything better. Our kids still have generational supervision, great morals and values because in a small town everyone

knows each other, takes care of each other, and lets parents know if they see their kiddos doing something wrong. We may not always have full instrumentation, but the support, dedication, and fun the community/kiddos bring to the table makes every second worth the challenges.

## Appendix G: Transcripts

### Interview Questions: MJA

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- One of the primary ways we have built and maintained relationships with the local community organizations is through participation within the community. When we lived in the neighboring city (Lubbock), we maintained a bank account at both local banks, ate at the local restaurants and shopped locally. After we moved into the community we began attending church in town. Other ways to establish and build partnerships is through membership in local Lion's Club organizations or local volunteer fire departments.

How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?

- Directors should consider the demographic of their community when choosing public musical selections. For example, the most common places people experience the local band is in marching band. If directors choose music that will appeal to "Joe Q. Public," he will be more likely to support the band in the future. Talking, shaking hands, visiting with the people of the community will give the opportunity for people to recommend what they would like to hear. One of the best ways to utilize input from the community is simply to ask questions and not be afraid to implement or to give the recommendations a try. In doing so, one must be mindful of which ideas to try. Time has a way of perfecting memories.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- When working with organizations within the community, music programs will often be invited to participate in special days/occasions. This allows the directors of the programs to educate the students on the social/cultural significance of the organization as well as perform literature appropriate to said occasion. For example, our band and elementary music programs are invited to participate in the local Veteran's Day celebration. We take this opportunity to discuss pride and patriotism as well as learn music appropriate to military/veteran occasions. The students see our local American Legion perform flag ceremonies as well as the MIA rituals.

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- First and foremost, one must define community-a sense of oneness or togetherness. The primary way a music director plays a part in community is through continuity. If the director stays in the same rural setting for any amount of time, he/she will begin to have siblings and second generations. Everyone loves to reminisce about "the good ol' days," and a welcoming band hall allows those in the community who are former program members to come in and remember easier, happier times, times before "adult-ing." Additionally, if the director is a member of the community (running down to the John Deere house or the local restaurant for a cup of coffee) becoming visible and

approachable, a huge door is opened to community relations. No other organization in school works with such a diverse group of students. Music programs bridge the gap between the different interest groups. If the music director is a member of the community, people from all walks of life can be included in the directors' circle in turn allowing the music organization access to all of these groups and the benefits/support that comes with that.

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- The community supports what they feel involved in. If the band performs on Friday night at the football game, "everyone" can lay claim to "our band." If the band performs music appealing to the fans in the stands, those same fans will vocally and financially support the program. If the director steers the performing group into the role of "hierarchical" performance and does not meet the community where it is, the community will not feel a part or take any ownership in the organization. If community members feel welcome to when attending events and comfortable approaching the director, they will be more likely to support bonds, fundraising programs, travel, etc. It is absolutely necessary to get the community involved in the local music programs or they will eventually be starved of support. Continuity with the director, bringing in alumni, promoting opportunities for people to reminisce about when they were the ones performing, programming of music to highlight the culture/interests of the community all allow people to be part of something larger than themselves-everything from providing desserts for the fundraiser to the banker sponsoring travel shirts.

## Appendix G: Transcripts

### Interview Questions: PT

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- As a band director in rural NE NM, I established relationships with area organizations such as Kiwanis Club, Rotary, Maverick Rodeo Association, Vietnam Veteran's Memorial, local restaurants and churches. I would contact those entities and offer to present sort concerts (30 min. max) in order to showcase our students and the program. This was especially important when I first created the band program in Cimarron. I had band programs in 3 schools. The school district encompasses approximately 425 square miles and includes about 6 rural communities. Over the years I made a point to reach out to each organization. After a performance, I would send a thank you note for the opportunity to perform. When it came time to fundraise for our program, I made sure to send students to those groups. Again, I would make a phone call or send thank you notes for the support of our bands. I would also write newspaper or social media articles heralding the band's successes and listing supporting entities. Communication is key!

How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?

- Again, communication is key. If there was a certain type of performance requested, I would prepare a performance to suite the need. Example: Christmas music for a church Christmas Program. Patriotic music for Veteran's Day programs. The type of performance drove my curriculum and became integral to my lesson planning. Sometimes, a performance would be with a whole band, but most often, a brass choir or small woodwind ensemble would play.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- See above. Also, these performances are easily a part of the anchor standards re: analyzing and interpreting artistic work, developing and refining artistic techniques. (NM AS #4) Certain performances, such as Veteran's and Christmas programs fit under the anchor standard regarding relating artistic ideas with societal, cultural and historic context which deepen understanding for the student. (NM AS #11)

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- Most of the time, a concert or other public performance brings members of the community together in support of students. Performing for a local service organization ties the youth of a community to older members of the community in showcasing their work and talent. Providing background music for a reception, dinner, wedding, church service brings an emotional element to the public that would be absent without that performance.

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- I found that the financial support that ensued from reaching out and providing music as a service to the community was substantial! Being there for the community meant that they were there for us. A successful music program becomes a matter of pride for the community, ESPECIALLY in rural settings. I feel it's important to continually keep the students in the public eye.



## Appendix G: Transcripts

### Interview Questions: Riq

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- We have the unique situation of the community being well knit so it is easier to reach out to community members for help with whatever is needed. However, with our population being so small there is a limited number of organizations that exist within the community. We do have to venture out further from home to surrounding communities with higher populations to provide students with more opportunities to enhance their music education. My school has a great relationship with Eastern New Mexico University. Our band students have visited the campus and music department multiple times this academic year.

How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?

- As a high school music program, a lot of what we do is for community entertainment. During the fall we perform a marching show every Friday during football season, and then have a winter concert. In the spring we have our concert band performances. When selecting repertoire for these ensembles there are many different factors that contribute to the final decision. First and foremost is student buy-in. We have to make sure that the students are going to enjoy what they are doing. With that being said community input is also taken into consideration as they are the people supporting our students. Community feedback can influence certain aspects of the program but it will never be the top factor in running a music program. There has to be a balance between what the students want, what the students need, and what the community would like to see.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- Students participating in different activities and events held by community organizations provide a learning environment that is different from what they are accustomed to. Having students participate in community bands/ensembles gets them in front of a different director with different experiences and teaching strategies. It is a way for students to receive different instruction in a way that may not necessarily seem like it is a class for them.

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- Band is like a melting pot of students. There are students of many different walks of life that come together to make music every day in an ensemble. As band directors we welcome all students with open arms and encourage them to be their honest and true selves. Making sure that all students are welcome and included helps to create the sense of community and family, both in and out of the music classroom.

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- Community involvement comes in different forms. There are community members who provide hands-on support by helping with uniform fittings, band meals, or even chaperoning trips. Other community members are simply supportive audience members. Both forms of community involvement play a large role in keeping students motivated.

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### Interview Questions: Sara

How do music directors in rural Eastern New Mexico and West Texas establish and maintain partnerships with local community organizations to promote music education in schools?

- For me, I do a lot of social media outreach and also utilize my booster organization to make connections. We reach out to local companies for sponsorships and this allows us to get the message out about what we do and why it is important. I am also very active on the band's social media account and share as much as possible about what the students are doing through the band program. I self-promote!

How can music directors successfully incorporate community input and feedback into their music education programs?

- When I started at my current school, the community opinion was very strong and community members were not even a little bit shy about sharing their opinions about the band I was inheriting. This gave me a good gauge of what the community liked and disliked and allowed me to plan for the upcoming season with a good plan in place to make positive change. I had my own ideas, and those are very different than what I walked into. I have been able to input my plans for the good of the program and the community feedback now is very positive.

How do partnerships with community organizations help to enhance music education curricula?

- Especially in regard to marching band, there are many aspects of the show that would not be possible without the support of the sponsors and community. Without that partnership, many elements of the marching shows would not be possible.

What role do music directors play in fostering a sense of community through music education in rural areas?

- The band needs to be very present in the community, positively, as much as possible. We are our own recruiters, promoters, and "hype men." Every opportunity there is for the band to be present, I try to get us out there. The community is very grateful for the band being present and understands the importance of the band in various activities throughout the district. It also helps recruit the younger students to want to join band and see what all the fun is about!

What role does community involvement play in the success of music education programs in rural areas?

- If the community is pleased with what is happening, they will encourage and support. They will also push for even more support of the band/music education because they recognize the positives it brings to the students and community. If the community is displeased, there can be dire consequences, especially in a small rural community.