

MUSIC ENSEMBLES AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

by

NICHOLE LAUREN MAYES

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN MUSIC EDUCATION

2026

Oakland University
Rochester, Michigan

Doctoral Advisory Committee:

Elizabeth Kattner, PhD., Chair
Deborah J. VanderLinde, Ph.D., Co-Chair
Lauri Hogle, Ph.D.
Michael Mitchell, D.M.A.

© Copyright by Nichole Lauren Mayes 2026
All rights reserved

*To my family: Steve, Nora, Alex, and Theo
This would not have been a possibility without you.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Deborah VanderLinde, I appreciate your passion, dedication, and knowledge more than I can describe. You helped me discover new possibilities in my teaching, and I'm forever grateful for you.

A huge thank you to Lauri Hogle for your joyous and enthusiastic support, which helped me recapture my courage to keep moving when I felt stuck.

Thank you to all at Oakland University who have been part of this journey with me: my committee, professors, and my doctoral cohort: Lauri Hogle, Liz Kattner, Mike Mitchell, Deb VanderLinde, Kevin Czarnik, and Jason Rose.

Thank you to all of my colleagues, especially those who teach music with me: Drew Shankles, Jeff McCoy, Eric LaNoue, Joe Lewin-Ziegler, and Jeff Nelson. I'm grateful to work alongside such incredible musicians and teachers.

Endless gratitude to Anthony Reeves, one of my biggest cheerleaders. Your steady support and understanding are what helped me finish this degree, and your friendship is one of my greatest joys.

And finally, thank you to my students, past and present, who inspire me every day to be the best teacher I can be. I'm honored to be part of your musical journey.

Nichole Lauren Mayes

ABSTRACT

MUSIC ENSEMBLES AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

by

Nichole Lauren Mayes

Adviser: Elizabeth Kattner, Ph.D., Chair
Deborah J. VanderLinde, Ph.D., Co-Chair

This qualitative study investigates the role of music ensemble repertoire selection in the formation of musical identity in high school students. I acted as a teacher-researcher (Kincheloe, 2003) in a constructivist, culturally responsive music classroom (Brooks & Brooks, 2001; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 2021; McKoy & Lind, 2023; Wiggins, 2015). Literature on culturally responsive music classrooms has previously focused almost exclusively on popular music, as well as culturally relevant music for specific minority student populations that do not match my own student population (Davis, 2016; Green, 2011; Hess, 2019; McKoy & Lind, 2023; Shaw, 2020). I was curious about the differences for my own students: how does incorporating my students' cultures into our music ensembles relate to their identities as musicians? How does that further affect their learning?

Using a sample of students from two ensembles, a choir and an orchestra, I collected data from interviews, surveys, recorded rehearsals, and classroom assignments. Contrary to my initial expectation that culturally responsive repertoire selection would directly influence musical identity, the findings from my research illustrate how

individual mindset, collective culture, and learning experiences, as well as repertoire selection, all affect students' musical identities. I also identified a part of culturally responsive teaching which I have called intellectually responsive teaching. While culturally responsive teaching in the music classroom allows for a much richer, deeper, and more significant experience for all students, intellectually responsive teaching in the music classroom allows for celebratory and exploratory experiences, challenge and rigor, and joy in making music.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
CHAPTER ONE	
INTRODUCTION	1
Need for the Study	2
CHAPTER TWO	
LITERATURE REVIEW	4
Constructivism	4
Holistic View of Teaching and Learning	4
Multiple Perspectives	5
Individual	6
Social	7
Schema Theory	8
Metaphor Theory	9
Zone of Proximal Development	11
Scaffolding	12
Flow	14
Experience and Learning	15
Authentic Experiences	15
Contextual Experiences	16

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Problems for Learning	17
Student-Centered	17
Active Learning	19
Metacognition	20
Agency	22
Cultures of Thinking	24
Visible Thinking Routines	24
Classroom Expectations	25
Language	25
Time	26
Modeling	26
Opportunities	27
Interactions	28
Classroom Environment	28
Culturally Responsive Teaching	29
Culture	29
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	30
Qualitative Characteristics	31
Diversity	34
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	35
Three Components of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy	36

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Identity	37
Wenger’s Communities of Practice	38
Negotiated Experience	39
Community Membership	39
Learning Trajectory	39
Nexus of Multimembership	40
Relation Between the Local and Global	40
Classificatory Systems	40
Difference	41
Culture in Identity	41
Social Processes	41
Musical Identity	42
CHAPTER THREE	
METHODOLOGY	45
Qualitative Research	45
Characteristics of Qualitative Research	45
Meaning	46
Validity and Credibility	46
Establishment of Credibility	46
Reliability	49
Generalizability and Transferability	50

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Researcher Bias	50
Ethics	51
Bracketing	52
Phenomenology	53
Arts-Based Research	54
Narrative Inquiry	57
Making Meaning	60
Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space	61
Ethical Concerns	61
Relationship With Participants	62
Bricolage	63
Qualitative Methods Used in This Study	63
Data Collection	64
Data Analysis and Interpretation	65
Context of the Study	65
School Background	65
Demographics	68
The International Baccalaureate Programme	70
Theory of Knowledge	72
Constructivism	74
Cultures of Thinking	77

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Culturally Responsive Teaching	82
CHAPTER FOUR	
DATA ANALYSIS	85
Our Music Department	85
Choir	85
Orchestra	86
Student Identities	86
Themes	89
Initial Perceptions of Musical Identity	89
Curiosity and the Need for Rigor and Challenge	93
Intellectual Curiosity and Challenge	94
The Need for Rigor	100
The Joy of Making Music	103
School Culture	107
Cultural Curiosity	111
Support and Respect	114
Culture-Bearer	116
Competence and Confidence	119
The ZPD	119
Flow	121
Agency	122

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Musical Agency	124
Characteristics of Musical Identity	125
CHAPTER FIVE	
FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS	128
The Individual Mindset	129
Curiosity and the Need for Rigor and Challenge	129
The Joy of Making Music	130
The Collective Culture	131
The Importance of School Culture and Culture-Bearers	131
Competence and Confidence	132
Repertoire Selection	132
Authentic	134
Comprehensive and Complex	134
Learning Experiences	135
Agentive	135
Relevant and Inclusive	135
Musical Identity	136
Celebratory and Exploratory	136
Respectful and Supportive	138
Musically Intellectual	138
Intellectually Responsive Teaching	139

TABLE OF CONTENTS—Continued

Next Steps	142
Knowledge of Students	142
Expansion of the Curriculum	143
Opportunities for Students	144
Celebrate Diversity	144
APPENDICES	
A. Internal Review Board Approval	146
B. Sample Permission Letter	148
C. Sample Surveys	151
D. Music	154
REFERENCES	158

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Student population by grade	67
Table 2	Student population by race	68
Table 3	Student population by birthplace	68
Table 4	Languages spoken at home	69

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	IB diploma programme model	71
Figure 2	Factors leading to musical identity	129
Figure 3	Intellectually responsive teaching	141

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teacher: What is your definition of a musician?

Michelle¹: Someone who creates and enjoys music.

Myung: Well, you don't have to necessarily enjoy it.

[all laugh]

Myung: A musician is a person who performs or creates music, or interacts with it in any artistic manner.

Saanvi: Someone who is partaking in the creation of music.

Teacher: Do you consider yourself a musician?

Michelle: Yes.

Myung: Yeah.

Saanvi: I would say that I play the violin, but I wouldn't say I'm a musician.

Over the years, I have had many conversations with students that are like the one above. I will be leading them on stage for a concert performance, and will call them “musicians,” and invariably, at least one student will protest that label because they do not feel they have earned it. What is it about music that leads us to that identity?

I have often pondered that question while teaching. Of course I see my students as musicians, and I do try to use that language with them often. When the opportunity arose

¹ All names are pseudonyms

for this research study, I thought this would be an excellent question to answer. I am interested in the ways my students may or may not identify as musicians, and how the things we learn together as an ensemble will influence those identities. As I told my students when I first introduced my study to them: we do not all look the same, love the same, pray the same, learn in the same way, but we are trying to learn the same music. We are all bringing different experiences to the classroom, which informs how we engage with the music. I am especially curious about how the choices I make for repertoire affect my students' responses to it, and in particular, how those choices change their musical identities.

My initial assumption was that my students would be more likely to identify as musicians when the music studied matched or fit with some aspect of their identity already. For example, if our choir was rehearsing music from the Middle East with an Arabic text, I believed my Middle Eastern students and those who grew up speaking Arabic at home would be more apt to identify as musicians while performing that piece, or at least feel like a more successful or adept musician.

After studying constructivism, cultures of thinking, and culturally responsive teaching, I wondered if there were more ways to honor my students' backgrounds and lived experiences in a music ensemble classroom. I was curious if careful repertoire selection—with cultural responsiveness in mind—would make a positive difference in the way my students learn (Gay, 2018).

Need for the Study

Much of the existing literature I found about cultural responsiveness in music ensembles focused on Black and African American student experiences, and Hispanic

and Latinx student experiences. I did not find anything with a sole focus on the high school music ensemble experiences of South Asian and Middle Eastern students in the United States. Where were people like my students? I knew that to be the best teacher I could to those student populations, I needed to do that research.

I was most intrigued by Julia Shaw's study on culturally responsive teaching in choral ensembles (Shaw, 2020). She wrote about being the only "White girl" in a classroom of students who wanted to sing in other vocal styles related to their own cultures (p.1). The students in her study were predominantly African American, Latinx, and White/European. She studied three different teachers who were working with those students. While this was not my experience, it came closer than anything else, and I wanted to know what it could look like to incorporate my own students' cultures and heritages into my choir and orchestra ensembles. Once I did that, I wanted to know if that could affect the answers to my original research question: how does incorporating my students' cultures into our music ensembles relate to their identities as musicians? And how does that affect their learning?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I will examine literature relevant to my study: a constructivist view of teaching, cultures of thinking, cultural responsiveness, and identity.

Constructivism

Constructivism is a psychological perspective that has multiple components, including, but not limited to: a holistic view of teaching and learning, multiple perspectives, schema theory, the zone of proximal development, experience as learning, and agency. Boardman (2001) summarizes the characteristics of constructivism, stating:

Learning is the construction of meaning, a process of selection, retention, and transformation that recognizes that all learning is holistic, a fusion of action, cognition, and emotion. This learning occurs within a sociocultural context that influences/molds the particular form and direction the learning process will take. (p. 50)

I will explore these components of constructivism below.

Holistic View of Teaching and Learning

A holistic view is one that considers the interconnected sum rather than individual parts. In education, this includes viewing the student as a whole person, regarding the many subjects taught in school as an entire curriculum, and recognizing ideas as part of a wider context. When perceiving a student as an entire being, teachers are aware not only of past educational experiences but also of experiences that occur outside a formal learning environment. These external experiences can include moments from their home lives, extra-curricular activities, cultural activities, and other classes or learning environments.

Viewing a learner in their entirety also necessitates viewing the learning process itself as holistic. A constructivist perception of learning views the process as “a result of an interactive, interdependent, synergistic enterprise” (Boardman, 2001, p. 51). This means education requires many facets of learning to be active. Learners can also more easily construct their own understanding when the new information is introduced through a holistic lens, as something “in relation to other things” (Wiggins, 2015, p. 10). The doorway in, or point of entry into the curriculum, could be different for each student, but when curriculum is presented as interconnected, the students are more apt to understand (p. 35).

Context is also vital to deeper understanding. Knowledge is situated in a setting that includes time, place, culture, and circumstances. Bruner (1990) wrote that human actions, and the contexts for them, are “conceived of as continuous within a cultural world” (p. 105). Additionally, failing to acknowledge the situated context of knowledge “is to lose sight not only of the cultural nature of knowledge but of the correspondingly cultural nature of knowledge acquisition” (p. 106).

Multiple Perspectives

Within constructivism, there are as many ways of making meaning as there are people in the world. Constructivism “does not insist that there is only one way of constructing meaning, or one right way” (Bruner, 1990, p. 30). Instead, multiple perspectives are valued, as everyone “perceives life experience through a lens or frame that reflects the sum of our prior experiences” (Wiggins, 2015, p. 9). No two people have the same exact set of prior experiences; even if the circumstances were identical, internal thought processes and feelings would create distinctly separate contexts for those

experiences. Therefore, “all ways of knowing and interpreting the world are valid” (Wiggins et al., 2006, p. 85).

Bruner (1986) wrote of the importance of multiple perspectives, also calling them realities: “We know the world in different ways, from different stances, and each of the ways in which we know it produces different structures or representations, or, indeed, ‘realities’” (p. 109). One of the responsibilities of formal education is to ensure students can become “increasingly adept at seeing the same set of events through multiple perspectives or stances and at entertaining the results as, so to speak, alternative possible worlds” (p. 109). Students will interpret the world through their own perspective but also must be aware of the perspectives of others.

These multiple perspectives are part of cultural understanding, as well. Bruner (1990) wrote of human participation in society and culture, postulating that the psychology of human development includes culture. Meaning-making and the process of education and learning must involve culture in some way: “Given that psychology is so immersed in culture, it must be organized around those meaning-making and meaning-using processes that connect man to culture” (p. 12).

Individual. When educators validate and value multiple perspectives, they emphasize the individual. There is an “organic connection between education and personal experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 21). Those personal experiences and connections to culture are what allow each student to construct their own individual meaning of the knowledge shared within the classroom. The curriculum discussed is the same, but the way each student interprets it will be different: “though our experience of knowing is individual, knowledge is not” (Wenger et al., 2002, p. 10).

Social. Within a constructivist lens, knowledge is socially constructed: “We learn in, from, and with groups” (Ritchhart, 2020, p. 8). Students learn with peers, from teachers, from other knowledgeable adults, and from all their experiences. Even solo experiences or thoughts inside students’ minds may be considered social, as people rely upon one another not only for acceptance and community, but also for context. When students are working alone, they are still guided by the social learning of previous experiences and interactions with others. With the advent of social media, those private or solo thoughts are shared more than ever before, and they are shared in a way that is meant to unite people in their commonalities. Students should “interact with peers to enable everyone’s learning and to provide scaffolding for peers when it is needed” (Wiggins, 2015, p. 49). To facilitate this, teachers must create authentic, real-life experiences within school “that include ample opportunity for meaningful interaction with peers and teacher” (Wiggins et al., 2006, p. 85).

Learning is “a fundamentally social phenomenon, reflecting our own deeply social nature as human beings capable of knowing” (Wenger, 1998, p. 3). Wenger writes of four main premises of this social theory of learning. The first is that people are social beings, what Wenger describes as a “central aspect” of learning and education (p. 4). Secondly, “knowledge is a matter of competence with respect to valued enterprises,” while third, “knowing is a matter of participating in the pursuit of such enterprises, that is, of active engagement in the world” (p. 4). Finally, “meaning—our ability to experience the world and our engagement with it as meaningful—is ultimately what learning is to produce” (p. 4).

Bruner (1990) wrote of the social nature of knowledge as it ties in with culture: “By the virtue of participation in culture, meaning is rendered public and shared. Our culturally adapted way of life depends upon shared meanings and shared concepts” (pp. 12-13). As people interact with others in their cultural group, they use the same cultural and contextual tools to make meaning. Bruner (1996) described cultural tools:

For however much the individual may seem to operate on his or her own in carrying out the quest for meanings, nobody can do it unaided by the culture’s symbolic systems. It is culture that provides the tools for organizing and understanding our worlds in communicable ways. The distinctive feature of human evolution is that mind evolved in a fashion that enables human beings to utilize the tools of culture. Without those tools, whether symbolic or material, man is not a ‘naked ape’ but an empty abstraction. (p. 3)

While each person’s ideas and learning are different, many of the processes by which they learn will be the same by virtue of their shared culture. Vygotsky (1978) wrote of learning and shared culture: “Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level” (p. 57). Regarding the social construction of knowledge, Vygotsky stated that “all the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals” (p. 57).

Schema Theory

Schema theory is a model that describes how people make sense of ideas and concepts, and it relates to constructivism’s multiple perspectives. Schema theory describes “the processes through which we connect new ideas to existing ideas in our minds” (Wiggins, 2015, p. 2). A schema heuristic is a representation of something else, often a diagram or framework, and is used to portray knowledge. In the psychology of learning, it is a mental framework. The idea of a schema itself is an analogy or metaphor, something used to “help us understand how we hold concepts in our minds” (p. 3). It is

abstract, and one's mental schema framework "summarizes what is known about a variety of cases that differ in many particulars" (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, p. 259). The framework is there to assist learners in assimilating or accommodating new information that does not fit what already exists in the mind (Piaget, 1952).

Every person learning something new has a different set of prior experiences, so their individual internal schema will be unique. The way people assimilate and accommodate information will change depending on their unique internal schema frameworks. One way of processing the new information is not necessarily any better or worse than another, which lends to multiple perspectives. Wiggins (2015) writes of this:

As we perceive through our senses, our minds organize the perceptions by finding appropriate schemas to connect them to what we already know. When we engage in a new experience, we seek to understand it through our understandings of prior experience. As we learn about new aspects of the world, we associate the new ideas we encounter with ideas we already know. (p. 4)

Therefore, the way people make sense of new knowledge depends entirely upon their prior knowledge.

Metaphor Theory. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson are cognitive linguists known for their work in metaphor theory, which is similar to schema theory. While schema theory is about one's internal concept maps that are connected and interwoven together, with one concept potentially triggering another concept, metaphor theory relates new knowledge or experiences to previous knowledge and experiences. This theory applies the literary concept of a metaphor to the brain. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim knowledge is "metaphorically structured," meaning "most concepts are partially understood in terms of other concepts" (p. 56).

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) also propose that metaphors come from our physical experience within the world: “Primary metaphors, from a neural perspective, are neural connections learned by coactivation. They extend across parts of the brain between areas dedicated to sensorimotor experience and areas dedicated to subjective experience” (p. 57). Metaphors link the physical interactions people have with their environment to more abstract concepts, enabling a richer understanding.

Ritchhart, Church, and Morrison (2011) incorporate this theory into their ideas about visible thinking routines: “When we encounter anything new, we make connections between the new and known, drawing on our past experience” (p. 12). Many of their routines allow for the use of metaphors, like drawing a picture or choosing a color to represent a concept within a lesson, which may support the students’ ability to demonstrate their knowledge beyond what they can write or speak with words.

Swanwick (1999) describes metaphor as a “dynamic phenomenon” that “underlies all discourse” (p. 7). Metaphor comes from “potentially dissonant relationships” between concepts, connecting ideas that students already know and have assimilated, and placing the ideas in a new context (p. 8). This allows students to create new ideas, through the connection of previously learned and assimilated concepts. “Metaphor allows us to see one thing in terms of another, to think and feel in new ways” (p. 10).

Metaphor theory also has a cultural dimension. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) write of the cultural component:

Each culture must provide a more or less successful way of dealing with its environment, both adapting to it and changing it. Moreover, each culture must define a social reality within which people have roles that make sense to them and in terms of which they can function socially. Not surprisingly, the social reality defined by a culture affects its conception of physical reality. What is real for an

individual as a member of a culture is a product both of his social reality and of the way in which that shapes his experience of the physical world. Since much of our social reality is understood in metaphorical terms, and since our conception of the physical world is partly metaphorical, metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us. (p. 146)

The connections students make to other concepts do not exist in a vacuum but are influenced by students' prior experiences and the environment in which they are learning.

Zone of Proximal Development

Vygotsky was an educational theorist who proposed that learning occurs through problem solving supported by scaffolding within the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and that language is the mediating tool for learning. The zone is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Students can achieve at one level independently, and at a higher level with a more knowledgeable other; the gap between these two levels is the zone of proximal development. This concept is vital to quality teaching, as the most successful teaching and learning occur within the zone.

The ZPD is different for every person, reinforcing a focus on each individual student. Educators commonly refer to this as differentiation in the classroom, ensuring that the needs of each student are met, even when those needs are varied. Bruner (1966) wrote of differentiation:

If a curriculum is to be effective in the classroom it must contain different ways of activating children, different ways of presenting sequences, different opportunities for some children to “skip” parts while others work their way through, different ways of putting things. A curriculum, in short, must contain many tracks leading to the same general goal. (p. 71)

Those many pathways toward the final goal of the lesson will reflect the many different needs of the learners in the classroom.

Teachers have much to consider when planning curriculum. “Engaging and interacting *below* a learner’s ZPD means working at a level of difficulty and proficiency that the learner has already mastered” (Wiggins, 2016, p. 5). If the teacher is working above the zone, the student is “working at a level of difficulty and proficiency that the learner is not ready to pursue” (p. 5). This is challenging because “learners who do not believe themselves capable will not enter the situation; they will disengage or resist the teacher’s efforts,” which can undermine student efficacy and learner agency (p. 5). Teachers use the ZPD to differentiate between a student’s developmental processes and their learning processes. More specifically, “the developmental process lags behind the learning process; this sequence then results in zones of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90).

Scaffolding. Scaffolding is a metaphor that draws on the imagery of the structures that support a building as it is constructed: larger, more expansive scaffolding is required in the early stages of construction, and the support is gradually removed until the building can stand on its own. Similarly in education, higher levels of teacher support are needed at the beginning of learning something new; gradually that support is removed until students are able to achieve the new task on their own. Skills, concepts, and the ability to take risks are three of the major things scaffolded in formal education.

Bruner (1977) poses the question: “How do we tailor fundamental knowledge to the interests and capacities of children?” (p. 22). Part of the answer to that question is the

concept of scaffolding. Teachers provide more support with younger students, when teaching is “representing the structure of that subject in terms of the child’s way of viewing things. The task can be thought of as one of translation” (p. 33). As students are more experienced, scaffolding looks different:

What the teacher must be, to be an effective competence model, is a day-to-day working model with whom to interact. It is not so much that the teacher provides a model to imitate. Rather, it is that the teacher can become a part of the student’s internal dialogue—somebody whose respect he wants, someone whose standards he wishes to make his own. (Bruner, 1966, p. 124)

Teachers are more of a guide for older or more experienced students, and less of the primary means of support. As teachers write lessons, they plan to work with students themselves at the start of new material and shift away from that as the lessons go on.

In the beginning of a learning experience, students work with another person, someone identified by Vygotsky as a more knowledgeable other. Once students have developed mastery with another person, they work more independently. Wiggins (2015) writes:

A broad vision of scaffolding learners in formal educational settings includes everything a teacher might do to support learning, including framing and planning the learning experience, providing appropriate groundwork to foster and enable learner success in the experience, and assessing learner understanding throughout the experience. (p. 17)

Vygotsky’s more knowledgeable other does not need to be a teacher or other adult in the students’ lives; the more knowledgeable other can just as easily be another student or a peer. This is because students “often provide scaffolding for one another, even when the teacher is not aware of the occurrence. Learners often translate ‘teacher-talk’ for peers or answer peers’ questions during a class or group activity” (Wiggins, 2015, p. 18). Piaget (1973) also wrote of the concept of peer-to-peer scaffolding, postulating that

learning activities should involve “experimental actions and spontaneous investigations” with “free collaboration among individuals – that is to say, among the students themselves, and not only between the teacher and the student” (pp. 107-108).

Scaffolding is part of what makes education a social endeavor. Wiggins (2015) further explains this concept, writing:

The relationship between teacher and learners might be described as an apprenticeship where an expert and novice work side by side, with the apprentice performing those portions of the task in which he or she is competent, and the expert filling in and providing support or scaffolding where necessary. Effective teaching includes providing scaffolding where it is needed and stepping back (sometimes called fading) when it is not. (p. 43)

When students are more competent with the learning tasks, the teacher’s role is that of a guide, able to step in only when needed.

Flow. Related to the ZPD is the idea of flow. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990) wrote of the concept, a theory of what he called optimal experience. He described it as:

On the rare occasions that it happens, we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished and that becomes a landmark in memory for what life should be like. This is what we mean by optimal experience. (p. 3)

Flow is, more specifically, “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). While this state can bring an experience of sheer joy, it also requires discipline and concentration. Flow requires the setting of and working toward a goal. Once moving toward the end target, “there is no need to worry, no reason to question one’s adequacy. But whenever one does stop to think about oneself, the evidence is encouraging: ‘You are doing all right’” (p. 39). That evidential feedback is positive and serves to strengthen the concept of self—self-worth and self-esteem—and then frees up more attention to what is happening

outside oneself. This growth transforms one's sense of self, making the self stronger and more complex. Further, this optimal experience of flow is good in the sense that "it has the potential to make life more rich, intense, and meaningful" (p. 70). In education, a sense of flow is evident when students are engaged in what they are learning and have set their own goals for improvement. This is when the student's prior skills meet opportunities for challenge, fostering a sense of agency.

Experience and Learning

Psychologist John Dewey (1938) wrote of the tie between education and experience, stating they are related, though not necessarily equivalents: "There is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education," though these processes are not the same thing (p. 20). Students learn through experience, but not all experiences are "equally educative" (p. 25). Some experiences will provide students with new knowledge to challenge their views, others will offer support for growing ideas, and still others will provide confirmation of knowledge already learned. The way the student interacts with the experience entirely "depends upon the quality of the experience which is had" (p. 27). Experiences also should be both authentic and contextual.

Authentic Experiences. If educational experiences are to be authentic, they must involve social learning as well as a sense of continuity and growth. Dewey (1938) wrote of the social aspect, stating "all human experience is ultimately social...it involves contact and communication" (p. 38). This way of viewing experience has a profound influence on the learning environment in the classroom: "The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities" (p. 59).

Students are encouraged to assist their peers in their learning, rather than always relying upon their teacher, which will foster skills to carry them through learning experiences outside of the classroom, as well.

Authentic experiences cultivate a sense of continuity, leading to learning and growth. Learning does not happen alone, and “experience does not occur in a vacuum” (Dewey, 1938, p. 40). Instead, each experience a student has will go on to inform later experiences. Each learning experience in a student’s life will instruct the way they view each subsequent experience, and the biggest growth happens when students change their preconceived ideas about a particular topic. Dewey wrote of this, stating “the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after” (p. 35).

Contextual Experiences. Wenger (1998) posed the question: “What if we adopted a different perspective, one that placed learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world” (p. 3). This question recognizes that all knowledge has context; it is situated in a specific time, place, and culture. Bruner (1996) wrote similarly that “all knowledge has a history” (p. 61). The ways students learn, the experiences they have, and even the actual knowledge itself are all positioned in the cultures and communities around them. Part of learning should include the knowledge of the context, as appropriate for each student, because “learning and thinking are always situated in a cultural setting and always dependent upon the utilization of cultural resources” (Bruner, 1996, p. 4).

Problems for Learning. “Posing problems of emerging relevance is a guiding principle of constructivist pedagogy” (Brooks & Brooks, 2001, p. 35). Students are more likely to be involved in their own learning experiences when they “view the problem as relevant” (p. 36). If the lesson does not have relevance to the student, they will not feel encouraged to participate in their own learning. The teacher is the “key factor” in the students finding relevance, helping students build connections to prior learning (p. 37). Additionally, students find relevance in complex or complicated learning problems, which encourages their curiosity.

When writing a curriculum that includes relevant problems for learning, teachers must also provide enough time for students to experiment on their own: “The students must be given time and stimulation to seek relevance and the opportunity to reveal their own points of view” (Brooks & Brooks, 2001, pp. 37-38). Within that free time, students also “need opportunities to ponder the question, form their own responses, and accept the risk of sharing their thoughts with others” (p. 38).

Student-Centered. John Dewey (1990) noted the need for a student-centered curriculum, stating the student is “the starting-point, the center, and the end. His development, his growth, is the ideal” (p. 187). Within that ideal curriculum, the teacher’s goal is not merely to get through content, but to ensure all students have transformative learning experiences, leading to the students’ development and growth. For students and teachers alike, “not knowledge or information, but self-realization, is the goal” (p. 187). It does not help students to simply memorize facts when they could instead be applying all their knowledge toward learning how to make connections across curricular subjects and throughout their lives:

What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information about geography and history, to win ability to read and write, if in the process the individual loses his own soul: loses his appreciation of things worth while, of the values to which these things are relative; if he loses desire to apply what he has learned and, above all, loses the ability to extract meaning from his future experiences as they occur? (Dewey, 1938, p. 49)

Student-centered experiences come from teachers who have knowledge about each of their students. With each student constructing their own meaning of the new material, it is invaluable to provide connections to knowledge they already have. This requires a teacher to have insight into the knowledge and ways of knowing students bring to their classroom. This manner of reframing curriculum is a “multifaceted and complex mindfulness toward children” (van Manen, 1991, p. 8). Van Manen explains the student-centered concept further, stating “a tactful educator realizes that it is not the child but the teacher who has to cross the street in order to go to the child’s side” (p. 155). This means the student is not the one responsible for inserting themselves into the curriculum, but it is instead the teacher’s responsibility to create experiences that are tailored to the needs of the student. It is the teacher’s job to find a place for the student, rather than the other way around.

Successful student-centered teachers are also flexible, able to change their lesson plans if it seems that students need more assistance with understanding, and able to move along to the next concept early if most or all students understand quickly. This is reflection-in-action at work, as described by Schön (1983):

When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. (p. 49)

Reflection-in-action is also called “thinking on your feet” or having a “feel” for what is happening (Schön, 1983, p. 54). Teachers cannot know every possible scenario that may unfold over the course of a lesson, but they are able to think on their feet and adjust their lesson plan as they teach their curriculum.

While many educators refer to lesson plans or certain educational activities as a “toolbox of tricks,” constructivist teachers know there is more depth to teaching than that. Constructivism is not simply a checklist of ideas to follow, as it is fundamentally “a theory about learning, not a description of teaching” (Fosnot & Perry, 2005, p. 33). Sometimes the biggest “aha” moments for students come not from the tried-and-true lessons, but from the teacher stepping outside of their own comfort zone to try something new with the students in ways that relate to the students’ own prior experiences, their own history. “A totally fragmented self can make no such meaning. A self with no history, without memory, has no future” (Barone, 2001, p. 166). Without those connections, students have no hope of retaining instruction or truly making meaning from the curriculum.

Active Learning. When a student “becomes an active agent in constructing his or her own understanding,” they demonstrate that learning is an active mode of gathering knowledge (Ritchhart et al., 2011, p. 35). Student-centered classroom environments encourage students to participate in all aspects of the learning process. Piaget (1973) also wrote of the importance of active learning:

A student who achieves a certain knowledge through free investigation and spontaneous effort will later be able to retain it; he will have acquired a methodology that can serve him for the rest of his life, which will stimulate his curiosity without the risk of exhausting it. (p. 93)

This idea of investigation stimulated by curiosity is a significant part of active learning. When students feel curious about a task and feel comfortable taking the risk to investigate the concept further, they are more apt to retain the knowledge. Blair (2009a) wrote that students need to be “the center of the action, interacting with music in ways that result in doing that informs their thinking and, reciprocally, with thinking that informs their doing” (p. 43). She has written about informed versus uninformed doing, describing uninformed doing as:

When students are simply ‘doing’ things – playing or singing through mimicking a teacher or recording, participating in a music ensemble without knowing or realizing how their part fits within the musical whole – they are acting without understanding and are engaged in what I call uninformed doing. (p. 43)

Blair (2009a) defines informed doing as when “students are personally engaged with music, solving musical problems” (p. 43). She also refers to this informally as “hands on minds on” learning. Uninformed doing is inauthentic, as it does not involve personal engagement from the learners.

Bruner (1966) also wrote of active, informed learning, using an analogy about learning to ski:

Skill can be improved with the aid of theory, as when we learn about the inside and outside edges of our skis, but our skiing doesn’t improve until we get that knowledge back into the skill of skiing. Knowledge helps only when it descends into habits. (p. 152)

When students have only abstract knowledge, but no experience in applying it, they may not retain that knowledge.

Metacognition. The awareness of and reflection upon one’s own learning and thinking is called metacognition. Ritchhart (2023) wrote that most teachers define

metacognition as “reflection or thinking about one’s thinking and actions” (p. 33).

However, he postulates that metacognition comprises three different aspects: “1) effectively planning and directing one’s thinking, 2) actively monitoring and controlling one’s thinking processes as they unfold, and 3) reflecting on one’s thinking afterward” (p. 33).

Bruner (1986) called metacognition “self-monitoring and self-correction,” and wrote that it is “very unevenly distributed, varies according to cultural background, and, perhaps most important, can be taught successfully as a skill” (p. 67). Students come to the classroom with widely varying abilities in metacognition, but it is something that teachers can support in even the youngest of learners.

Ritchhart, Church, and Morrison (2011) wrote extensively of teaching metacognitive skills to young learners, and how it begins with a culture shift in the entire school:

When schools take on the mission of cultivating students’ thinking and enculturating the habits of mind and dispositions that can support lifelong learning, the issue of how students construe thinking and their general metacognitive awareness comes to the fore. It’s one thing for us as teachers to articulate the kinds of thinking we are seeking to promote; it is another for students to develop a greater awareness of the significant role that thinking plays in cultivating their own understanding. (p. 15)

Valuing metacognition as a skill in even the youngest of learners is something that starts with the teachers and administrators. It is vital for music students, since they must also practice their music at home alone. Teachers provide appropriate scaffolding by modeling what this looks like in rehearsals. As they are modeling, teachers should name what they are doing, drawing attention to the metacognitive process, and showing how to proceed with the practice session or rehearsal based on the feedback.

Agency

Bruner (1996) defined agency as “taking more control of your own mental activity” (p. 87). That control includes “not only the capacity for initiating, but also for completing” learning activities (p. 36). Additionally, the qualities of an agentive student are “proactive, problem-oriented, attentionally focused, selective, constructional, directed to ends” (p. 93).

Bandura (2006) wrote regarding agency: “to be an agent is to influence intentionally one’s functioning and life circumstances” (p. 164). He further clarified that agentive people are “self-organizing, pro-active, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. They are not simply onlookers of their behavior. They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them” (p. 164).

Bandura (2006) also wrote of four core properties of agency: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness (p. 164). He defined intentionality as when people “form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realizing them” (p. 164). Forethought is what happens after setting goals, when people “anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts” (p. 164). The third property, self-reactiveness, is “the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution” (p. 165). Finally, self-reflectiveness is a sense of “functional self-awareness,” which guides people to “reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits” while adjusting their paths as needed (p. 165). Further, “the metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one’s thoughts and actions is the most distinctly human core property of agency” (p. 165). Agentive students embody all four properties.

Agency is vital in constructivist teaching. Wiggins (2016) has written extensively about agency, postulating “music educators in all kinds of music learning settings need to understand the role and importance of learners’ sense of and capacity for personal and musical agency and how the musical actions they can precipitate facilitate and enable music learning” (p. 27). Likewise, “fostering and enabling learner musical agency and independence is at the core of what music education is all about” (p. 28). Teachers must provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate agency, scaffolded so they can feel successful and validated.

On agency, Wiggins (2015) writes, “Learning requires initiative and intent on the part of the learner” (p. 22).

One component of the process that enables learner agency is for learners to understand what they are supposed to be learning – the goals of the learning experience. It is not enough for the teacher alone to possess this knowledge. If learners are not fully cognizant of what they are supposed to be doing and learning, they cannot take responsibility for their own role in the process. (p. 22)

Agency is also found in student independence in creating their own musical ideas. Students use their own musical experiences to guide their creation, which is why it is vital that teachers provide quality experiences and lessons. Teachers should understand the roles of both the student within the concept of agency, as well as the role of the social learning, combined with an understanding of the entire process of agency. Students will often feel “more agentic” as they master musical techniques (Wiggins, 2016).

Blair (2009b) describes agency as “the ways people act and interact within sociocultural settings” (p. 179). She further notes that it “implies learners moving from powerlessness to a sense of control and a hope for the future, their own future” (p. 180). Moreover, Blair postulates that “valuing students and respecting their agency about what

they are learning, doing and living are key attributes of a successful learning community” (p. 180).

Cultures of Thinking

Culture is one of the key elements affecting classrooms and transforming schools’ teaching and learning. Ritchhart (2015) writes of eight different forces that shape culture within a school: classroom expectations, language, time, modeling, opportunities, thinking routines, interactions, and environment. I will summarize each of the eight forces below, however Ritchhart, Church, Morrison, and the Harvard Project Zero team are best known for their thinking routines—metacognitive strategies in teaching and learning designed to organize students’ thoughts.

Visible Thinking Routines

Visible thinking routines are “any procedure, process, or pattern of action that is used repeatedly to manage and facilitate the accomplishment of specific goals or tasks” (Ritchhart et al., 2011, p. 45). These routines can be used in any subject, with any grade level. As students move through each routine, the steps provide “natural scaffolds” to “lead students’ thinking to higher and more sophisticated levels” (p. 47). The routines also provide a framework for class discussions, exploring the course material in more depth. With enough repetition of the thinking routines, students can use them independently to organize their own thoughts. Visible thinking is not “a program one adopts and then evaluates the results” (Ritchhart, 2020, p. 13); this is instead meant to be a tool used to explore and validate student thought processes. It is a way of forming metacognitive habits with students of all ages.

Additionally, “thinking doesn’t happen in a lockstep, sequential manner, systematically progressing from one level to the next. It is much messier, complex, dynamic, and interconnected than that” (Ritchhart et al., 2011, p. 8). The thinking routines not only provide order to the mess, but also assist students in reaching a deeper understanding and help teachers discern the reasoning behind gaps in achievement. “As we make thinking...visible, we draw attention to the mechanisms by which individuals construct their understanding” and teachers therefore have a much better idea of who the students are, how the students think, and what they need from their teachers (pp. 21-22).

Classroom Expectations

Outside of visible thinking routines, the first of Ritchhart’s (2015) cultural forces is classroom expectations, or the “internal compass that keeps us moving toward our goal” (p. 37). Ritchhart discusses five belief sets in this cultural force: learning versus work; teaching for understanding versus teaching for knowledge; deep learning versus surface learning; promoting independence versus promoting dependence; and developing a growth mindset versus developing a fixed mindset (p. 42). The first of each dichotomy is the ideal expectation in constructivist classrooms—learning, teaching for understanding, deep learning, promoting independence, and developing a growth mindset.

Language

The cultural force of language is more than just the words used in a classroom or school. It is also the intent behind the diction and syntax. Ritchhart (2015) writes of seven different ways of using language: the language of thinking, community, identity, initiative, mindfulness, praise and feedback, and listening (p. 68). The language of

identity particularly reflects constructivist practices in education in an active way: students are known as musicians in a music class, historians in their history class, or writers in their language class. The language choice here “conveys intention and cues behavior” (p. 75). Teachers who speak this way in their classroom are letting students know they expect them to be active, agentic learners taking part in the learning experiences; the curriculum is not something that passively happens to them.

Time

Time not only refers to the measurement but also the “qualitative dimension” of experience (Ritchhart, 2015, p. 87). Time as a cultural force in education does not mean planning for every moment of every lesson, but instead is more about priority.

Leveraging the cultural force of time requires teachers to review these key perspectives in their own classrooms: recognizing that time usage is a statement of the values of the educational system, prioritizing learning, providing time for thinking, providing extra time when needed for deeper understanding, and managing energy expectations (p. 96).

Teacher choices about the length and structure of activities will send messages to students about what is considered important in the learning environment. Constructivist teachers think about time “not as periods of the day that we fill” but instead as “a cultural force sending messages about what we value and shaping students’ learning” (p. 110).

Modeling

Modeling is classroom technique familiar to all teachers on an external, explicit level. Ron Ritchhart (2015) also refers to modeling as something implicit: students see their teachers modeling passions, interests, caring, thinking, and leadership. Teachers model the exemplar, but they also should model their own processes, because “learning is

messy” (p. 126). For students to feel comfortable with their own vulnerability in messy learning experiences, they need to see others being equally vulnerable and working through setbacks or potential failures. It can also help students through what Ritchhart calls a “cognitive apprenticeship” (p. 129). As the teacher models their thinking process, it shows students how they should or could be thinking. “Without an understanding of the thinking that lies behind an expert’s actions, it is all too easy for learners to focus on the wrong things, develop rigid procedures, or engage in mindless mimicry” (p. 130). With modeling, students are more likely to repeat the thinking process, as opposed to the procedure.

Barbara Rogoff (1990) wrote of the cognitive apprenticeship model of learning as more than just a teacher and student:

The apprenticeship model has the value of including more people than a single expert and a single novice; the apprenticeship system often involves a group of novices (peers) who serve as resources for one another in exploring the new domain and aiding and challenging one another. Among themselves, the novices are likely to differ usefully in expertise as well. (p. 39)

As students are learning together, modeling happens not only from the teacher, but from each other.

Opportunities

The cultural force of opportunities concerns the types of learning experiences provided to students. In school environments with a strong culture of thinking, teachers provide “rich opportunities for growth, advancement, and creativity” (Ritchhart, 2015, p. 141). The ways students are thinking are more important than the things students are doing, and it is the type of experiences provided to students that create this distinction.

Teachers must provide experiences that move far beyond the students sitting at their desks and taking notes.

Interactions

“Interactions form the basis for relationships among teachers and students, students and students, and teachers and teachers” (Ritchhart, 2015, p. 199). All of those interactions and relationships together create the learning environment; if the environment is positive for students, they will learn. Students learn best in situations where they feel welcome, like they are part of the group. Ritchhart suggests teachers track the interactions in their classrooms: how much of the conversation flows from the teacher to the students as a whole? How many experiences incorporate built-in time for students to interact with each other? The ratio between the tracked interactions will reveal much about the culture of the classroom.

Classroom Environment

The final cultural force is the classroom environment, the physical space where students learn. Ritchhart (2015) writes of four main aspects of environment that every teacher must consider when designing their classroom space: visibility, flexibility, comfort, and invitational quality (p. 247). For visibility, students’ thinking must be obviously present. That will look differently in each classroom, but could look like school work on the walls, or a visitor walking into a classroom and observing the students’ learning processes as they happen. Flexibility is important because learning is dynamic, not static; learning is messy. Flexible furniture can help support students as they move around in the classroom. Comfort can be anything from the chairs students sit on to the brightness of the lighting. Finally, the invitational quality is part of what makes

students want to be in the classroom to learn. It is not as easily defined but can include things like the posters on the walls, the choice of textbook, or color scheme used.

Ritchhart's Cultures of Thinking is another way to honor the experiences of the students in the classroom. The cultural forces also provide a framework to scaffold students in metacognition, which could strengthen those skills beyond their educational experiences.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

The way people make sense of the world is cultural. Prior experiences and knowledge come from a cultural way of knowing; therefore, new knowledge is related to that same cultural context. But what is culture?

Culture

Culture is “multidimensional and continually changing” (Gay, 2018, p. 10). As such, it can be hard to define concretely. We often use metaphors to explain culture; Hammond (2015) instructs her readers to “think of culture as software for the brain’s hardware” (p. 22). Culture is often portrayed metaphorically as an iceberg or tree: there are some aspects that are visible to others, forming the top of the iceberg or tree, while other aspects are deeper but invisible, and make up the roots of the tree or underwater portions of the iceberg. Visible aspects of culture include food, language, holidays, and music; invisible aspects include attitudes toward work, facial expressions, the concept of time, and spirituality.

No matter the metaphor used, culture is “dynamic, complex, interactive,” and “a stabilizing force in human life” (Gay, 2018, p. 10). It encompasses the belief systems, social norms, shared values, and patterns of behavior of groups of people. It is complex,

“influenced by a variety of factors,” and is part of what forms our worldviews, which therefore means it is “constantly evolving” (McKoy & Lind, 2023, p. 11). Culture is also “the way that every brain makes sense of the world” (Hammond, 2015, p. 22). Culture “guides how we process information” (p. 48).

Bruner (1990) wrote of culture, stating that it and “the quest for meaning within culture are the proper causes of human action” (p. 20). He posited that culture is what “shapes human life and the human mind, that gives meaning to action” (p. 34). Turino (2008) defined culture as “shared habits of thought and action and our repertoire of choices,” also noting that “without these cultural frameworks for living we would not be able to get through a single day” (p. 17).

These different ways of defining culture serve to further illustrate its complex and ever-changing nature. It is part of what makes culturally responsive teaching such a complex way of thinking about education.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy, or teaching, is a way of approaching curriculum that “validates, facilitates, liberates, and empowers ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success” (Gay, 2018, p. 53). It is a view of teaching that applies to all students in all classrooms. Gay further writes of this pedagogy:

Culturally responsive pedagogy simultaneously develops, along with academic achievement, social consciousness and critique, cultural affirmation, competence, and exchange; community-building and personal connections; individual self-worth and abilities; and an ethic of caring. It uses ways of knowing, understanding, and representing various ethnic and cultural groups in teaching academic subjects, processes, and skills. It cultivates cooperation, collaboration, reciprocity, and mutual responsibility for learning among students and between

students and teachers. It incorporates high-status, accurate cultural knowledge about different ethnic groups into all subjects and skills taught. (p. 52)

Qualitative Characteristics. Culturally responsive teaching is defined by its qualitative characteristics, which I will identify below, drawing on the work of Gay (2018). This way of teaching is validating, comprehensive and inclusive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, emancipatory, humanistic, and normative and ethical.

Validating. Culturally responsive teaching is validating, as it uses “the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2018, p. 36). Students enter a culturally responsive classroom secure in the knowledge that their cultural history will be affirmed as valuable. All students’ prior experiences will be equally important, as those experiences will influence the way they make meaning of current experiences. Students will construct their own understanding through the lens of their cultural heritages, and a culturally responsive teacher “acknowledges the legitimacy” of making meaning in that way (p. 37).

Comprehensive and Inclusive. The curriculum of a culturally responsive classroom is holistic: “expectations and skills are not taught as separate entities but are woven together into an integrated whole that permeates all curriculum content and the entire modus operandi of the classroom” (Gay, 2018, p. 38). This means the curriculum is not only comprehensive across a grade level, but also throughout the students’ educational experiences, from early childhood to beyond high school. Students also learn

about cultural heritages outside their own to include different perspectives, rather than othering cultures that differ from the dominant group or majority.

Multidimensional. Multidimensional teaching respects and requires multiple perspectives across a wide range of teaching: “curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, classroom management, and performance assessments” (Gay, 2018, p. 39). Teachers must have knowledge of and experience with a diverse spectrum of cultures, from the visible aspects of culture at the top of the iceberg model to the invisible aspects at the bottom. In addition, teachers must be aware of their own thoughts and biases. “Emotions, beliefs, values, ethos, opinions, and feelings are scrutinized along with factual information and physical behaviors to make curriculum and instruction more reflective of and responsive to ethnic diversity” (p. 39).

Empowering. When students feel empowered by the schools they attend, it “translates into academic competence, personal confidence, courage, and the will to act” (Gay, 2018, p. 40). To ensure that empowerment, culturally responsive teachers must hold high expectations for student success, while still encouraging students and providing opportunities for them to experience smaller victories. “Culturally responsive teachers are aware of the risks involved in learning and the need for students to have successes along the way to mastery” (p. 40). Rogoff (1990) posits that learning “requires risk taking, since learning involves functioning at the edge of one’s competence on the border of incompetence” (p. 202). When students experience successes from their risks, they feel empowered.

Transformative. In transformative education, students are “taught to be proud of their ethnic identities and cultural backgrounds instead of being apologetic or ashamed of them” (Gay, 2018, p. 42). If students feel a sense of pride in who they are, they are more apt to “be productive members of and render service to their respective ethnic communities as well as to the national society” (p. 42). Gay also writes of the two-pronged nature of transformative education:

One direction deals with confronting and transcending the cultural hegemony nested in much of the curriculum content and classroom instruction of the traditional classroom. The other develops social consciousness, intellectual critique, and political and personal efficacy in students so that they can combat prejudices, racism, and other forms of oppression and exploitation. (p. 42)

As students, particularly those who belong to a minority culture in the educational setting, realize the constraints of the majority culture curriculum, they are more apt to transform their own educational experiences.

Emancipatory. Culturally responsive pedagogy helps students “realize that no single version of ‘truth’ is total and permanent. Nor should it be allowed to exist uncontested” (Gay, 2018, p. 43). For teachers to accurately convey this valuing of multiple perspectives, they teach students “how to apply new knowledge generated by various ethnic scholars to their analyses of social histories, issues, problems, and experiences” (p. 43). Teachers model information and technological literacies, demonstrating for students how to find authentic sources within cultural communities to provide appropriate multiple perspectives.

Humanistic. Culturally responsive pedagogy is “ultimately concerned with the human welfare, dignity, and respect of the various individuals and groups who comprise the United States and the world” (Gay, 2018, p. 44). This way of teaching “helps students

acquire knowledge of self and others, and the attendant values that come with having a better and more accurate understanding of who diverse people are and how they came of be as individuals, groups, and nations” (p. 44). Additionally, it “develops the idea that interdependence is an inherent attribute of humanity; when people know, respect, and relate to each other, all groups and individuals are better off” (p. 44).

Normative and Ethical. “Culture and education are inseparably linked, and different ethnic groups have different cultures,” resulting in a diverse environment across the country (Gay, 2018, p. 45). With such a cultural variety, it is “the normal and right thing to do to incorporate cultural diversity into educative processes intended for ethnically, racially, and socially diverse students” (p. 45). Teachers would be doing students a disservice to only teach them about their own minority cultures, or the dominant or majority culture. By incorporating the cultures of all students, or those across the nation, it normalizes minority cultures rather than othering them.

Diversity. Culturally responsive teachers are looking for ways to “affirm diverse cultural characteristics, perspectives, and experiences,” and then “use these multiple perceptions of reality and ways of knowing to form bridges to new learning and ideas” (McKoy & Lind, 2023, pp. 19-20). More specifically, teachers use students’ varying cultures as a “vehicle for learning” (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 48).

Culturally responsive teaching is a way to honor and validate all the students in the classroom, regardless of background or educational experience. Culturally responsive teachers recognize the unique ways of knowing that their students bring with them and design their curriculum to empower each student to be their most successful selves. Gay

(2018) writes that “diversity is inherent to humanity,” which illustrates the necessity of empowering all students in their educational journey (p. 22).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Ladson-Billings (2022) is an educator who writes about cultural relevance with regard to cultural responsiveness, detailing the ways in which it is best for all students:

Culturally relevant teaching honors the students’ sense of humanity and dignity. Their complete personhood is never doubted. Self-worth and self-concept is promoted in a very basic way, by acknowledging the individual’s worthiness to be a part of a supportive and loving group. (p. 82)

Ladson-Billings (2022) defines culturally relevant pedagogy as a vision of teaching that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 20). Those referents are intended to be “aspects of the curriculum in their own right,” rather than ways to connect the dominant culture to the students’ classroom culture (p. 20). Many educators make the mistake of focusing on the dominant culture—for teachers in this part of the world, that would be Western European and American, Protestant, White culture—while only adding parts of other cultures when convenient, such as exploring Black and African-American culture only during the month of February, in Black History Month. Teachers who are culturally relevant instead explore the cultures of all students present in their classroom, always finding ways to connect the curriculum back to the lives of their students. Ladson-Billings further defines culturally relevant teachers as:

Teachers who practice culturally relevant methods can be identified in the way they see themselves and others. They see their teaching as an art rather than as a technical skill. They believe that all of their students can succeed rather than that failure is inevitable for some. They see themselves as part of the community and they see teaching as giving back to the community. They help students make

connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities. (Ladson-Billings, 2022, p. 28)

Teachers who are culturally relevant also believe students “come to school with knowledge and that that knowledge must be explored and utilized in order for students to become achievers,” a key characteristic of constructivism (Ladson-Billings, 2022, p. 56). Constructivism is also part of the way students are involved in their own learning process in culturally relevant pedagogy:

Culturally relevant teaching involves students in the knowledge-construction process, so that they can ask significant questions about the nature of the curriculum. The ultimate goal is to ensure that they have a sense of ownership of their knowledge – a sense that it is empowering and liberating. As coconstructors in the knowledge-building process, they are less alienated from it and begin to understand that learning is an important cultural activity. (Ladson-Billings, 2022, p. 84)

Teaching in a culturally relevant way also allows teachers to acknowledge their students’ differences while still embracing equity. “Different children have different needs and addressing those different needs is the best way to deal with them equitably” (Ladson-Billings, 2022, p. 36). Treating every student in the exact same way might seem equal, but it is not equitable. Culturally responsive teachers have taken the time to know all their students, and therefore know which students need extra teacher support to succeed, which students need to try things on their own, or which students need peer support.

Three Components of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. This is an approach to teaching composed of three primary components, according to Ladson-Billings (2021): “academic achievement or student learning, cultural competence, and sociopolitical or critical consciousness” (p. 4).

Academic Achievement or Student Learning. Ladson-Billings (2021) originally intended this component to be titled “academic achievement” but noticed that most people connected that phrase to scores on standardized tests. She later changed it to “student learning” to better reflect the clarity of her meaning, stating “students always learn much more than we can ever test” (p. 5). Simply because students are not traditionally tested on something does not take away its importance.

Cultural Competence. This includes an awareness of all aspects of culture, including history, language, customs and traditions, and knowledge of the community—both the dominant community and others. “Culturally competent students leave school at least bicultural and ideally multicultural” (Ladson-Billings, 2021, p. 5). This means students are familiar with their own culture, the cultures of other students in their classrooms, and the dominant or majority culture of their area.

Sociopolitical or Critical Consciousness. Ladson-Billings (2021) states that “all teaching is political” (p. 6). Every decision a teacher makes in the classroom is a political decision. For students, “sociopolitical/critical consciousness is the essence of education in a democratic society” and students must be able to “apply, analyze, synthesize, and critique their environment and the problems they encounter” (pp. 6-7).

Identity

“Identity is at once personal and sociocultural” (McKoy & Lind, 2023, p. 50). The way people choose to represent themselves comes from both individual characteristics and from the communities they join. With all different characteristics and communities, identity is experienced in multitudes: “neither my self nor my narrative can have...a

single strand. I stand at the crossing point of too many social and cultural forces...my identity has to be perceived as multiple” (Greene, 1995, p. 1).

Mead (2015) wrote about identity as a concept of the self. He also depicted identity as multiples: a person “sees himself from the point of view of one individual or another in the group. These individuals, all related together, give him a certain self” (p. 176). People find ways of defining and describing themselves as individuals, as well as based on the groups they join:

In the same socio-physiological way that the human individual becomes conscious of himself he also becomes conscious of other individuals; and his consciousness both of himself and of other individuals is equally important for his own self-development and for the development of the organized society or social group to which he belongs. (p. 253)

Wenger (1998) also describes identity, stating it is “a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities” (p. 5). Wenger writes of identity through the lens of community, and particularly through communities of practice. He posits that “our identity includes our ability and our inability to shape the meanings that define our communities and our forms of belonging” (p. 145). The communities to which he is referring are communities of practice.

Wenger’s Communities of Practice

“Communities of practice are an integral part of our daily lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar” (Wenger, 1998, p. 7). Communities of practice involve four main ideas: meaning, practice, community, and identity. Everyone is a member of more than one community of practice, and learning occurs within these

communities. Students are members of their school learning community, their cultural communities, and communities based on shared common interests, among others. As students learn within the context of these communities, the knowledge they are learning is also contextual: “knowing is defined only in the context of specific practices, where it arises out of the combination of a regime of competence and an experience of meaning” (p. 141). The gained knowledge informs identity, which has several characteristics: negotiated experience, community membership, learning trajectory, nexus of multimembership, and a relation between the local and the global (p. 149).

Negotiated Experience. Identity is a “way of being in the world” (Wenger, 1998, p. 151). Identity as negotiated experience means “we define who we are by the ways we experience our selves through participation as well as by the ways we and others reify our selves” (p. 149). This means people form their identities based on the events in which they participate, as well as the ways in which they choose to represent themselves.

Community Membership. “Membership in a community of practice translates into identity as a form of competence” (Wenger, 1998, p. 153). People define their identities based on what they know and what they do not know, by “the familiar and the unfamiliar” (p. 149). Community membership provides familiarity, competence, and knowledge, which therefore informs identity.

Learning Trajectory. Wenger (1998) uses the word *trajectory* to suggest not a fixed path but instead a “continuous motion—one that has a momentum of its own” (p. 154). Identity is in flux, always able to change. Viewing identity this way allows people to connect their past, their present, and their future selves: “we define who we are by where we have been and where we are going” (p. 149).

Nexus of Multimembership. All people belong to multiple communities of practice throughout all the stages of their lives. Wenger (1998) writes that “we define who we are by the ways we reconcile our various forms of membership into one identity” (p. 149). People do not define themselves by a single community—like a job or profession, or one aspect of culture, or even a commonly shared interest or hobby—but instead by a combination of all of those and more.

Relation Between the Local and the Global. Identity comes from the ways in which people relate their closer communities of practice—the local—into the wider context of the world—the global. “We define who we are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and of manifesting broader styles and discourses” (p. 149). People think of their identities as a mix, or interplay, of both local and global communities of practice.

Classificatory Systems

Woodward (1997) wrote that identities are produced by representational systems: “Representation includes the signifying practices and symbolic systems through which meanings are produced and which position us as subjects” (p. 14). When someone chooses to identify as something, it is done through a social and relational way that “involves looking at classificatory systems” that show how those social relations are explored (p. 12). People identify in many different ways, and these do not always need to be identical. Instead, “there may be contradictions within them which have to be negotiated” by the individual person (p. 12). People may identify in one particular way that shares contradictions with another way they identify, and it is up to each person to navigate those contradictions within themselves.

These classificatory systems “draw on social and symbolic systems” (Woodward, 1997, p. 38). The ways people identify often involve external signs or attributes that signal their identities to others. “There is thus an ongoing process of identification, where we seek some unified sense of ourselves through symbolic systems and identify with the ways in which we are seen by others” (p. 45).

Difference. Identity comes through “the marking of difference,” which could seem contradictory; however, identity “depends on difference” (Woodward, 1997, p. 29). When people are thinking about who they are, how they will identify, they are thinking in a “us versus them” mentality. Identity comes not only from finding similar characteristics in the group with which one is choosing to identify, but also from finding the differences from the other groups. Woodward further explains this: “A classificatory system applies a principle of difference to a population in such a way as to be able to divide them and all their characteristics into at least two, opposing groups – us/them; self/other” (p. 29).

Culture in Identity

Culture plays an important role in identity formation. Each culture “contains its own distinctive ways of classifying the world” (Woodward, 1997, p. 30). When classification and difference are what help people find their identity, that demonstrates the critical nature of culture in identity. Within classificatory systems, “culture gives us the means by which to make sense of the social world and to construct meanings” (p. 30).

Social Processes. Identity formation comes through the social encounters and rules that make up various cultures; it is related to the social construction of learning. Chen (2009) wrote of this social nature: “Without the other, there is no self; the self emerges only through social processes in which one can role-take with the other and

generate meaning based on the other's responses to one's act" (p. 4). Therefore, identity is a constant part of social life, an action rather than an adjective. People are always "acting out certain forms of meaning-making" (p. 9).

Mead (2015) was a psychologist who wrote of identity in terms of the self and linked identity to social processes: "The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience" (p. 140). Those social experiences begin with birth, as identity is formed through growth and development. Mead further wrote that the self's development "arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (p. 135). The self develops within the constraints of culture:

The self appears in experience essentially as a 'me' with the organization of the community to which it belongs. This organization is, of course, expressed in the particular endowment and particular social situation of the individual. He is a member of the community, but he is a particular part of the community, with a particular heredity and position which distinguishes him from anybody else. He is what he is in so far as he is a member of this community, and the raw materials out of which this particular individual is born would not be a self but for his relationship to others in the community of which he is a part. (Mead, 2015, p. 200)

Culture, therefore, has an important role in the development of identity.

Musical Identity

Musical identity is formed through personal experiences as well as membership in music-making communities of practice. Identity comes from all types of musical skills and knowledge, and is viewed through the lens of context. Lucy Green (2011) writes of musical identity:

Musical identities are forged from a combination of personal, individual musical experiences on one hand, and membership in various social groups—from the family to the nation-state and beyond—on the other hand. They encompass musical tastes, values, practices (including reception activities such as listening or dancing), skills, and knowledge; and they are wrapped up with how, where, when, and why those tastes, values, practices, skills, and knowledge were acquired or transmitted. (p. 1)

Much of the music people enjoy has a cultural context, which means their musical identities can have a cultural context, as well. Green (2011) posits that people feel “the pull of musical identity formation as a way to express their local, ethnic, or national selves” (p. 15). Musical identity is not limited to national borders, but in all ways that culture can be expressed: “many factors influence musical identity formation, including age, gender, musical preferences,” as well as the contexts in which people live (Marsh, 2011, p. 22).

Children form their musical identities through “informal games and their formal educational experiences in schools” (Green, 2011, p. 16). The rhythms and musical elements they learn in their kindergarten music classes with experienced teachers have just as much importance as the rhyming songs they learn on the playground from their peers. Children are exposed to music from multiple sources: “family, friends, individual teachers, schools and other institutions, and the community all foster musical identities” (p. 17). Musical identity comes from performance opportunities, listening opportunities, and “through being involved in expressive decision making concerning a range of musical parameters” (Davis, 2011, p. 267). Every time students are involved in the music-making process, they are learning in ways that can inform their identity.

In the next chapter, I will examine research methodology, with a focus on qualitative research. I will also explore phenomenology, arts-based research, narrative

inquiry, and bricolage. I will finish with a discussion of the methodology of my specific study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

For this study, I have chosen a qualitative approach in my exploration of cultural responsiveness within choir and orchestra music ensembles over the course of a single school year. I will examine various aspects of qualitative research before relating them back to my study.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research relies on data collection methods like interviews and surveys, and answers open-ended questions. It can be complex and unstructured. Research results are often more subjective. Simply put, qualitative research is a research methodology that uses observations, rather than numerical measurements, as data.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) define qualitative research as:

...a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

Situated activities have a culture and a context and cannot be separated from either one, which is why qualitative researchers observe and study these activities in the settings in which they naturally occur. Researchers interpret their observations with a sensitivity to the contextual meanings.

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Some of the important concepts in this research methodology include: meaning; validity and credibility; the establishment of credibility; reliability; generalizability and transferability; researcher bias; ethics; and bracketing.

Meaning. This is a vital component of qualitative research. Those who research “are interested in how different people make sense of their lives,” which is also called “participant perspectives” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 7). It is important that the researcher accurately assesses the participants’ perspectives and must therefore continually ask themselves about the meaning or motive behind the data. Constructivism teaches there are multiple perspectives, with each person creating their own valid and valued meaning and is thus a crucial lens through which qualitative researchers view their data.

Validity and Credibility. Given (2008) defines credibility as

The methodological procedures and sources used to establish a high level of harmony between the participants’ expressions and the researcher’s interpretations of them. The basic notion with credibility is that both the readers and participants must be able to look at the research design and have it make sense to them. (p. 138)

While qualitative research is more concerned with the concept of credibility, validity does have a place; if the qualitative researcher is ethical and ensures all research procedures are clear, logical, and part of an accepted methodology, the study is considered valid. Validity also “refers broadly to the ‘goodness’ or ‘soundness’ of a study” (Given, 2008, p. 909).

Establishment of Credibility. Credibility requires several important steps to ensure the data is being interpreted by the qualitative researcher in an appropriate way.

Among them: triangulation, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, negative case analysis, and member checks. All of these are defined below.

Triangulation. This is one of the important ways that research findings are considered credible. Lincoln and Guba (1985) refer to radio triangulation as a possible source for the name, or the use of directional antennae to perceive a point of origin. Triangulation is defined in qualitative research as “the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories” (p. 305). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) outline the concept as less of a triangle, and more of a crystal; the three-dimensional shape has many facets, all refracting within itself. With a crystal, triangulation becomes “the display of multiple, refracted realities simultaneously” (p. 6).

Peer Debriefing. This particular credibility technique is the process of “exposing oneself to a disinterested peer...for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). This is meant to keep the qualitative researcher honest in four main ways:

- by “exposing him or her to searching questions by an experienced protagonist doing his or her best to play the devil’s advocate”
- providing “an initial and searching opportunity to test working hypotheses that may be emerging in the inquirer’s mind”
- providing “the opportunity to develop and initially test next steps in the emerging methodological design”
- providing the researcher with “an opportunity for catharsis, thereby clearing the mind of emotions and feelings that may be clouding good judgement or preventing emergence of sensible next steps” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308).

Within peer debriefing, it is important that the debriefer “not be someone in an authority relationship to the inquirer” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 309). This could look like other PhD students within a common cohort meeting to debrief with each other.

Prolonged Engagement. Lincoln and Guba (1985) characterize prolonged engagement as “the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes: learning the “culture,” testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondents, and building trust” (p. 301). This also requires the qualitative researcher to be engaged with the setting or participants “sufficiently long enough to detect and take account of distortions that might otherwise creep into the data” (p. 302). Bresler (1996a) posits that prolonged engagement is “necessary in order to develop familiarity and determine important issues” while also establishing “participant trust which allows a researcher access to what is often a semi-private setting and observation of participants behaving naturally” (p. 134).

Persistent Observation. The purpose of persistent observation is “to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the problem or issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 304). While prolonged engagement provides the wider picture for the research study, persistent observation provides the depth of the study.

Negative Case Analysis. A negative case is something that does not fit the researcher’s current theory or hypothesis. While quantitative researchers remove these outliers, qualitative researchers seek to revise their hypotheses to incorporate this new data because “negative cases are integral to strengthening findings” (Given, 2008, p. 552). “Negative cases are not a rare occurrence, but rather are a natural part of any study” (p. 552). Qualitative researchers often actively seek out negative cases, looking for the “outlying data that could disprove the working hypothesis or confirm an alternative one, intervening variables that might refute assumed causal relationships, as well as collecting

new data from additional sources” (p. 552). This is so the researcher can refine their hypothesis until it accounts for all known cases without exception.

Member Checks. “Once the interviewer writes a report on the interviews, he or she may share the report with the participants” (Seidman, 1998, p. 82). When doing a study in the field of education, this often means sharing findings throughout the research process with the students in the study. “Member checking is both informal and formal, and it occurs continuously” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314).

The member check (also referred to as member or respondent validation) is a strategy most often used to optimize the validity of qualitative research findings. Research participants are asked to evaluate one or more of the following: whether (a) researchers accurately rendered their experiences that were the target of study, in the service of what Joseph Maxwell described as descriptive validity; (b) researchers fully captured the meaning those experiences had for them, in the service of what Maxwell called interpretive validity; or whether (c) researchers’ final interpretive (e.g., ethnographic, phenomenological) accounts of those experiences do justice to them, in the service of what Maxwell called theoretical validity. (Given, 2008, p. 501)

When working with children, the qualitative researcher may desire to approach this differently depending on the age of the students. High school students could handle this one way while elementary school students will need more careful preparation.

Reliability. Reliability comes when two different researchers are looking at the same setting and participants and finding the same conclusions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). When only one researcher is conducting the study, peer debriefing can help ensure reliability. “Qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations” (p. 40). A broad definition of reliability is the “dependability, consistency, and/or repeatability of a project’s data collection,

interpretation, and/or analysis” (Given, 2008, p. 753). Within qualitative research, this is not a set of guiding principles or requirements, but is more individualized.

Generalizability and Transferability. “When researchers use the term generalizability, they usually are referring to whether the findings of a particular study hold up beyond the specific research subjects and the setting involved” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 36). This idea is more used in quantitative research, when numerical data can be analyzed for a single conclusion. In qualitative research, transferability is more useful. Qualitative researchers want others to see their conclusions and transfer them to their own new or different situations. To ensure their research is transferable, qualitative researchers need to consider two things: “(a) How closely the participants are linked to the context being studied, and (b) the contextual boundaries of the findings” (Given, 2008, p. 886). This is further accomplished through thick description and purposeful sampling.

Researcher Bias. “Objectivity in its pure form is an unattainable state” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 108). Therefore, it is imperative that qualitative researchers are not only aware of their subjectivity, but also map out their biases and write them into their research reports. Qualitative researchers “objectively study the subjective states of their subjects. While the idea that researchers can transcend some of their own biases might be difficult to accept in the beginning, the methods researchers use aid this process” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 37). The specific methods are mentioned above, including triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking.

“The researcher’s primary goal is to add to knowledge, not to pass judgement on a setting” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 38). One of the best ways to ensure that is for the

qualitative researcher to admit their own inherent bias. Without doing so, “there is no hope of dealing with the influence of values” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 185-186). Researchers should therefore “systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). The key word in that statement is “systematic,” since this standardizes the procedure and ensures the researcher does not miss any aspects of their own bias.

Ethics. “Being an ethical and responsible researcher is more difficult than it first appears” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 53). Two main issues influence ethics in research working with people: “informed consent and the protection of informants from harm” (p. 48). There are official guidelines in place to ensure those issues are handled carefully, including subjects participating in the research voluntarily, with full understanding of the research study and all dangers or obligations. Participants are also not to be exposed to any risks “greater than the gains they might derive” (p. 48). Additionally, “fully informed consent must be obtained formally” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 254).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) list seven guidelines for ethical approaches to fieldwork:

- avoid any settings where participants are forced to participate
- honor the privacy of all participants
- respect and acknowledge the time commitments for all participants, especially noting the differences in time commitments between participant observation and interviewing
- all participant identities are further protected so that published research findings do not embarrass them
- respect all participants and honor their willing cooperation
- create a contract outlining all expectations with the participants, and stick to that agreement
- tell the truth when writing the research report (p. 49-50).

Qualitative researchers also use an institutional review board (IRB) which are “official university bodies in the United States that are authorized to evaluate research proposals to ensure ethical research practices” (Given, 2008, p. 439).

Part of upholding the model of ethical research relies entirely on the personality or character traits of the researcher themselves:

Crucial to ethical behavior is an experientially and character-driven sense of what is salient and appropriate in particular situations, such that one does the right thing, at the right time, toward the right person, in the right company, in the right way, and with right intent. (Bresler, 2006, p. 64)

This is particularly important due to the “power relationships between researcher and researched” (Bresler, 1996a, p. 135). Researchers must be committed to using qualitative methodology as “a reflective stance on the research process and on its intellectual/emotional/political outcomes” (p. 135). The “representation of truth” in the research “is based on ontological and epistemological world views, yet it carries important implications for ethics” because it matters whose truth is represented (p. 136). If the researcher makes a point to only represent their own truth, that is not ethical research.

Bracketing. The SAGE Encyclopedia (2008) defines this term as a deceptively simple yet “profoundly complex” idea (p. 63).

At its core, bracketing is a scientific process where a researcher suspends or holds in abeyance his or her presuppositions, biases, assumptions, theories, or previous experiences to see and describe the essence of a specific phenomenon. This process allows a focused researcher to observe the unfiltered phenomenon as it is at its essence, without the influence of our natural attitude—individual and societal constructions, presumptions, and assumptions. (p. 63)

A qualitative researcher will need to identify their biases within their work, which is similar to bracketing, as explained above.

Phenomenology

“Phenomenology is, in a broad sense, a philosophy or *theory of the unique*; it is interested in what is essentially not replaceable” (van Manen, 1997, p. 7). Max van Manen writes extensively about phenomenology:

The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence—in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful: a notion by which a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience. (van Manen, 1990, p. 36)

Others have slight variations with their definitions. “A phenomenological study describes the meanings of a lived experience” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 36). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) express, “Many anthropologists operate from a phenomenological perspective in their studies of education” (p. 30). Combining key terms within qualitative research, van Manen (1997) posits, “Hermeneutic phenomenology is a philosophy of the personal, the individual, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the *logos* of *other*, the *whole*, the *communal*, or the *social*” (p. 7).

The SAGE Encyclopedia (2008) promotes the philosophy of phenomenology in research:

Sometimes, the best way to enter a person’s lifeworld is to participate in it. For example, to gain access to the experience of young children, it may be important to play with them and follow them into their play spaces. Participatory and close observation generates different forms of experiential material than is obtained through written or interview approaches. Observational method may require that one be a participant and an observer at the same time, maintaining an orientation of reflectivity while guarding against the more manipulative and artificial attitude that a reflective attitude tends to insert in a social situation and relation. (p. 618)

van Manen (1997) also writes substantially about phenomenological research:

From a phenomenological point of view, to do research is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to *know* the world is profoundly to *be* in the world in a certain way, the act of researching—questioning—theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to *become* the world. (p. 5)

Additionally, “What first of all characterizes phenomenological research is that it always begins in the lifeworld” (van Manen, 1997, p. 7). He also writes that the research “reintegrates part and whole, the contingent and the essential, value and desire. It encourages a certain attentive awareness to the details and seemingly trivial dimensions of our everyday educational lives” (p. 8). Within his book, *Researching Lived Experience*, he lists several criteria or additional definitions for phenomenological research:

- it is the study of lived experience
- it is the explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness
- it is the study of essences
- it is the description of the experiential meanings we live as we live them
- it is the human scientific study of phenomena
- it is the attentive practice of thoughtfulness
- it is a search for what it means to be human
- it is a poetizing activity (pp. 9-13).

Arts-Based Research

Arts based research is “an approach to research that we define as a method designed to enlarge human understanding” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 8). It is not any easier than quantitative research or other forms of qualitative research, despite a general anecdotal perception of the arts as something less difficult. However, “art is not an ornament on a form of productive work; it is essential to what it communicates and what critically effects its reception” (p. 61).

Barone (2001) listed qualities that turn texts of educational inquiry into *arts based texts*:

- the presence of expressive, contextualized, and vernacular forms of language
- the promotion of empathic participation in the lives of characters
- the creation of a virtual reality
- the presence of aesthetic form
- the presence of the author's personal signature
- a degree of textual ambiguity. (p. 154)

“Research is...a process of *researching*—that is, of coming back again and again to perceived phenomena, scrutinizing the world, and thereby reexperiencing it” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 47). Within that idea of research, “arts based research is, at its deepest level, about artistic and aesthetic approaches to raising and addressing social issues” (p. 57). A key idea about arts based research is its “capacity for enhancing alternative meanings that adhere to social phenomena, thereby undercutting the authority of the master narrative” (p. 124).

“Only the compositions of artists and arts based researchers can redirect conversations about social phenomena by enabling others *to vicariously reexperience the world*” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 20). This is in part because:

The artist is a researcher with his or whole organism, inquiring, testing with the body as well as the mind, sensing and seeing, responding and retesting – a multitude of functions performed simultaneously – registering complexity, then sorting, finding a pattern, making meaning. (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 43)

After all, “some of the most valuable research is not at all scientific, where science means, in general, quantification of data and the application of statistical methods to determine causal relationships” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 2).

Within the arts, diversity is praised and expected. This does shine through in arts based research, as identified by Barone and Eisner (2012): “the arts are important as a means through which understanding is promoted...because its expansion serves as a marker that diversity in methodology is possible” (p. 4).

“The well-designed experiment can have artistic features” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 48). There is not necessarily a divide between art and science in research. “The arts...are concerned with the processes of questioning and knowing. The arts, like the sciences, convey to us images in a variety of sensory modalities through which we come to notice what we haven’t previously seen” (p. 52). Further, “science, when taken to its height, can be regarded as an art” (p. 52).

The product of arts based research is “research that has elegance and subtlety, which promotes meaning not only through its literal or discursive features but because of its metaphorical and qualitative features as well” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 48). This means the research will address “complex and often subtle interactions” while providing “an image of those interactions in ways that make them noticeable” (p. 3). Additionally, “arts based research is a heuristic through which we deepen and make more complex our understanding of some aspect of the world” (p. 3). Arts based research is “the conscious pursuit of expressive form in the service of understanding” (p. 7).

“The end in view is not to arrive at a singular and unchallengeable slice of knowledge,” but to ask more questions (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 53). The result is a “politically powerful work...that stands on firm ethical grounds, an aesthetically powerful work of arts based research with the potential to change the world for the better” (p. 136). This type of research asks people to abandon “the notion that the

research process...should *always* result in a more persuasive argument or interpretation of how social and cultural phenomena are best perceived or conceptualized” (p. 14). The intent is simply to “open up possibilities rather than to converge upon a single correct and true answer to a question or solution to a problem” (p. 158).

“In a truly ethical process of arts based research and composition, the researcher must be a writer rather than an author” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 134). The term *author* implies a sense of authority and finality, while the term *writer* invites discourse and conversations about change. Further:

Arts based researchers may never escape the fact that, in addressing social issues, they will inevitably, in one way or another, explicitly or less so, be dealing with power relationships and therefore ethical issues that exist within the sociocultural landscape they choose to portray. (p. 128)

Ethics and a sense of “intellectual honesty requires arts based researchers to attend overtly to – and even explicitly reveal – those power relationships” (Barone & Eisner, 2012, p. 128). Explicitly stating and exploring the researcher’s biases is one way to handle ethical concerns in arts based research.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is “a way of understanding and inquiring into experience” that is “situated in relationships and in community, and it attends to notions of expertise and knowing in relational and participatory ways” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 13). Narrative inquiry comes from a tradition of qualitative research with roots in the work of John Dewey. Dewey wrote about experience, which is “what we study, and we study it narratively because narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 18). Bruner (2002) posited “we are so

adept at narrative that it seems almost as natural as language itself” (p. 3). People use narrative to give “shape to things in the real world” and “a title to reality” (p. 8). In short, narrative provides “models of the world” (p. 25) through which we “construct, reconstruct, in some ways reinvent yesterday and tomorrow. Memory and imagination fuse in the process” (p. 93).

“Narrative inquiry begins and ends with a respect for ordinary lived experience,” making it an excellent tool for research in education (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18). Narratives can be “strategic, functional, and purposeful,” with the ordinary lives of students and teachers providing a wealth of information that can “mobilize others into action for progressive social change” (Riessman, 2008, pp. 8-9). Compared to a quantitative study with many different cases all condensed to form a “one size fits all” conclusion, in “narrative study, however, attention shifts to the details—how and why a particular event is storied, perhaps, or what a narrator accomplishes by developing the story *that* way, and effects on the reader or listener” (pp. 12-13).

Polkinghorne (1988) also describes using single cases to make meaning, stating “the purpose of descriptive narrative research is to produce an accurate description of the interpretive narrative accounts individuals or groups use to make sequences of events in their lives or organizations meaningful” (pp. 161-162). This sort of narrative is “polyphonic, respecting the variety of languages found within the dialogue between the author of a work, its various characters, and its readers” (Barone, 2001, p. 156).

Narrative inquiry is appropriate for research with an emergent design: One of the methodological principles we were taught in quantitative analysis courses was to specify hypotheses to be tested in research. It does not work like that in narrative inquiry. The purposes, and what one is exploring and finds puzzling, change as the research progresses. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 73)

Additionally, though narrative inquiry always has purpose and focus, those may “blur and move. Narrative inquiry boundaries expand and contract, and wherever they are at any point in time, they are...interactively permeable” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 115). Qualitative researchers “experience shifts and changes, constantly negotiating, constantly reevaluating, and maintaining flexibility and openness to an ever-changing landscape” (p. 71).

Narrative inquiry “is both the phenomenon and the method of the social sciences” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 18). This particular method of research is “a form of living, a way of life” (p. 78). Witherell (1991) writes, “The coherence of self is grounded in its narrative structure,” referencing the way humans understand their lives through story (p. 92). The use of narrative helps us to understand our lived experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Narrative inquiry must have a sensitivity to the flow of time: “narrative construction is an approach to social research in which data are configured into any of a variety of diachronic, or storied, formats” (Barone, 2007, p. 454). This helps to show “the significance that events have for one another,” which can be used to illustrate various conclusions for qualitative research studies (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 13). In addition to the chronological flow of time, narrative must focus on what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call the four directions: “*inward* and *outward*, *backward* and *forward*” (p. 50). “To experience an experience—that is, to do research into an experience—is to experience it simultaneously in these four ways and to ask questions pointing each way” (p. 50).

Narrative is not only stories; this type of research can involve more. Narrative has “come to refer to almost anything that uses...stories as data, narrative or story as representational form, narrative as content analysis, narrative as structure, and so forth” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 11). Bruner (2002) questions narrative as various types of stories: “Are stories real or imagined?” (p. 22). He suggests as an answer, that “stories are always told from a particular perspective,” which may or may not be the “real” perspective (p. 23). This is also an ethical consideration since stories form the backbone of the data in narrative inquiry as well as the mode of representation of the data.

Within the concept of stories as data, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define various types of field texts that may be written and reviewed as part of the research process and results:

We explore the use of teacher stories; autobiographical writing; journal writing; field notes; letters; conversation; research interviews; family stories; documents; photographs, memory boxes, and other personal-family-social artifacts; and life experience—all of which can make valuable field texts. (pp. 92-93)

Bruner (2002) suggests there are two modes of thought: paradigmatic or logico-scientific and narrative. Paradigmatic is an analysis of narrative using deductive reasoning, relying on “the verification of well-formed propositions about how things are” (p. 101). Narrative reasoning is inductive, with understanding coming through the creation of a story, and “directed toward the world, not toward how things are but toward how things might be or might have been” (p. 101).

Making Meaning. “Narrative is a form of ‘meaning making’” that “recognizes the meaningfulness of individual experiences by noting how they function as parts in a whole” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 36). This means narrative inquiry is “a form of

qualitative research that focuses on the way people make meaning of their lives and their interactions with each other through the vehicle of story” (Blair, 2009b). People are always telling the stories of their lives to make meaning of situations and to relive those situations. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) articulate this, also: “In the construction of narratives of experience, there is a reflexive relationship between living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story” (p. 71).

Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space. Narrative inquiry is about “*personal* and *social* (interaction); *past*, *present*, and *future* (continuity); combined with the notion of *place* (situation)” which creates a “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). Researchers working within this space will see themselves as “always *in the midst*—located somewhere along the dimensions of time, place, the personal, and the social” (p. 63). This space is for collaboration between the researcher and the participants. The researcher will enter this space “in the midst” and progress “in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that made up people’s lives, both individual and social” (p. 20).

Ethical Concerns. “Narrative inquiry is a deeply ethical project” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 30). Ethics are infused into the entire process and will “shift and change as we move through an inquiry” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 170). Anonymity is one of the most “troubling” ethical issues throughout narrative inquiry in particular and qualitative research as a whole (p. 174). There will be many tensions between the collected data and maintaining participant anonymity. Some data may be unable to be published due to anonymity concerns.

Field texts can also present ethical concerns, “because field texts are our way of talking about what passes for data in narrative inquiry and because data tend to carry with them the idea of objective representation of research experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 93). These texts can “also say much about what is not said and not noticed” (p. 93). Furthermore, “a researcher is, even with the best of intentions of getting everything down, unable to do so” (p. 93). This can provide limitations to the validity of the data if the researcher has not accounted for it.

Relationship With Participants. “Narrative inquiry is relational” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81). Researchers “must ‘fall in love’ with their participants, yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of the participants, as well as the larger landscape on which they all live” (p. 81). This also means that “good narrative working relationships carry with them a sad and wistful sense born of the possibility of temporariness” (p. 72). The researcher will become part of the participants’ lives and the participants will become part of the researcher’s life.

Throughout the research process, narrative inquirers “seek ways of enriching and transforming that experience for themselves and others” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 18).

Additionally:

As narrative inquirers we work within the space not only with our participants but also with ourselves. Working in this space means that we become visible with our own lived and told stories. Sometimes, this means that our own unnamed, perhaps secret, stories come to light as much as do those of our participants. This confronting of ourselves in our narrative past makes us vulnerable as inquirers because it makes secret stories public. In narrative inquiry, it is impossible (or if not impossible, then deliberately self-deceptive) as researcher to stay silent or to present a kind of perfect, idealized, inquiring, moralizing self. (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 61-62)

It is not just the participants who learn from and experience the research process; narrative inquirers are also “having an experience, the experience of the inquiry that entails the experience they set out to explore” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81). Often, the person who ends up the most changed from the entire process is the researcher themselves.

Bricolage

The concept of *bricolage* comes from the blurred genres phase of the humanities, which then in turn was applied to qualitative research. Researchers became *bricoleurs*, “learning how to borrow from many different disciplines” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). This means they used a “wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the subject matter” (pp. 3-4). Further, a *bricoleur* as qualitative researcher will use the “aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, or empirical materials are at hand” (p. 4).

Qualitative Methods Used in this Study

Given the nature of the questions I am asking, qualitative research best fits my study. I thought my top-performing auditioned choir and orchestra ensembles would be the most appropriate for this study as the available performance repertoire would be more authentic. Additionally, most of those students will have taken at least one semester of our Theory of Knowledge (TOK) course over the duration of my research, and therefore feel more confident with the type of self-reflection I was asking of them. I also thought it would be beneficial that I had taught all of these students for at least one full year at this point, knew them well, and had a more longitudinal relationship with them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data Collection

I first collected data from students about multiple ways of identifying: cultural identities, religious affiliations, proficient spoken languages, basic spoken languages, and any other identities they may have chosen to share with me. Those others include hobbies, sexual orientation, gender identity, astrological signs, and even their favorite color. Students also shared the role of music in their homes: some grew up as the only musician in their household, while other students had parents in the regional professional symphony orchestra, and still others had families that never listened to music other than religious music.

I then asked students to complete an assignment that I called a Musical Journey. I asked them to share about the role of music within their lives, starting with their immediate family. They told me about any instruments their parents and siblings played, or if anyone was involved in music, either as a hobby or something more professional or formal. Then I asked them to share important musical milestones, and their favorite pieces or songs from various times in their lives. I asked them to consider this a document that detailed the important steps along their journey to our music ensembles. I included this information as part of their musical and cultural background.

Throughout the school year, I recorded ensemble rehearsals, sectional rehearsals, individual interviews, and group interviews. I also asked students to fill out several surveys over the course of the school year. Based on the initial survey about the ways in which my students identify, I chose repertoire for the school year that reflected the interests and identities of almost every student. I also offered multiple opportunities for students and community members to step in as a more knowledgeable other. For example

if we were performing a piece of music in choir that used a Hindi text, I asked our students who could speak Hindi, either proficiently or at a more basic level, if they wanted to work with the choir on the text pronunciation, or any other musical dimension, as we were learning and rehearsing the music.

Throughout our concert preparations, I listened to my recordings and read survey results, using those to plan and guide the next rehearsals. After concerts, I surveyed students and had them complete a concert reflection assignment, asking them about their connections to the music they performed. As I began to analyze the data, I was looking for connections among the identities that students brought to the classroom and the repertoire to which they felt the strongest connections.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Throughout the study, I was continually reviewing the data I had collected, writing field notes after each recording and observation, and making connections of my own with the students' survey answers. I brought my notes and data to meetings with my doctoral cohort, sharing my thought process with all of them. I would leave those meetings with more questions to ask my students, more literature to explore, and different interpretive possibilities. I would then come back to my classroom with fresh eyes, ready to examine the data anew.

Context of the Study

I work at a unique school, with a curriculum, environment, culture, staff, and student population that do not fit into typical American high school norms. Those very differences are what led me to this study.

School Background

I teach at a rigorous academic magnet high school in a suburb of a greater metropolitan area in the Midwest region of the United States. It is part of one school district but draws students from all over the metropolitan area. Approximately half of the student population comes from the home school district, while the other half comes from out-of-district. Our teachers and staff are also employed primarily by the home school district, but some have contracts through other school districts.

One of the bigger changes from traditional American high schools is that our school does not offer sports. Students wishing to participate in team sports must join the teams of the other high schools in our school district. A few years ago, we set up a house system: all students are sorted into one of six houses, and they participate in weekly meetings led by teachers and elected peers. The house system serves as a vehicle for school spirit, like sports would be in a typical high school, as well as a homeroom opportunity. We also spend a lot of time in the weekly meetings with mental health topics and social-emotional learning. I am assigned a group of students that stay with me for their entire four years at the school, and I work to build a rapport with them.

Prospective students to my school apply as eighth graders and are assigned a random number through a lottery process. Those with lower numbers are called first, and if they pass on their spot, we move through the list toward the higher numbers. All prospective students take an entrance exam that assesses their writing and math abilities, which we use to place them on a math track. Because students must opt into this high school and take a test, we tend to see similar profiles in our students: motivated, studious, academically talented, and agentive.

In a typical school year, our school has around 540 to 550 students in four grades: ninth through twelfth. The table below (Table 1) shows our grade breakdown for the 2022-2023 school year, the year of my study. The music department has about 330 students each year in band, choir, and orchestra. The International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum requires two years of a fine art in ninth and tenth grades, and many of our students continue in music in eleventh and twelfth grades as well. We also offer the Diploma Programme (DP) Music course, an additional music class for eleventh and twelfth graders who are interested in learning more about music history, theory, analysis, and composition. I teach the choirs, orchestras, and junior year level of DP Music: three choirs separated by ability, two orchestras separated by ability, and DP 1 Music. I also supervise two after-school music clubs, Glee Club and Full Orchestra.

Student Grade	
9 th	141
10 th	143
11 th	128
12 th	126

Table 1. *Student population by grade*

Students take eight classes per semester in a block schedule: four ninety-minute blocks each day. We do not offer many electives, so most students have a similar schedule throughout their four years. The teachers work hard to ensure our curriculum is interconnected and holistic, so students can see both a micro perspective—the curriculum of each individual class—as well as a macro perspective in the way their new knowledge relates to everything else. All students take a class in Language Acquisition, with four full years of learning to speak the language plus two additional semesters in culture.

Students can choose either French or Spanish, and the ultimate goal of the course is to at least be competent at a basic daily-use level.

Almost every student participates in at least one after-school club. Most students stay after school an extra half hour every day, often longer, using that time for club meetings, study sessions, and extra meetings with teachers. Our teachers are required to have office hours three days per week after school, making us available for student questions. It helps encourage stronger teacher-student relationships within the classroom, too.

Demographics

In a typical school year, approximately 80% of my students identify as Asian, 10% as European or American, 8-9% as Middle Eastern, and 1-2% as Black, African, or African-American. There is a minority-majority culture in our building, with most of our students identifying as South Asian. The table below shows the racial breakdown for the year I did my study.

Student Race	
Hispanic/Latinx	5
Not Hispanic/Latinx	533
Asian	437
Caucasian/European	53
Middle Eastern	40
Black/African American	8

Table 2. *Student population by race*

The majority of our students are first- and second-generation immigrants (see Table 3).

Student Birthplace	
Australia	1
Bangladesh	6
Canada	5

China	1
Great Britain	1
India	37
Iran	1
Iraq	1
Japan	2
Jordan	1
Lebanon	1
Mexico	1
The Philippines	1
Ukraine	5
United States	474

Table 3. *Student population by birthplace*

Many students speak languages other than English at home. The table below is family-reported data when students register to attend our school. Some families skip the language questions, so I know these numbers are underreported, but it does give a decent picture of how many languages are represented at our school. When I review my data in the next chapter, the languages represented by my ensembles exceed this list, which again helps me to see how underreported this information truly is.

Student Home Language	
Arabic	9
Bengali	29
Bosnian	1
Chaldean	2
Chinese	2
Filipino	1
Gujarati	5
Hindi	10
Japanese	3
Kannada	6
Korean	3
Malagasy	1
Malayalam	12
Mandarin	1
Marathi	7
Mongolian	1

Persian Farsi	1
Polish	2
Punjabi	5
Romanian	2
Spanish	2
Syriac	1
Tagalog	1
Tamil	18
Telugu	23
Ukrainian	14
Urdu	9

Table 4. *Languages spoken at home*

The International Baccalaureate Programme

We are one of the largest full-diploma International Baccalaureate (IB) high schools in the world, with all students taking classes toward their IB diploma. Our diploma acquisition rate is consistently above the world average, usually in the 80-90% range.

See Figure 1 below, taken from the IB curriculum, which offers a heuristic of the IB approach to teaching and learning. The center of the circle is the student themselves, with a focus on the IB Learner Profile. The Learner Profile is a list of ten attributes that we encourage all students to be: inquirers, knowledgeable, thinkers, communicators, principled, open-minded, caring, risk-takers, balanced, and reflective. The next circle is for Approaches to Teaching and Approaches to Learning (ATL), two sets of life skills designed to teach students how to learn. The ATL include: thinking skills, research skills, communication skills, social skills, and self-management skills.

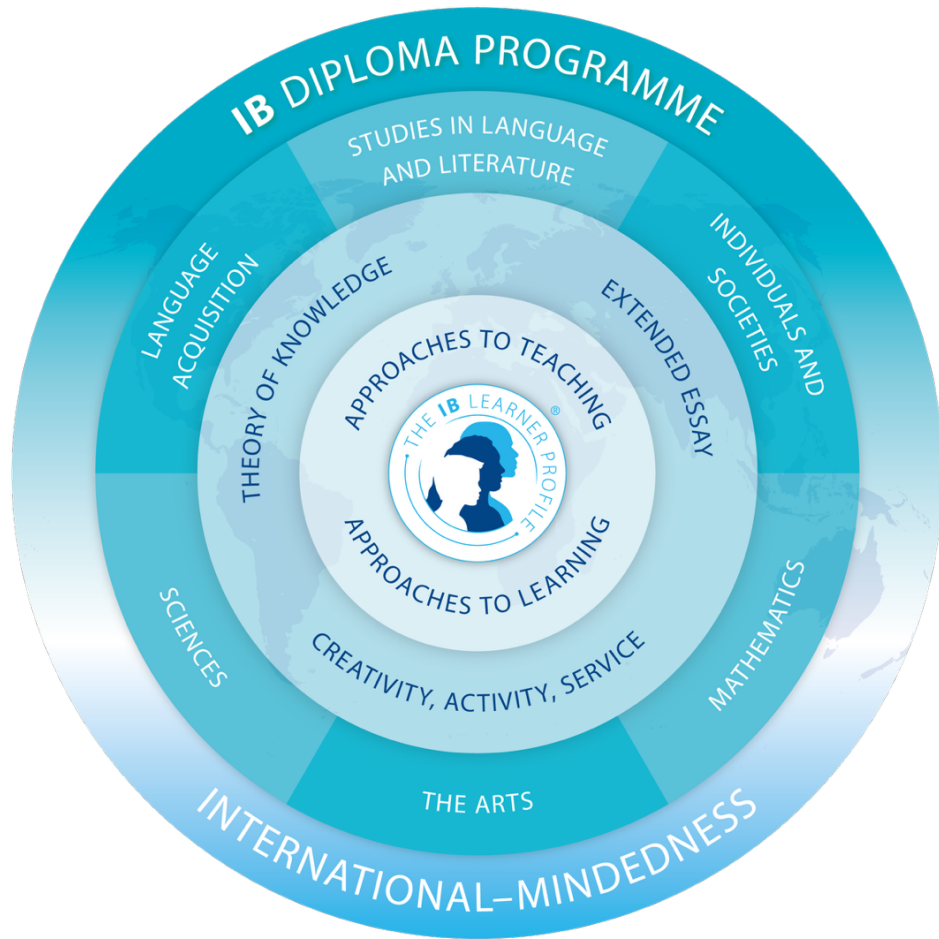


Figure 1. *IB diploma programme model*

The next circle is the DP Core: the Extended Essay (EE); Creativity, Activity, and Service (CAS); and Theory of Knowledge (TOK). The EE is a 4,000 word essay on a topic of each student's choosing and is completed in the junior year. It is a self-directed research paper that examines a research question. CAS requires students to complete tasks with a focus on each of the three aspects: creative pursuits like the arts, activities like sports, and community service opportunities. Students write reflections about each of their tasks and end with a CAS project that challenges them in some way. I will explain TOK in the next section, as it is a large part of our school curriculum.

The curricular circle is divided into six equal parts, designed that way to assert that no one section is meant to be more important than the others. The six subjects are: Language and Literature, Individuals and Societies, Mathematics, the Arts, Sciences, and Language Acquisition. Individuals and Societies comprise a multitude of courses, including economics, history, psychology, and global politics. The curriculum of the IB is designed for well-rounded students who are interested in globally-minded cross-curricular connections, rather than simply a STEM focus.

Theory of Knowledge

Theory of Knowledge (TOK) is one third of the Diploma Programme core, and represented in three semester-long courses at our school. Students take the first semester in their junior year, and the other two as a senior. TOK is also infused organically within all other courses. It asks students to reflect critically upon the knowledge they already have, as well as the new knowledge acquired throughout their IB courses. Students reflect upon the nature of their knowledge, how they acquired it, and its limitations. Our students are accustomed to discussions about identity, culture, metacognition, and self-reflection, as these discussions happen not only in TOK, but across all grade levels and subjects in our school.

The IB course guide for TOK lists seven aims of the course:

- to encourage students to reflect on the central question, “How do we know that?”, and to recognize the value of asking that question
- to expose students to ambiguity, uncertainty and questions with multiple plausible answers
- to equip students to effectively navigate and make sense of the world, and help prepare them to encounter novel and complex situations
- to encourage students to be more aware of their own perspectives and to reflect critically on their own beliefs and assumptions

- to engage students with multiple perspectives, foster open-mindedness and develop intercultural understanding
- to encourage students to make connections between academic disciplines by exploring underlying concepts and by identifying similarities and differences in the methods of inquiry used in different areas of knowledge
- to prompt students to consider the importance of values, responsibilities and ethical concerns relating to the production, acquisition, application and communication of knowledge. (p. 8)

As students work through those course aims, they study five areas of knowledge: history, the human sciences, the natural sciences, the arts, and mathematics. Within each area of knowledge, students consider knowledge questions. In the arts, examples of knowledge questions are:

- Does new knowledge in the arts always build on what is already known?
- Can a work of art have meaning of which the artist themselves is unaware?
- Can art change the way we interpret the world?
- If the language of an art form is non-verbal, does this free it from being limited to propositional knowledge?
- Can we separate the moral character of the artist from the value of the artwork? (pp. 33-34)

The final projects of the TOK course are an exhibition and essay. The exhibition asks students to find three objects or artifacts that they can use to answer a question.

Some possible questions:

- Are some types of knowledge more useful than others?
- To what extent is certainty attainable?
- Why do we seek knowledge?
- Who owns knowledge? (pp. 40-41)

For their TOK essay, students must write a formal response to a prescribed title. The students who graduated in May 2025 had to choose one prompt from six different prescribed titles:

- Do historians and human scientists have an ethical obligation to follow the directive: “do not ignore contradictory evidence”? Discuss with reference to history and the human sciences.
- Is our most revered knowledge more fragile than we assume it to be? Discuss with reference to the arts and one other area of knowledge.
- How can we reconcile the relentless drive to pursue knowledge with the finite resources we have available? Discuss with reference to the natural sciences and one other area of knowledge.
- Do the ever-improving tools of an area of knowledge always result in improved knowledge? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.
- To what extent do you agree with the claim “all models are wrong, but some are useful” (attributed to George Box)? Discuss with reference to mathematics and one other area of knowledge.
- Does acquiring knowledge destroy our sense of wonder? Discuss with reference to two areas of knowledge.

These prescribed titles require students to think critically and examine their own knowledge. They practice those skills throughout their four years in the IB programme and are thus capable of having the kinds of discussions I had with them throughout my study. They are also eager to participate in those discussions.

Constructivism

Constructivism informs my teaching, and it is something my students are used to experiencing in our music classroom. Together, we look at everything through a holistic lens. I am aware of my students’ other musical experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, and I structure lessons to connect to their prior learning. For example, I know many of my students participate in Hindustani and Carnatic Indian Classical music lessons outside of school. They do not often learn via printed sheet music but instead learn aurally. Therefore, I create practice tracks for all our songs in choir, as well as difficult passages of our orchestral music, and send those to the students in case they want to learn our music in a similar way.

Honoring multiple perspectives is a way to value the students in the classroom. Constructivist teachers ensure students know “the world is a complex place in which multiple perspectives exist and truth is often a matter of interpretation” (Brooks & Brooks, 2001, p. 22). Each student brings a plethora of experiences to our classroom, and teaching in a way that acknowledges them and their truths is validating for students. I try to connect with students’ musical cultures, their favorite popular music, and the music they are learning in private lessons or in extracurricular ensembles.

I find myself often asking the question: “What makes you say that?” I am encouraging my students to explain their thought process behind their answer, as a way to “see” their schema, or the connections they have made among various concepts in our curriculum. Sometimes a student arrives at an answer that seems incorrect, but when they explain how they got there, their thought process reveals discoveries for all of us. I first read about this question in a Cultures of Thinking book, and I was amazed at the results after trying it (Ritchhart, Church, & Morrison, 2011, p. 34). Not only does it unmask students’ thought processes for me as a teacher, it also is “the kind of question that can facilitate and clarify the learner’s own thinking,” prompting metacognition for the students themselves (p. 35).

One of the approaches I use in choosing our music repertoire is striving to support the ZPD for each student, offering an optimal learning experience and performance. If I were to choose music below a student’s ZPD, it will quickly be too easy for them and boring to practice. If I choose music that is above a student’s ZPD, it will be too difficult and therefore feel impossible to practice. This is because “learning should be matched in

some manner with the child's developmental level" to appropriately support the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 85).

Our music ensembles use scaffolding in learning new music. I will provide more support to students when sight-reading, such as singing phrases, calling out measure numbers, clapping or snapping the beat, and frequent stops to restart. As the students become more comfortable with their music, they rely on their peers: they will practice sections of the music with their stand partners or friends, polishing it together. By the time the performance happens, I am silently conducting the group, and no extra support is needed.

Even when students practice their music at home alone, they are still engaged in authentic, scaffolded social learning experiences. The choices they make while practicing are influenced by the choices I and their peers have made in the classroom. I model practicing techniques frequently for them, and I provide every student a multiple-page document detailing common practice techniques in both choir and orchestra, fostering metacognition. I always set up several practice assignments near the beginning of the school year in which I have them choose one to two of those practice techniques from the document and write a paragraph detailing their practice session while using the techniques. Later in the school year, I do not require them to list any techniques but ask them to journal about their at-home practice sessions. And at the end of the school year, I merely remind them to practice a few specific spots.

In our music ensembles, we spend time learning the context of our music, not only the music itself. If an ensemble is performing a symphony by Beethoven, but they do know anything about Beethoven, the styles of the Classical and Romantic eras, or

what was going on in the world at that time, they cannot perform the music authentically. The students cannot make musical decisions about the piece of music without also knowing the historical, social, and musical contexts.

Cultures of Thinking

Many teachers at our school participated in an online Cultures of Thinking course through Harvard's Project Zero in the fall of 2017. We also had Ron Ritchhart visit our school during the 2018-2019 school year. Our teachers spent a few years exploring the cultural forces mentioned in Chapter Two, and many of us still use them in our classrooms, me included.

In our music classroom, I use some of the core thinking routines with my students. These are adaptable to every classroom, so I only need to say the routine's title and my students know what to do without further explanation. Ritchhart, Church, and Morrison (2011) explain the need behind the visible thinking routines in *Cultures of Thinking*: "Thinking routines operate as tools for promoting thinking" (p. 45). "*I used to think... Now I think...*" is a favorite Visible Thinking Routine in my DP Music classroom used as an exit ticket activity when we have covered new material: students write of their previous thoughts on the topic ("I used to think..."), then write something they learned in class that day ("Now I think..."). It allows me to check their understanding of the new material and use it to plan my curriculum for the next lesson.

I have also created my own routines that follow the spirit of Ritchhart's *Visible Thinking Routines*. One such example is something I call "Graph the Dynamics." Students are asked to create a graph of the dynamics of a certain musical composition that they are rehearsing in the ensemble. Depending on how they use their X and Y axes,

they can create a line or bar graph, and it is immediately clear to me how the students approach performing that aspect of the music. Students who think about dynamics with a more terraced approach will have that show up in specific points on their line or as more of a bar graph, while students who think of a gradual crescendo or decrescendo between dynamics will have a continuous line. This information will guide my scaffolding of dynamics during the next rehearsal. It has led to fascinating class discussions about how the slope of the line correlates to their thinking about performance, and we have fun mixing math with music.

The second cultural force, *classroom expectations*, is a school-wide initiative. The expectations cultural force is intended to help “focus our teaching” (Ritchhart, 2015, p. 7). All teachers work with students on applying knowledge rather than merely memorizing new material. In our music ensemble classroom, I encourage any question about the subject matter, even when those questions may pull the discussion away from the schedule. Students are also encouraged to ask peers or search out online sources for their questions rather than rely upon their teachers for every answer. I have a bookcase in my classroom filled with music reference books; when students have a question about the translation of a particular musical term, they often feel comfortable walking over to look it up, rather than raising a hand to ask me for the answer. This is because “in a learning-oriented classroom, teachers and students focus their attention on the learning as the priority” rather than expecting the correct answer every time (p. 45)

Language is the third cultural force, and a guiding part of this study. Ritchhart (2015) asks this question about the power of language: “Does our language merely reveal what already exists...or is it shaping and transforming situations?” (p. 73). I use “we” as

often as possible, part of the language of community. Students know they are part of a team when they are in a rehearsal; they are part of our community. When fostering a community of learners, “the ‘we’ must include the teacher not only as the director of activity but also as a participant in the learning processes” (p. 72). The language of praise and feedback is another important aspect of my ensembles: I work to give students specific, accurate feedback so they know what they need to improve. Praise is equally specific, and I endeavor to find the right balance between the two. Calling my students “musicians” is another way I use language.

With ninety-minute blocks for each ensemble class, I seemingly have an abundance of time to rehearse with my students, *time* being the fourth cultural force. I set up each rehearsal with the knowledge that the way I plan will show students what I believe is important for them to practice on their own, serving as scaffolding for their independent practice sessions. If I give only one minute out of ninety to a warm-up activity, for example, students will think warming up is not important when they practice at home or for what we seek to accomplish in the classroom together. It is the choices teachers make that are “sending messages to our students about what is deemed important and worthwhile in the classroom” (Ritchhart, 2015, p. 98).

Modeling is the next cultural force. I model practicing my own instrument frequently in my classroom: not only performing the selection perfectly so students can hear what it should sound like, but also rehearsing and practicing the selection. Both are important, but if I want the students to work through errors at home in a methodical way, I must model what that could look like. Outside of musical skills, I also model the implicit passions, leadership qualities, and thinking that Ritchhart has discussed in his

books. I speak to students about finding small breaks in my day to promote my own mental health; I demonstrate the importance of having hobbies outside of work or school; and I speak out loud to demonstrate my thought process when making a tough decision. I want my students to see the messy side of thinking, as “there is a transparency, authenticity, and vulnerability to this sharing that forges a bond between teacher and student” (Ritchhart, 2015, p. 120). It normalizes many different things for my students, including making mistakes.

Opportunities is Ritchhart’s sixth cultural force. “Powerful learning opportunities invite all students to the learning” (Ritchhart, 2015, p. 9). In our music classroom, this is evident in the various experiences all our students can engage in throughout the school year. Our ensembles do more than just perform in traditional large-ensemble concerts; they compose music, perform in smaller ensembles, provide music learning opportunities for the district preschool, and perform in combined large ensembles, among many other experiences. Students also have multiple chances for leadership in various ways across the music department. Students can be section leaders; board members of the Orchestra Council (a group that helps out around the classroom while also providing social opportunities for all music students); the culture-bearer or more knowledgeable other, someone who teaches all of us how to accurately pronounce the language of the choir piece we are rehearsing; and many others.

Our music ensembles provide many opportunities for partner and sectional work, in addition to full ensemble rehearsals. Students are encouraged to ask each other questions, provide feedback about performance, and assist their peers in learning new material. I also have a co-teacher for most of my rehearsals, and the two of us model

those interactions for the students daily: we check in with each other, out loud and in front of the ensemble, about a myriad of topics like conducting techniques or how we want a specific section to be performed. We also encourage the students to provide feedback to us, as well, participating in those conversations.

The seventh force is *interactions*. I implement what I call “Technique Day” several times per semester. Students have the class period to work with peers on any aspect of their technique and performance with which they are struggling. They are welcome to bring their problems to me for help, and I ensure that I am clearly visible and available, but most students see these days as an opportunity to seek out peers, a more knowledgeable other their own age, to help, or simply to provide a supportive audience. I am eager to provide opportunities for students to have meaningful multidirectional interactions, beyond simply teacher-to-student and student-to-teacher. These interactions form relationships:

As social beings, we recognize that it is through interacting with others that we learn what a group or culture is about, how it operates, its norms and values. Interactions give us a feel for a place, help us learn how to behave in the group and to know what is expected. Through interactions, we identify who our allies and champions are. (Ritchhart, 2015, p. 202)

Those relationships are what provide support for the cultural norms of our classroom.

The final cultural force is the *classroom environment*. In our music classroom, students find themselves and their cultures represented: student work is posted, funny music memes students print are on a whiteboard, posters feature people who look like my students, and the chosen repertoire authentically represents student cultures. While the furniture is standard music equipment—black musician chairs and black metal music stands—the students are encouraged to move things around to accommodate their own

best learning practices. Ritchhart (2015) writes “the physical space can inhibit or inspire the work of the group and the individual” (p. 227). Despite having the same black chairs and stands that every music room has, the freedom and flexibility found within our classroom aims to inspire all of us as musicians.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

When I first started reading about culturally responsive teaching, I thought it would be simple. I needed to have posters on my walls of people who looked like my students, I should offer more opportunities for my students to have a say in the overall curriculum, and I had to find ways to connect our music back to what they were learning in their private Carnatic and Hindustani Indian Classical music lessons. Of course, I could do that; it sounded easy.

Once I pushed further into my research, I realized how surface-level it all was. The surface level of culture is “made up of observable and concrete elements of culture such as food, dress, music, and holidays,” and does not have a high emotional charge (Hammond, 2015, p. 22). If I wanted my students to feel authentic connections with everything we were doing, I needed to go deeper. The deep level of culture “is made up of tacit knowledge and unconscious assumptions that govern our world view. It also contains the cosmology (view of good or bad) that guides ethics, spirituality, health, and theories of group harmony” (p. 23). Culture could not just be a buzzword; it needed to guide every aspect of what we were doing in our music classroom and be part of our knowledge and assumptions. So much of cultural responsiveness in music comes down to repertoire.

As discussed in Chapter Two, culturally responsive teaching is validating. When I am choosing repertoire, I am now doing so with this concept in mind. I am carefully considering all students' cultures and prior experiences, as a way of "building bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities" (Gay, 2018, p. 37). When our choir sings a piece of music that is from a popular Bollywood movie that my students are familiar with, I am showing them that their home experiences with music and culture are also meaningful within our classroom.

I also recognize that the skills my students learn in their home musical experiences are transferable to what we do every day in our ensembles. My students often learn music from their own cultures through an oral tradition, whereas much of Western music is not. To help bridge these traditions, I always give my students sheet music—part of Western musical traditions—as well as aural practice tracks that I create. My choir students receive a link to a file in music composition software. It has each of their parts written as specific instruments, so they can hear the difference in timbres to find what they need to sing. For example, the soprano part is written as a flute and alto as an oboe. The piano or accompaniment parts are also included. I share the file with all students, and they make a copy of it for their own accounts. To help with their own practicing, they can adjust dynamics, balance between parts, octaves, tempo, and other musical dimensions. This allows students to learn our music reflecting an oral tradition, if they prefer that approach. For the orchestras, I always ask if they would appreciate a file in this manner. Often, they ask for only a small but difficult section of the music, rather than the full piece.

One of my main goals is to normalize the links between culture and music education within our school. Culturally responsive teaching offers many opportunities to do so, and I am still discovering more ways to incorporate it. I will examine multiple pathways of cultural responsiveness in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

Our Music Department

Our school prioritizes music: without sports to generate publicity and school spirit, we turn to clubs, academics, and our music program. We have three choirs, two bands, and two orchestras that meet during the school day, as well as additional band, choir, and orchestra ensembles that meet after school. We have an active music honor society, as well as many students who participate in the state music organizations' solo and ensemble festivals, honor ensembles, and audition for all-state groups.

Choir

During the school year of my study, I taught three choirs that met during the school day. All incoming ninth graders were placed in the first group, along with any tenth graders who still needed support. This group began the year singing unison music to build their skills and singing abilities. By the end of the school year, they were learning three-part music with accompaniment. The second choir was for tenth through twelfth-grade students who were not as serious about choir or needed additional support with their singing. They sang three-part (SAB) choral music with accompaniment.

Chorale, the group in my study, was the top auditioned choir of the three. There were 31 students total, spread across four sections: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. The group most often sang four-part (SATB) choral music, both accompanied and a cappella, at a moderate difficulty level. There were students from grades ten, eleven, and twelve, with 15 seniors who graduated at the end of the school year. Nine students were in the

additional DP Music course, learning music theory, history, and composition. All 31 of these students were more fully engaged with choir, singing, and learning music.

Orchestra

I taught two string orchestras that met during the school day, plus an additional full orchestra course after school. Incoming ninth graders could audition for the top string orchestra if they were in private lessons, though few made it. During the year of my study, two ninth graders were in the top auditioned group. The younger string orchestra typically played grade 2.5 to 3.5 repertoire. The after-school full orchestra was also part of my teaching schedule, not as a club. Students taking the class would receive academic credit, and their grades in the course counted toward their GPA. It was open to all students in the school, including those who were not in band or orchestra during the school day. The group therefore performed grade 2 to 2.5 literature. As a result, many orchestra students chose to perform on secondary instruments.

Our Symphony Orchestra ensemble, the group in my study, was the top auditioned group of the two orchestras that met during the school day. There were 56 students across four grades, ninth through twelfth, with 18 seniors. The group was divided into a typical string orchestra set-up: first violins, second violins, violas, cellos, and string basses. This ensemble performed string orchestra literature at a grade 4.5 to 6. Nine students were in the additional DP Music course, studying music theory, history, and composition.

Student Identities

At the beginning of the school year, I surveyed all the students of both Chorale and Symphony Orchestra via Google Forms about the different ways they identify (see

Appendix C for the survey questions). They could answer any number of the questions however they wanted. I found their answers fascinating. For example, of all the students who I knew had families from India, there were as many different answers to the question about their cultural identity as I have students: Indian, American Indian, first generation Indian, Indian/American or Indian-American, Canadian (Indian), and Asian American, among many others. Without the ability to select from a list or drop-down menu, they came up with their own words for their identities, words that resonated more than something meant as a one-size-fits-all. Among my 56 orchestra students, I received 45 different answers to that question.

The questions I asked about language yielded incredible answers: my 31 choir students could communicate in 24 different languages. They considered themselves proficient in 16 of those: Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Korean, Malayalam, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Tamil, Ukrainian, and Urdu. I wanted to know about languages because their responses told me more about their culture, but it also presented opportunities for repertoire choices involving languages my students were comfortable speaking. This list gave me many repertoire options, as well as opportunities for students to step into the role of a more knowledgeable other, if they so desired.

The orchestra students had similar variety: they spoke 22 different languages, at least at a basic level. They considered themselves proficient in 16 of those: Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, English, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Marathi, Punjabi, Romanian, Swedish, Tamil, and Telugu. Even though I would not be

choosing repertoire that required these students to sing in various languages, this still provided me with valuable information when selecting string orchestra literature.

When I asked them about the role of music in their home, both choir and orchestra students talked about a multitude of paths of engaging with music. Some of the choir students had been taking Hindustani or Carnatic Indian Classical voice lessons since early childhood, and others did not have any formal musical training until they joined our choir class. Several students talked about the importance of music within their religion, and still others referenced cultural dance lessons and how much they listen to the music that goes along with physical movement. Some students did not interact with music at all outside of school, other than within the context of their religion.

The orchestra students had more formal training: many students took private music lessons outside of school, whether Hindustani or Carnatic lessons on voice or violin, or Western lessons on violin, viola, cello, or piano. Several students were involved in local extra-curricular orchestra programs, as well as our own after-school full orchestra. Others participated in our full orchestra on different instruments to challenge themselves further. All these students were involved in their middle school orchestra programs, except for one.

The orchestra students also spent more time completing the section of the survey that asked about other identities they wanted to share. They told me preferred pronouns, gender identities, sexual orientation, athletic identities (cheerleader, athlete), favorite colors, zodiac signs, physical attributes they appreciate about themselves (hair color, height), and which sports teams they support. They told me they considered these to be important parts of their identity that I needed to know.

Themes

I identified several emergent themes while analyzing the data I collected (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). I noticed connections among all students in the way their home cultures reinforced their need for musical agency (Wiggins, 2016), linked to ideas about flow and the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). I also observed the profound influence of our overall school culture. All of these themes were important to the formation of students' musical identities (Green, 2011; MacDonald, Hargreaves & Miell, 2002).

Initial Perception of Musical Identity

One of the first questions I asked my students in interviews was about their musical identity: I wanted to know if they thought of themselves as musicians. I had so many talented students seeking to improve their skills and musical knowledge, I thought they would all enthusiastically declare themselves to be musicians and claim that as part of their identity. This comes from an interview with a group of the soprano section in the choir during a rehearsal:

Teacher: What is your definition of a musician?

Krishna: Someone with the ability to play an instrument or sing.

Zlata: Having some deep connection to the music, like it creates a passion that they need to create music in its forms.

Teacher: Okay, what makes someone a musician versus not a musician?

Lily: It's the difference between appreciating music and actually expressing it.

Jasmine: A musician is someone who studies music, and a nonmusician is someone who listens to it.

Teacher: Based on your answers to those two questions, do you consider yourself a musician?

Anika: I would not, because I don't know everything about music.

Lily: I'm not a professional musician.

Lena: Our DP Music students could be considered musicians, because we do know how to analyze a piece of music.

These students were careful in the way they identified themselves. When I did a quick poll of the soprano section, nine students said their answer was yes, but with a qualifier of some sort, such as “yes, but not a professional musician” or “yes, but I’m not a good musician.” Two students said they were not musicians. No one gave a positive answer without a qualifier. All these students were enthusiastic participants in our choir class throughout the school year, and all had interesting responses later when asked about the music and their identities after the concerts.

I received different responses when I talked to the alto section:

Amira: A musician is someone who actually enjoys making music, it's their passion.

Maria: Anyone who has an association with music, as in being a singer or playing an instrument.

Paola: Someone who can connect with the music they're performing.

Sarah: You don't have to be passionate to be a musician, if you just play music.

Kashvi: Anyone can be a musician, as long as what they're doing has some kind of purpose and conveys some kind of meaning. It doesn't matter if it's good or bad. Good can be subjective sometimes.

Teacher: Do you consider yourself a musician?

Aditi: Yeah

Paola: I consider myself a musician.

Sarah: No, because music is important to me, but it's not a big part of my life.

Kashvi: Yes, but for the opposite reason. Even though it's not a huge part of my life anymore, it's still part of me.

The alto section was more open as they identified themselves. A poll of this section had nine of the 10 students say they were musicians, with only one person saying no. These students related things back to their TOK classes, also, with one student referencing a philosophical discussion they had in class about whether AI-generated art is still considered art. These students all agreed that without the human element, there is no possibility of musicianship.

When I spoke to the tenors and basses of the choir, they frequently ended up in friendly arguments amongst themselves about various definitions, as well as more TOK-like discussions.

Teacher: What is your definition of a musician?

Ishaan: A type of artist.

Omar: Someone that's passionate about the art that they're creating.

Aaryan: Someone who makes music.

Omar: Someone who composes music.

Zain: Is a composer different from a musician?

Omar: No, they're the same.

Zain: Are you sure?

Ivan: You can be a composer but not a musician if your music isn't good.

Zain: Who decides if it's good?

Aaryan: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, right?

[several minutes of back and forth about good versus bad, and how that is decided]

Teacher: Okay, so who makes the value judgment on the music?

Aaryan: The artist!

[all agree]

Teacher: Do you consider yourselves musicians?

All: Yes!

Zain: But I'm not a composer.

The tenors and basses were quick to identify as musicians, all 10 of them. They were a more playful group, less serious than the sopranos or altos, but all were open about their avid enjoyment of our choir class. They were wonderful about focusing when it was needed, however.

For the orchestra students' musical identities, I surveyed them individually. They seemed to be more willing to share that way. I interviewed a few students in groups, and they did not talk as much as the choir students did. When I asked the orchestra about that, they said they were worried about losing the rehearsal time during class or study time after school. So, I put my questions in an electronic survey and sent it to them, and they wrote substantial answers. Here are some of their responses to the question about defining a musician:

- *Anyone who enjoys music, whether it be the production, sharing, or playing of music. (Sita)*
- *A musician is anyone who interacts with the creation of music in any form. This includes the performance, composition, and production of music. (Myung)*
- *A person who plays music at a professional level. (Shiv)*
- *Someone who uses creativity and incorporates that to an instrument. (Hamza)*
- *Someone who expresses an emotion, idea, or concept through musical elements. (Lakshmi)*
- *I think a musician is anyone who has some sort of passion and interest to learn or play a musical instrument or dive into some field of music. (Rohaam)*
- *Someone who makes noise with artistic purpose. (Shakti)*
- *Someone who creates music in any capacity—a baby with a toy xylophone counts as a musician and a professional violinist playing in a symphony orchestra is also a musician. (Navi)*

Their answers to whether they identify as musicians were not varied. Except for a few, all students considered themselves musicians without qualification. They explained that because they played their instruments and were able to do so at a high level, they considered themselves musicians. Many students also cited their private lessons or extra-curricular orchestra involvement, and still others talked about their private Indian classical music or dance lessons.

Curiosity and the Need for Rigor and Challenge

Even with the myriad of identities expressed by the students, all were united in a few ways: their intellectual curiosity and the desire for challenge, need for rigor, and their joy in making music. The students may have come from all over the world with diverse ethnicities and spoken languages, but their passion for knowledge and learning was a common thread. Rigor and challenge are often used interchangeably, but for the purpose of this study I will define them differently. I will use *rigor* to discuss the depth of the thinking involved: curriculum is rigorous when it requires more complex thought processes. I will use *challenge* to denote something that provides a fun or exciting intellectual problem to solve, requiring curiosity.

Intellectual Curiosity and Challenge. “Curiosity is almost a prototype of the intrinsic motive” (Bruner, 1966, p. 114). What drives learning—intrinsic motivation or something more external? For my students, there was clearly an internal drive to learn. One word came up more than any other in student surveys, interviews, and assignments: challenge. These students certainly love a challenge. Considering the school they attend, that is not surprising.

With each of these students, I was intrigued by their internal motivation to learn and how ingrained their intellectual curiosity was. It was clear to me that it was something they possessed before attending our school. Bruner (1966) wrote:

External reinforcement may indeed get a particular act going and may even lead to its repetition, but it does not nourish, reliably, the long course of learning by which man slowly builds in his own way a serviceable model of what the world is and what it can be. (p. 128)

These students did not need any external reinforcement to jumpstart their desire to learn, they possessed it intrinsically, which may be why they were so eager for a challenge.

I talked to the choir students after our first concert about the three pieces we performed and asked them which piece helped them feel more like a musician. Our first concert had two Indian pieces, plus a choral “classic”: *Svaagat*, *Dravidian Dithyramb*, and *Homeward Bound* (see Appendix D). Peter, one of our twelfth grade tenors, said it was *Homeward Bound* for the first concert, for several reasons. It was the audition piece to get into our top choir after his freshman year, so he had spent some time with it on his own before coming to full-ensemble rehearsals for the piece during his senior year. He also said, “*All of us knew the language already, so instead of focusing more on the text itself, we were focusing more on the musical elements.*” He appreciated the challenge of learning something beyond the text, something that he had previously tried but had not quite managed as well on his own. Near the end of the school year, I asked the students to look at a list of all the music we had performed during their time in our choir program and to tell me what on that list resonated with them or helped them feel more like a musician. Peter was most enthusiastic about two performances: *Skyfall* with the school’s jazz band, and the previous year’s barbershop quartet performance of a Billy Joel tune. He enjoyed being able to “*actually sing famous songs, something that everyone knows.*” He said it was a “*fun challenge.*”

When I asked Lily, a tenth-grade choir student, about which pieces made her feel the most like a musician, she mentioned *Svaagat*. She thought it was because she liked the new and exciting harmonies and it was difficult to learn at first, which presented an interesting challenge. Lily also said, “*It was fun to practice, because it was different from music we’ve done.*” This was a common theme for Lily. After our January concert, she discussed similar things about the Ukrainian version of *Carol of the Bells*. Not only was

that her favorite piece of the concert, but it was also the one she connected to the most: *“I liked the challenge of singing in a foreign language, having high notes, and being a cappella. It was a good balance between difficult and rewarding.”*

Mina, a tenth-grade Indian violinist, was excited about the music we had performed during her freshman year and the current school year. I wanted to know which of those pieces stood out to her as making her feel most like a musician. She was most enthusiastic about performing *Danse Nègre* and *Isma 'a* (a collection of Arabic tunes) because they were difficult: *“I loved the melodies and I felt that I could challenge myself.”* She played the violin solo in *Isma 'a*, so she had a unique perspective—and challenge—with that piece. She did not know much about Arabic music before learning it, but made sure she listened to enough recordings of the themes to ensure she had the right interpretation of her solo.

Wayne was another tenth-grade orchestra student, and he played the cello. He grew up constantly surrounded by music because his parents were interested in it and they encouraged him. He especially loved American and British rock bands, such as Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, The Beatles, and The Who, as well as Romanian progressive rock bands like Phoenix. He took cello and piano lessons and participated in local extra-curricular orchestras. He was also a member of our jazz band on the piano. He attended Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in the summers, focusing on piano and cello. Our sophomores also took a semester-long class, Personal Project, where they work on a passion project, and his was to learn how to play the guitar. He considered music to be a large part of his life, and when given the opportunity to push himself further with Personal Project, he took the chance to incorporate music. When we first began rehearsing *Son of Pandu*, I

took the opening measures and entered them into Noteflight, an online music notation software. I shared it with the students so they could listen to it, adjust the tempo to play along with it, and learn how their part fit in with everyone else's parts. I knew that many of our students learned music outside our orchestra class through oral and aural traditions; I thought this would help them. When I first introduced Noteflight to the students, Wayne had some musically insightful things to say:

Teacher: Look at the pickup measure. What do you see there? What does it look like?

Wayne: A scale.

Teacher: What kind of scale?

Wayne: A weird C minor.

The scale was actually C Dorian, but Wayne picked up on what was going on with a lowered third and seventh but natural sixth. It demonstrated that he could look at the full score and read what was going on, and was curious enough about it to take a risk with his answer.

Mari, a twelfth-grade violist, enjoyed the chance to talk to the composer of *Son of Pandu* because she was curious about the compositional process and the way that worked. Below are some of the questions that she asked Shruthi Rajasekar:

- *Why is the melody split between sections, causing syncopation?*
- *Why did you write a drastic shift in the style between the parts of the piece?*
- *How does the music reflect the story being told?*

After the January concert was over, she wrote of the way she connected with *Son of Pandu* in her Concert Reflection assignment:

I connected the most to Son of Pandu. I think there's something interesting, or maybe meaningful, about how you can subdivide all you want, but the most effective way to figure out where to come in was to listen to the rest of the orchestra and vibe-check certain spots. Unfortunately, that approach does not work with every spot, and you still need to know your part to do it properly.

Mari also spoke of challenges in her concert reflection. She answered the question about what she was looking forward to for the next concert cycle: *"I'm once again most excited for the new music that we might be playing. Whether it goes well or not, new music is always fun to learn and play!"*

Challenge was a common theme for Omar, also. When I asked him what we did in our choir ensembles that reinforced his identity as a musician, the eleventh-grader said, *"When we sing pieces that are actually challenging."* One of his favorite parts about our music program was that *"we challenge ourselves with the music that we do."* Near the end of the school year, when I asked him what we had done across all his years in the program that helped him feel more like a musician, he had two pieces in mind: Ryan Main's *Dies Irae* because it was so difficult to learn at first, and the Billy Joel barbershop quartet. The previous year, a group of tenors and basses had learned *The Longest Time* and decided to play it up as much as they could. They researched all different types of barbershop quartet music, found an arrangement of *The Longest Time* that fit the style, and even purchased outfits: vests, hats, and stick-on mustaches. They performed for the other two choirs, grinning the entire time. Omar added, *"I feel like the barbershop was something for fun, and we tried hard. I truly felt like I was being a musician because we crossed a boundary in a sense."* He was proud of himself and the whole barbershop

group for what they learned and for how effectively they communicated it to the other choir classes.

Zlata had a rich musical background: she took piano lessons from a Russian teacher, played the flute in the fifth grade, and had been in our choir since ninth grade. She also took our additional music class, DP Music, because she was so interested in musical analysis and composition and wanted to learn more. When I first asked her about musicianship, she put a qualifier on her statement: *yes, but not a professional musician*. I found her need to qualify her statement interesting, given not only her robust musical experience at our school but also her piano lessons. That fits with her desire to challenge herself and constantly build upon her skills, however.

When I asked Jiya after the January concert which of our pieces resonated most with her, she also spoke of challenge:

Funnily enough, I'll have to say Son of Pandu. I know I was its critic before we started piecing it together in class, and even though we didn't quite get it together until the end, learning it was a challenge for me. It felt fun to learn it. The call with the composer really helped.

These students all were excited about the challenges they faced, because “cognitive or intellectual mastery is rewarding” (Bruner, 1966, p. 30). They did not need to be pushed by a teacher, by parents, or through peer pressure. My students looked forward to the confidence they felt from their competence (Blair, 2009c). They come into high school with an incredible amount of intellect and skills already; while I do not know how many of them would be considered gifted or neurodivergent, it is likely a high percentage. Regardless of the skills these students enter high school with, they are

passionate about adding more, building upon what they already have, and never settling. They seek that out in their music ensembles, too. They are not passive learners, but active: “learning is active. It involves reaching out of the mind” (Dewey, 1990, p. 187).

The Need for Rigor. Not only do these students love challenges to help them grow, they also desire opportunities for deeper thinking about their learning—some of which comes from family or community pressure. When I asked them why they decided to attend our school, many of them said it was because their parents wanted them to attend a rigorous school. A few students talked about the pressure from their cultural community to pursue the intellectual challenge in our school:

- *My cousin said it was a great school and everyone he knows that attended are super smart. (Hamza)*
- *Everyone who is Indian knows about this school. (Krisha)*
- *When our community hears the name of the school, they think “rigor,” “smart.” (Omar)*

Some students talked about finding rigor in the skills and techniques required to perform our music while others talked about the cultural context. But all were enthusiastic about pushing themselves to learn something new, thinking about it in different and complex ways, and they had multiple chances in our music ensembles to do so. Brooks (2002) writes of the importance of fostering opportunities for rigor and growth:

How do schools focus attention on intellectual rigor, powerful thinking, and knowledge construction? The responsible adults in the learning community must create settings that challenge students’ design capacities, foster student ownership of learning outcomes, and provide leading-edge opportunities. Skillful teachers help students attain progressively greater achievements, internalize more rigorous

standards, and become more reflective learners. They do this through their own knowledge of content and their understandings of student disposition and ability. (p. 37)

While the students' desire for rigor starts at home and is part of their background and cultures, it is vital that they are met with teachers who value the same things.

Aparna's story fits both intellectual curiosity and challenge and the need for rigor. She was a tenth-grade violinist in the Second Violin section. Because our school requires two years of a fine art, and she was not interested in visual art, she picked up the violin for the first time in the summer after eighth grade. She knew she would be attending our school and was interested in pushing herself to learn something new. During my study, she had been playing her instrument for only a little over a year, and the fact that she was already in our top auditioned group says much about her dedication to learning, love of a challenge, and need for rigor. She identified as Bengali and practiced Hinduism. She could speak fluent English and Bengali. When asked if she thought of herself as a musician, she said yes, because *"I do try to improve and play music, and at times try pieces outside of orchestra class."* Aparna looked forward to the challenge of learning new music and even applied that to the wider school community. I asked her why she decided to attend our school, considering she came from out-of-district. She stated she came to our school *"because it has a challenging environment"* and decided to stay because *"I have many opportunities and am challenged outside my comfort zone."* It would have been much easier for Aparna to join our beginning choir, learning about music at a slower pace along with her peers, but she wanted the chance to think deeper about music at a quicker pace.

Many of our students pursue extra educational opportunities outside of school, looking for even more challenges. Zlata was an eleventh-grade choir student at the time of my study. She sang in the soprano section and was one of the leaders of that group. She identified as Ukrainian and went to a Ukrainian school on Saturdays to learn more about her cultural background through the Ukrainian language. She spoke fluent Ukrainian, Russian, and English. She had a basic level of understanding of Polish, Serbian, as well as the Spanish that she was learning at our school. She—and her family—were not satisfied with the school schedule of Monday through Friday; they wanted extra opportunities for learning, and for that knowledge to come through a different cultural lens.

Lily was a soprano in the tenth grade during the time of this study. She filled out her survey, stating she was Korean-American, born to Korean parents. She spoke fluent Korean and English and considered herself to have basic fluency in French. Her musical background was quite extensive as well: she could play the flute, violin, piano, and guitar. She also sang in several musicals in middle school. She participated in our state choral organization's solo and ensemble festival at both the district and state levels. Despite her varied musical background, Lily was hesitant to call herself a musician at first. She would only do so with a qualifier: *"I'm not a professional musician. Definitely not professional."* When I asked her if there was anything we did in our choir class that affects, changes, or reinforces that identity, she said: *"When we perform difficult music. Also when we look at solfege and kind of analyze it a little bit more."* Lily was vocal about how much she loved our music program, saying her favorite things are *"we learn a lot of diverse music. If you're a casual learner, there's classes for that. If you want to go*

deeper into music, like music theory, there's DP Music and the higher ensembles." Lily wanted, even expected, the deeper challenge of musical analysis, which requires a different way of thinking about music.

Lena, a senior in the choir, was intrigued by the academic side of everything. When I asked her why she decided to come to our school, she said:

I'm an out-of-district kid. I always liked challenging myself academically, so I wanted something that piqued my interest, like the thought of getting two diplomas, the high school diploma and the IB diploma. There was a similar IB school in my home district, but it wasn't a full-on school. Plus, a lot of our school district's academics are different from other schools. It's more challenge-based, and the thought of preparing myself for college piqued my interest.

While she is using the word "challenge" here, she is referring to the rigor of our school curriculum. This idea came up in other moments for Lena, like her response to being asked about her favorite things about our music program:

In visual art, if you want to continue in junior and senior year, there's only DP Art. We have an ensemble as well as DP Music, so we get the best of both worlds, and you don't have to choose one or the other. If you want to keep it casual and you just want to perform, you can do that. But you can also explore other things as well.

While Lena appreciated her peers who wanted the casual performance-only experience in music, for herself she wanted the rigor in her music class.

The Joy of Making Music. One common theme I noticed was the emotional responses of my students as they spoke about and interacted with music. This was an

unexpected theme for me; while I was aware of the smiles and enthusiasm, I originally speculated this was connected to the students' passion for knowledge. The more I explored my data, the more obvious it was that students found joy in engaging with music.

Myung was a twelfth-grade violinist in our First Violin section. Culturally, he identified as Korean-Filipino American. Musically, Myung was involved in quite a few musical activities. He took piano lessons, participated in our after-school full orchestra, and used his Personal Project semester in sophomore year to learn to compose electronic dance music. He loved listening to video game music, musicals, and synthpop. He was also in our DP Music course and enjoyed learning all about the compositional process. When I asked him what makes someone a musician or not, he said simply, *"You make music? You're a musician."* When given the opportunity to share anything else, Myung said: *"While the consumption of music is not enough to denote a musician identity, I think the enjoyment itself is immeasurably valuable as it relates to the human experience."*

Mari was a twelfth-grade viola player and DP Music student. She took piano lessons and enjoyed a wide mix of music. During online schooling a few years prior, she asked if we could study and compose in different styles of music. When I agreed, she led the charge to learn more about lo-fi music and had a lot of fun composing in that style. She loved any kind of philosophical discussion, often commenting, "very Extended Essay" or "very TOK of us." When I asked her what made someone a musician, her love of philosophy came through:

I think, like art, what makes someone a musician is the intent behind the music they make. They become a musician when they want to be a musician, when they

want to make music that can create an experience for either themselves or someone else.

I asked her to elaborate further on how that affected her identity. She said she thought she was a musician, because *“I want to play my viola to create an experience for the people who listen to me, or for songs I play for myself, to create a musical experience for myself.”*

Peter’s family is Middle Eastern, and he identified further as Chaldean. He spoke English and Spanish proficiently and had a more basic understanding of Chaldean and Arabic. He was always excited to talk about Middle Eastern music, but was even more enthusiastic about American popular music. When I interviewed his section about musicianship, he said he identified as a musician and was quick to extend that to everyone in our music department. He also said he appreciated the department, saying *“We get to stay with choir the whole way through! You can be improving throughout the whole four years. Even if you think you’re not good, you’re going to be improving.”* He was thrilled about the chances he and his peers had to learn and improve.

Lena had a lot to say about the music we performed over the years, continuing to highlight the challenging aspects of the pieces as moments that helped her feel closer to the music, or more like a musician. She loved a previous performance of Ola Gjeilo’s *Across the Vast Eternal Sky* because we performed that with the orchestra, and it was difficult at first:

I thought we really learned to blend well with the orchestra. We haven’t done that before, where we sang along with another ensemble, and I thought it was a beautiful piece. We performed it well, and I remember being so happy afterward.

Mina was a tenth-grade violinist who identified culturally as American Indian (Punjabi), and religiously as Sikh. She could speak English and Punjabi proficiently. Music played a large role in her household, with her family listening to a lot of Hindi and Punjabi music. She sang and played harmonium at her gurudwara (Sikh temple), and her sibling played tabla with her. As part of her culture, she was also an active participant in Indian dance and Bhangra (Punjabi dance). She took private violin lessons in the Western tradition and participated in a local extra-curricular orchestra program. When asked if she considered herself a musician, Mina answered: *"I do, since I genuinely enjoy playing the violin. I love playing and listening to different music both as a violinist and a dancer."* I asked her if there was anything we did in our orchestra class that reinforced that identity, and she said:

I think that the variety of music we play reinforces the identity of a musician since it allows us to find music that we really enjoy playing. Playing pieces like Son of Pandu and Hoe-Down exposed us to completely different types of music that definitely helped me grow as a musician.

DeNora (2000) wrote about the way music takes meaning from the ways people internalize it:

Music is an active ingredient in the organization of self, the shifting of mood, energy level, conduct style, mode of attention and engagement with the world. In none of these examples, however, does music simply *act upon* individuals, like a stimulus. Rather, music's 'effects' come from the ways in which individuals orient to it, how they interpret it and how they place it within their personal musical maps, within the semiotic web of music and extra-musical associations. (p. 61)

I thought this was a common theme within the idea of finding joy in making music.

These students are interpreting and internalizing their musical experiences as joy, happiness, and pride in their improvement.

Brooks (2002) wrote “empowerment is rooted in knowledge” (p. 130). I see that reflected in the excitement and joy my students had with each new piece we learned and the ways in which they spoke about our music after each concert. They loved the challenges they faced each concert cycle, and ended the performances feeling much more confident in their own abilities. Bruner (1966) states: “eagerness comes from increased confidence in one’s ability to understand the material” (p. 120). Now that I have paid attention to the confidence of my students after a concert, I have been amazed by the growing sense of empowerment they have gained, as well as their enjoyment throughout the music-making experience.

School Culture

When I first began this study, I did not consider the culture of our school to carry much weight. I knew I taught very intelligent students who were driven to succeed, but I thought that came mostly from their home lives and families. Our school is academically rigorous, but again, I thought that was important only in the sense that our students’ families chose to attend because they already valued a rigorous curriculum. Throughout the year of my study, I saw things much differently. I also conducted follow-up interviews with some students after my initial data collection, as I was curious about their experiences in other classes.

To begin, I asked the choir students a few questions about our school, since it is such a unique environment. I asked them why they chose to come to the school and I

received the usual assortment of answers: their parents made them apply, they wanted a fresh start after middle school, and they were curious about the academic rigor and how it would prepare them for their future educational endeavors. I followed up that question by asking them why they chose to stay. After all, they could return at any point to their home high school, or transfer to another high school within our district. The students shared several different answers with me:

- *It's easy to build a community here, even as a freshman. You can rely on people. (Sirisha)*
- *I chose to stay because of the culture. We do things with cultures that other schools don't. (Anika)*
- *Everyone cares about their education here. (Ishaan)*
- *I like the environment. You may not be the smartest person in the room because everyone is smart here. (Peter)*
- *I like the close-knit community here. You know everyone in your grade. (Janvi)*
- *Close-knit community for sure. It's easy to feel like you fit in here. Everyone is accepting here. (Kashvi)*
- *It's less judgmental here, more friendly. (Maria)*

I also asked them about their favorite parts of our school and community. They had wonderful—and validating—things to say:

- *All the people. You get close to people so fast. (Omar)*

- *We have a lot of fun events, like Powderpuff games and Olympics. All the dances, too. Plus, it's really easy to talk to teachers if you ever need help or tutoring. (Sirisha)*
- *The teachers. You know they actually care about you. They're focused on the students. (Christopher)*
- *I really like the academic things. It's challenging, but taught in a way that we understand. (Lily)*
- *I think it's just a chance at opportunity. We have so many opportunities to be involved in our community. (Kashvi)*

After talking with the choir, I asked the orchestra students about our school. I asked the same three questions: why did you come to our school, why did you stay, and what are your favorite things about our school? For the first question, the orchestra students had a lot of different answers:

- *I wanted a challenge. (Sita)*
- *The vague idea of intellectual prestige. (Myung)*
- *My sister came here, and she told me I had to go. (Nandini)*
- *I wanted to be like my brother who has academically been better than me. I looked up to him and wanted to prove everyone wrong about me. (Suraj)*
- *I wanted a more academically rigorous high school. (Emma)*
- *I wanted a better future for myself. (Shankar)*

I anticipated that these students would respond to the question about staying at our school with answers about the academic rigor and challenge. While many students did, there were other answers, too:

- *I've found my place in this community. (Wayne)*
- *I made a lot of friends and good connections with teachers. (Vivaan)*
- *It's very inspiring here, and the events we have like Olympics make it fun.*
(Katelyn)
- *I have a lot of friends here. I'm thriving academically, I love the closeness of the people and the connections and comfort I feel with all my teachers, too.*
(Rohaan)
- *Because of my teachers. They have showed me how to love learning and love what I do. (Kavya)*

While these students do clearly appreciate the academic challenges, they also love the teachers, the other students, and the overall environment.

The last question I asked them about our school was about their favorite things:

- *The teachers (multiple students)*
- *The sense of camaraderie knowing everyone is going through hard stuff together. (Rishi)*
- *Inclusivity and diversity (Hrithik)*
- *How accepting our school is of LGBTQ+ identities and similar. (Mari)*
- *I like the small community and the relationships I have built here. I have also grown a lot as a student. (Piya)*
- *I know who everyone is. I know everyone's names. (Shakti)*
- *My favorite things about our school include how like-minded we all are, being very academically driven. I also enjoy how helpful we all are to one another,*

always willing to help each other get through a project or studying for a test. I love how small our school is for the sole reason that it brings us more together. (Lorena)

All these answers, from students in both the choir and the orchestra, provided a wealth of data to explore. I found many common threads that supported and mirrored what I was finding in students' home lives and cultures. Our school provided an outlet for students' cultural curiosity with opportunities to celebrate and explore different cultures, moments to support and respect each other's cultures, and chances for each student to step in as a culture-bearer.

Cultural Curiosity. While my initial hypothesis was that students would most enjoy sharing their own cultures with their classmates and ensemble members, I found that they enjoyed learning about each other's cultures more. They were eager to celebrate each other and explore further whenever possible.

Culturally, Wayne identified as Romanian American, with parents who were born in Romania. He spoke fluent Romanian and English. He identified his religion as another important part of his identity—Eastern Orthodox—as well as his status as a Liverpool FC fan. He considered himself a musician due to his ability to play several instruments. When I asked him what we did in our orchestra class that changed that identity, he shared, *"We play difficult music that requires practice, dedication, and unity as an ensemble, and I think that does help reinforce my identity as a musician."* When I asked Wayne what pieces we had done that helped reinforce that identity more, he talked about four different pieces of music: *"Hoe-Down and Ode to Joy because they're by 'actual' composers, and American Salute and Paint It Black because they sound cool."* I chose

Paint It Black that year because of Wayne, knowing a rock arrangement of a Rolling Stones song would be interesting to him given his love for rock bands. His answers about “actual” composers were what I expected from some of these students, especially in orchestra.

When I asked Mina about *Son of Pandu*, she said that while she did not like the piece as much as the other music we performed, she connected to it more than anything that school year. *“I connected most to Son of Pandu because although I don’t play or listen to the type of music that influenced that piece, both the composer and I are Indian American.”* She also referred to an interview I set up for our class with the composer of *Son of Pandu*: the composer joined us for a video call, discussed her compositional process and how her culture and identity inform her music, and answered students' questions. Mina appreciated the chance to talk to the composer, especially hearing about how Shruthi Rajasekar combined Indian and Western musical traditions.

Myung had interesting thoughts about our concert repertoire in relation to his identity as a musician. One of the pieces that resonated the most for him was *Son of Pandu* because *“it was very interesting to hear about it from the composer herself and how she composed it to relate to the Arjuna narrative.”* Another piece from a previous school year that resonated and helped him feel more like a musician was *Rikudim*. He said during class one day:

I thought Rikudim was interesting because we got to see a lot of musical elements that were very nonstandard for Western music. I know we have Son of Pandu and others that represent other musical cultures, but Rikudim felt very specific to the Jewish culture that was being represented, especially with all the different time

signatures and rhythms. It was interesting to see how other cultures view music. Across all the cultures there are so many different ways to view rhythm, for example. Different beats being accented. Just how the overall meter works within music, and to see that and play it in Rikudim was really interesting.

This was the kind of answer I expected from many, but I thought it would come from students when they played music from their own cultures.

Cultural curiosity is something that must be nurtured and encouraged by the teachers, administrators, counselors, and support staff. Brooks (2002) wrote of the importance of school staff fostering this curiosity:

Today's schools must serve students of very diverse backgrounds, all with unique personal histories. Teachers must grapple with the dilemmas of how to teach and then how to acknowledge student growth and achievement that is as diverse as the students' original starting points. (p. 126)

Our school is full of adults who enthusiastically celebrate the diversity of student backgrounds and encourage curiosity about them. Brooks and Brooks (2001) also wrote of this, stating "a constructivist framework challenges teachers to create environments in which they and their students are encouraged to think and explore" (p. 30).

When I reached out to students several years after my initial study, I was asking questions directly related to this type of curiosity and classroom environment. I wanted to know about a time when the students felt supported in another class. All of them mentioned their ninth-grade history class with the unit on world religions as the first time, one of many:

- *When we learned about Hinduism in class, I was so excited. I was thinking: I know all about that, people are learning about my culture! They're asking me*

about it, they're learning from me. It was cool to see people care, and to see my teacher care, too. My teacher asked us questions about it and asked for our voices. (Pooja)

- *Before we started talking about Christianity, the teacher pulled me aside to say it might be different from what I have learned, but that I could share my viewpoint, too. (Adam)*
- *I remember reading about Indian history in that class, then going home to talk to my parents about it. They gave further context about what I had learned, and I just remember appreciating it that much more. It was my history. (Yash)*
- *That world religion unit was the first time I felt accepted. Hinduism was taught with an unbiased view. (Sanjana)*

Support and Respect. All my students approached their cultural learning with an incredible amount of support and respect. They listened when another student shared the text pronunciation for a choral piece, practicing it carefully with that student to ensure they had it correct to honor that student's heritage. They asked each other questions about Indian music when we rehearsed *Son of Pandu* in orchestra. They also encouraged each other to share whenever possible.

Omar was an eleventh-grade bass singer and one of our most outgoing and extroverted members of the ensemble. He was proud of his Egyptian identity, as well as being Coptic Orthodox Christian. He spoke English and Arabic fluently, as well as a little Spanish. Music was an important part of his life; he played trumpet, viola, and piano in middle school, and was an enthusiastic member of our choral program. One of his favorite pieces during the school year was the Ukrainian *Carol of the Bells*, because “I

have many Ukrainian friends, and I connected more to them personally through this song.” He also talked about enjoying singing Dravidian Dithyramb for the challenge of singing a different language with different musical and cultural conventions. He also said that when he sings in English, “that’s my main language, so I can sing those notes. Being in another language, it’s expanding what I’m learning. It feels like I’m learning a different musical language, too.”

I also noticed this with the students I interviewed after the original study:

Teacher: Tell me about a time when you felt supported in our school.

Adam: Whenever I’m fasting for a religious event, the teachers are so supportive and accustomed to helping us. My friends are used to it, too, and provide a safe place to deal with fasting.

Yash: I agree. I still secularly celebrate a lot of religious holidays in Hinduism.

My math teacher always brings up the holidays, like saying to me, “Happy Holi.” I just feel seen.

Pooja: Yes! Before Diwali, the teacher told us if our parents made anything, we should bring it in. So I brought some sweet that my mom made. It wasn’t anything special, but the teacher tried it and praised my mom’s cooking. I felt appreciated.

Adam: That happened to me, too. My mom made some Middle Eastern dishes. She brought the food for the staff lunches. The whole rest of the day, I didn’t hear anything but good things about my culture’s food.

Esma: See, I notice this with the other students. The idea of ethnicity and culture is very prevalent here. All my friends share their culture, and I feel compelled to

share back. There's a lot of different cultural exchanges we do here, and it's just very normal.

Sanjana: You're right, it does feel normal. I feel supported every day just walking through the hallways here. Everyone's really good about handling the diversity. We're just really kind people.

The support and respect these students were feeling starts within the school community, particularly the teachers: “by *seeing, respecting, and assisting* diverse students from their own vantage points, teachers can better help them grow academically, culturally, and psycho-emotionally” (Gay, 2018, p. 58). Not only does feeling supported help the students with their academic achievement, but it also helps them emotionally. Students need to feel that from their teachers for a myriad of reasons, but especially for their growth and development. “Teachers who really care for students honor their humanity, hold them in high esteem, expect high performance from them, and use strategies to fulfill their expectations” (p. 59).

Culture-Bearer. Due to the respect and support our students feel, our school environment invites students to step in as a more knowledgeable other or culture-bearer. Patricia Shehan Campbell (2018) defines *culture-bearer* within the musical community as:

Culture bearers are often locally living artist-musicians who come into schools from their nearby communities to make their contributions as full-fledged performers; as demonstrators of musical genres, instruments, vocal styles, and dances; and as storytellers who give credence to the music by way of what they say about how the music functions or what it personally means to them and others within their communities. By their very presence, they can advance mandates and inspire social consciousness. Culture bearers have been referred to also as tradition bearers, as visiting artists, and as heritage musicians. (p. 142)

The students are comfortable with this role, often volunteering themselves before anyone else can ask.

Zlata as Culture-Bearer. One of our traditions with our top choir is to go caroling around the school building during the week or two before our December holiday break. We always sing *Carol of the Bells* and a German text of *Silent Night*. Despite most of our school not celebrating Christmas as a religious holiday—it is a secular holiday, if our families celebrate it at all—our students across the school love this tradition and look forward to it every year. After I handed out copies of *Carol of the Bells* during the year of my study, Zlata asked if we could sing it using the original Ukrainian text, *Shchedryk*. I told her that if she could get me a copy of the text, I would make it happen. She found the four-part copy they had learned in her Ukrainian school and emailed it to me that night.

I distributed sheet music to our choir, and we all talked together about how we wanted to approach the *Carol of the Bells* tune that year. As a class, we decided to learn both. We would sing the English text for our school caroling, since that was our tradition, but we would perform both the English and Ukrainian texts at our January concert. Zlata would teach us how to pronounce the text and work with our choir, me included, to ensure it was accurate. After class, Zlata pulled me aside to say: “*Thank you. This means a lot to me and to the other Ukrainians in the choir.*” I had several Ukrainian students in Chorale that year, and they were worried about what was going on between Ukraine and Russia.

Zlata spent the next several weeks carefully working with us. I had never seen her shine as brightly as she did when she was encouraging us to learn the text pronunciation. She was supportive of her classmates, frequently complimenting their efforts, but she also

held us all to a high standard. When the January concert was over, and the students were filling out their concert reflections, she answered the question about her favorite piece from the night: *“My favorite was the Ukrainian version of Carol of the Bells, because I spent time and effort in teaching my choir the proper pronunciation, and I was very happy and proud.”*

Jiya as Culture-Bearer. Jiya’s story is one I have been looking forward to telling from the moment I first interviewed her. She was very open about her thoughts and was enthusiastic about sharing, both in wider class discussions and solo interviews. Jiya was an eleventh-grade violinist. She identified as Indian-American and could speak fluent Telugu and English. At home, she and her parents listened to a lot of Bollywood and traditional Indian music, watched Telugu movies, and listened to Telugu movie soundtracks. She took Carnatic music lessons and Indian classical dance lessons. She was an active member of our school orchestra program, including our after-school full orchestra. Jiya did consider herself a musician and thought the biggest indicator of being a musician was simply believing in oneself. When I first handed out *Son of Pandu* to the students, she loudly exclaimed, *“I’ve never seen myself represented in the music we play before. The composer is like ME!”* Once we started rehearsing, she had a lot to say about the music, struggling a bit with the difficulty. After a few rehearsals, she stopped by my office before class one day to correct my pronunciation of the title of the piece: *“It’s more like ‘pahn-doo,’ not ‘pan-doo.’ I don’t want parents to yell at you at the concert.”* I practiced it a few times with her, before she proudly announced I had it correct.

Both students, Zlata and Jiya, volunteered themselves to assist in others’ learning about their cultures. They did so enthusiastically and were not seeking any extrinsic

motivator or reward, but simply the joy of sharing their cultures with others. That uninhibited pride comes from the knowledge that their unprompted sharing would be met with respect, support, and celebration.

Competence and Confidence

The students' home cultures and the school culture they experience together combine to form a desire and need to experience both competence and confidence. Blair (2009c) writes of these two interdependent layers within the ZPD (p. 181). She posits:

In a music classroom, as students successfully move through once-uncertain zones of proximal development, they grow in their conceptual understanding and grow in competence, in their ability to function as musicians. As students are honoured and celebrated for their musical ideas, they grow in confidence and their sense of agency to be considered valued members of the learning community is met. (pp. 181-182)

This is seen in the ZPD, but also within a sense of flow, and is a large part of student agency.

The ZPD. So many of my students talked about challenge and how they enjoyed the music we were performing more when it was difficult at the start, but easier by the end. While they all wanted to feel a sense of rigor or challenge, they did not want to struggle too much during the rehearsal process. With appropriate scaffolding from other more knowledgeable peers and me, that would slowly go away, they wanted to reach the performance feeling confident. That is exactly what is described by Vygotsky (1978) when he wrote about the ZPD.

The ZPD looks completely different for each student, even as they are all working toward a common goal: our concert performance. The students support each other throughout the learning process, especially at the beginning of a concert cycle when the

music is outside of their comfort zone. “Willingness to engage in experiences that are outside a learner’s comfort zone requires (a) a desire and willingness to learn and (b) feelings of confidence, security and trust” (Blair, 2009c, p. 181). These students have shown their willingness to learn repeatedly, but they also support each other.

Out of all the pieces that we performed while Jiya was in our orchestra program, she felt the most like a musician when the piece was difficult to start, but ended up with a great performance. She specifically called out Eric Whitacre’s *October* and Richard Meyer’s *Of Glorious Plumage*. She explained, “*I think that once you get a certain amount of confidence in a piece, it feels good to play it.*” Another moment that stood out to me from her assignments, interviews, class discussions, and surveys was her answer to a question on the January Concert Reflection assignment. I always ask the students what they’re most looking forward to with our next concert cycle. Jiya’s response: “*I’m looking forward to getting to work on completely brand new music and facing new challenges.*” Jiya also spoke of how much she appreciated her peers throughout the concert preparations: “*This class is very encouraging, no matter what level you are at.*”

“Within the ZPD, with effective, appropriate scaffolding, a learner is often able to operate at a higher level than he or she would have been able to operate independently” (Blair, 2009c, p. 181). These students frequently support each other with their learning, acting as a more knowledgeable other. Hrithik said: “*Our orchestra has people with different skill levels, and we all help each other.*” Wiggins (2016) writes of the role of the ZPD in learning: “teaching and learning take place *within* the ZPD—at a point that lies just above the learners’ level of competence, where the learner can operate successfully with the support of a teacher” (p. 5).

Flow. The students also seemed to want to feel a sense of flow as they were working. They wanted to rehearse and practice without feeling the weight of the details or difficulty. My students had their final goal in mind—our concert date—and wanted to work toward that smoothly, without breakdowns or questioning their abilities. Confidence is a large part of my students’ feeling of musicianship. They want to sound good together, and perhaps even need to sound good together. This conversation comes from a group interview with a few orchestra students after I asked them about their favorite part of our music program:

Aashvi: When I match up with the person next to me, once I feel like it’s good, then I feel like, ‘oh, I actually did something.’

Rohaam: Once you actually get the melody and you hear it, you’re like, oh we actually did it.

Suraj: I get that feeling. There’s a lot of excitement and joy that comes from that. When you get it right, there’s a ‘wow, I learned how to play that’ feeling.

Rohaam: It’s such a good feeling. I have math right before this class, and I just want to sleep in there. I want to pass away in that class.

All others: PASS OUT!

Rohaam: No, I meant what I said.

[all laugh]

Rohaam: I’m kidding. But when I walk into this class, I’m feeling good. I know I’ll get that feeling every day of being excited to work.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) wrote of that excited feeling regarding flow: “we feel a sense of exhilaration, a deep sense of enjoyment that is long cherished” (p. 3). These

students do not need to be pushed into a sense of flow, but instead are so passionate about the challenge of their learning that they step into it on their own.

Jiya also answered the question about her favorite thing about our music department. She had a lot to say:

My favorite thing is the people. The students, the teachers. You guys really encourage us, no matter what skill level we are at, because there's always more to grow. I'm always constantly trying to go forward, and I'm not worried that I'm behind. We all come from different skill levels, different backgrounds. The people that I'm surrounded by, they all come from different musical backgrounds. My stand partner in orchestra hears something once and he can play it. He rarely looks at our music. But me? I'm a lot more regimented. I'll break down a measure and play it 15 times and then speed it up. But I don't mind it because we all have different approaches to learning our music.

Jiya went on to talk more about her regimented approach to learning music, saying that it brought her joy even as it might seem tedious for someone else. She was experiencing flow, too: “the best moments usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 3).

Agency. “Learners who do not believe themselves capable will not enter the situation” (Wiggins, 2016, p. 5). My students are eager for each new learning opportunity and each concert cycle. They cannot wait to get their new music each time, no matter the difficulty. They believe they are capable of the music and therefore are ready to immerse themselves in the learning. I noticed this especially as students spoke about which pieces

of music helped them to feel most like a musician. Soham, an eleventh-grade tenor in choir, spoke about the barbershop quartet piece:

We got to try and experiment with barbershop. Everyone had a passion for the song, even if the music was so hard. It was a small community of us and we were all doing it together. We knew we could do it. Other people recognized us as musicians. After we went to the other choirs, me and Omar walked into history together wearing our hats, mustaches, and vests, and it was really cool. At the end of our hard work, we sang it, and I was like, that's so fire. It was really good.

Blair (2009c) wrote of agency, stating it “implies learners moving from powerlessness to a sense of control and a hope for the future” (p. 180). That matches Soham’s experience with the barbershop quartet: he initially felt more powerless when he first saw the sheet music, and then worked with his peers toward a sense of confidence, control, and hope. This was the piece that helped him feel like he was knowledgeable as a musician because of the amount of work he put in. All the students who participated in the barbershop quartet felt the same pride and confidence in their accomplishments.

Anika, a senior in the soprano section in choir, spoke about her appreciation for singing the national anthem at our school’s powderpuff football game. When I asked about music that resonated with her, she shared:

The national anthem. Unpopular opinion, I’m sure. But it sounds so cool when you put all the parts together and we work hard to make it happen. I’ve learned the alto part at one point. This is the only song that I can sing higher, and it makes me feel good about myself to know I did that, I learned it myself. It makes me want to keep going.

This is evidence of Anika's agency:

Agency was students' internal motivation to have their needs met. It is what propelled them to learn, to be engaged in thoughtful problem solving and reflection, to care about the content under consideration, and to function democratically with others in a particular learning environment. (Blair, 2009c, p. 180)

Anika wanted to improve her choral singing and pushed herself to learn a new part for a familiar song. After the performance, she thought of that piece first as something that proved her musicianship to herself because of her problem solving, rehearsing with her community, and desire to sing the higher soprano part.

Musical Agency. Avani was a twelfth-grade soprano in choir who identified as Indian, and spoke Gujarati and English proficiently, as well as Hindi and Spanish at a more basic level. She sang often for her Hindu religion, with music taking a large role within her family. She studied Hindustani classical singing for 10 years. She was one of the students who helped us learn the Hindi text pronunciation for *Svaagat* in our first concert that year. When I asked her about her favorite pieces or music that we had performed that helped her identify as a musician, I was surprised by her answers. I was expecting her to respond with the Hindi piece that she helped us learn, but she chose the American popular music pieces that we had performed over the years, saying she had to work harder to learn those. Wiggins (2016) wrote of musical agency:

Music learning requires both personal agency and musical agency, that is, belief in one's capacity to engage, initiate, and intentionally influence one's life circumstances and also belief in one's capacity to engage musically, initiate musical ideas, and intentionally influence one's musical life experiences. (p. 4)

I saw this with Avani's desire to help her peers learning the Hindi text, but especially in the way she thought of all our concert music. The pieces that resonated most with her

were not the ones that she had learned as part of her cultural heritage. Instead, she found more success with the music that required her to work harder and stretch her musical capacities and ideas. It was the music she wanted to learn: “learner agency is essential to the learning process. Learners need to feel ownership of the music itself and of their processes of engaging with the music” (Wiggins, 2015, p. 55).

Zlata talked about a song she learned as a freshman, *The Tide Rises*. She said that piece stuck with her because of the new skills she learned: “*There were a lot of stretched notes, and that tested my vocal limits at the time.*” By stretched notes, she is referring to whole notes tied across a bar line. She had a lot of difficulty with that when she first joined our choir, but she was determined to learn how to hold notes for more than four counts. Zlata felt most like a musician when she performed a piece that required her to learn something new: “musical agency is rooted in musical identities” (Wiggins, 2016, p. 25).

Throughout these stories, especially those of the students who were culture-bearers, like Jiya and Zlata, I have observed how one student’s energy and enthusiasm will infuse the classroom, leading to a similar energy in the other students. Hogle (2018) wrote of this phenomenon, the way individual musical agency is “permeating each musical experience, socially mediating musical agency for others” (p. 10). It was incredible to witness, and renewed my own dedication to ensuring all students could have an opportunity to be a culture-bearer. Blair (2009b) concurs: “The role of the teacher, then, is to design ways for students to be the center of classroom activity, interacting with the music and with each other” (p. 44).

Characteristics of Musical Identity

While most students identified as musicians at the beginning of my study, there were still a few who did not. Throughout the school year, I asked them about the music we were rehearsing and performing to discover which of those pieces resonated more strongly with them, and which helped them feel more like a musician with their performance. All students were able to indicate pieces that helped them identify as a musician.

“Music can be used increasingly as a means by which we formulate and express our individual identities” (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002, p. 1). I originally thought my students’ cultural heritage would have a stronger influence on musical identity, but I am now considering the powerful role of our school culture. “At the local level, family, friends, individual teachers, schools and other institutions, and the community all foster musical identities” (Green, 2011, p. 17). While their home cultures and ethnicities do play a big role in the way students look at themselves as musicians, as well as interact with music, I think it is the influence of their peers that most changes their musical identities. Green also writes:

Musical identities are forged from a combination of personal, individual musical experiences on one hand, and membership in various social groups—from the family to the nation-state and beyond—on the other hand. They encompass musical tastes, values, practices (including reception activities such as listening or dancing), skills, and knowledge; and they are wrapped up with how, where, when, and why those tastes, values, practices, skills, and knowledge were acquired or transmitted. (p. 1)

My students have multiple facets of their identities, but they also have multiple ways of identifying as musicians. The question is not “are you a musician?” but instead closer to “what kind of musician are you?” or “what music do you enjoy?” or “what musical experiences do you enjoy?”

Additionally, “aspects of our musical identities constantly are being reconstructed” (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002, p. 12). While my students may walk into the school as a ninth-grader with set ideas about music—identities based on the music they enjoy listening to for fun, the music they use for studying, the music they perform in our ensembles, and any music they perform outside of our ensembles—they will discover new ways of identifying based on the interactions with their peers, their teachers, and other school community members. They will also add identities: students may have one musical identity informed by the religious music they listen to, another for popular music, and still another for our school music. “How individuals construct and conceive their own identities, as well as the identities of others around them, can involve conflicts between their ‘personal’ identity and a more ‘public’ or professional identity required of them by an institution” (Green, 2011, p. 17).

Considering the responses from my students above, their school musical identities seem to be linked to the way they experience our educational world together: celebratory, exploratory, respectful, supportive, and intellectual. I will explore this further in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Over the course of this study and dissertation, I sought to answer the question: how does incorporating music from my students' cultures into our music ensembles relate to their identities as musicians? Once I had those answers, I was curious about how that would affect the way my students learned music. As stated in the previous chapter, I now suggest the questions should be: "What kind of musician are you?" and "How does that affect the way you learn music?" These questions more accurately reflect the way my students think about music, as well as how they approach learning and education.

In this chapter, I will review the main themes of my study: curiosity and the need for rigor and challenge, the joy of making music, the importance of school culture, the value of musical repertoire and learning experiences, and musical identity. I will also discuss the emergent finding that I have coined as *intellectually responsive teaching*. I will then suggest ways these ideas may be used by music teachers going forward, ways it can support their classroom culture and assist their students in learning music. These ideas may be transferable beyond secondary choral and orchestral ensembles, extending to all music classrooms.

The following heuristic (Figure 2) demonstrates the relationships between these themes. Individual students bring curiosity, the need for rigor, and the joy of making music into the classroom. The music ensemble experiences the school culture, supports culture-bearers, and seeks out competence and confidence. The repertoire selection should be authentic, comprehensive, and complex. Musical learning experiences should

be agentive, relevant, and inclusive. All of those combine to affect each student's musical identity.

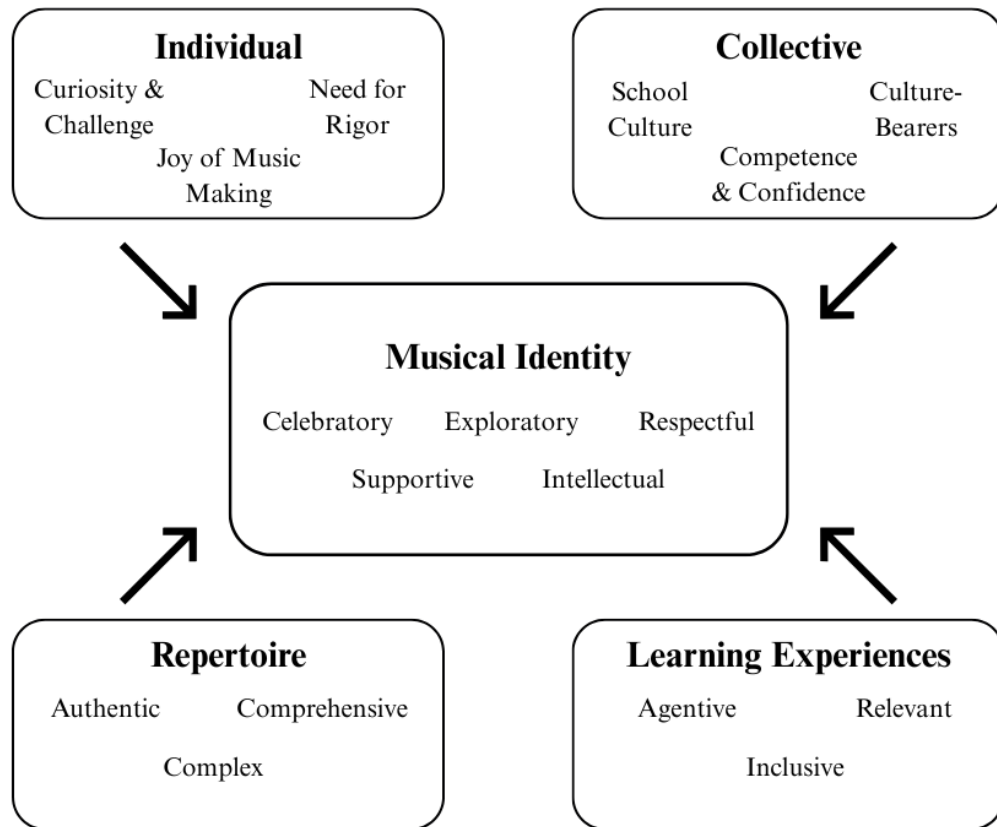


Figure 2. Factors leading to musical identity

The Individual Mindset

Teacher: In the concert reflection, there were a number of people who wrote their least favorite song we performed was also the same as the one they connected to the most. Why do you think those might be the same?

Omar: We had to try harder so we would sound good. That means something.

Peter: Maybe we all felt like we had to do well on that one.

Aaryan: We'll never forget it now. We worked so hard.

Curiosity and the Need for Rigor and Challenge

I have noticed the vignette above as a common thread in class discussions after each concert. The students will frequently mention a piece as their least favorite from our repertoire and then say the same piece is something that resonated deeper with them. I have asked about this phenomenon many times over the years, and multiple groups of students have told me the same thing: they did not like a piece at first because it seemed too hard, but by the time we performed it at the concert, it meant more to them *because* it was difficult and they handled the challenge.

The rigorous music that seems difficult at first is different for every student, and for every concert cycle: “competence is always changing and evolving” (Gay, 2018, p. 17). What these students were capable of in August is vastly different from what they were capable of the following June. Some of that is due to their developing skills, while some is due to their confidence in their curiosity. Swanwick (1999) wrote:

Music is not some curious anomaly, split off from the rest of life, not just an emotional thrill by-passing any processes of thought, but it is an integral part of our cognitive processes. It is a way of knowing, a way of thinking, a way of feeling. (p. 6)

I noticed the truth of Swanwick’s ideas in the way my students engage with music. This is a new way of knowing for them, a new way of interpretation and analysis, but one they are excited to explore. The challenge of doing something new sparks their curiosity. Furthermore, “what makes information knowledge—what makes it empowering—is the way in which it can be integrated within an identity of participation” (Wenger, 1998, p. 220). My students are enthusiastic about the rigor of the music we perform, which inspires them to learn it, and that further encourages them to identify with it.

The Joy of Making Music

My students approach the music learning process with joy, especially when it is a social activity. They love to learn, and making music together “with” their peers is something they all appreciate. Turino (2008) wrote: “musical participation and experience are valuable for the processes of personal and social integration that make us whole” (p. 1). These students felt joy when they were working “together,” even more so than the excitement they felt when learning things on their own.

The Collective Culture

Teacher: What do we do in orchestra that affects your musical identity?

Harsh: You give us opportunities to experiment, like learning a new instrument in full orchestra. You encourage us to learn and be musicians, so we ARE musicians.

Lakshmi: The moment when I was playing percussion for Hoe-Down. Giving us a chance at another instrument can be an eye-opener.

Dan: Looking at music from famous composers.

Juan: And looking at music from different cultures, too.

The Importance of School Culture and Culture-Bearers

My students chose to attend our school for various reasons. As discussed in previous chapters, for many of them, it was due to parental or cultural community pressure. However, they chose to remain at the school when they could have returned to their home high schools and districts. They valued the culture of our school.

“Culture is at the heart of all we do” (Gay, 2018, p. 8). Gay’s statement is evident when considering the myriad of ways our school approaches culture. The teachers seek to be culturally responsive with their curriculum “to *empower* ethnically diverse students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy” (p. 142). Not only

are we empowering our students academically, we are also ensuring they know their voices will be valued. Wiggins (2016) wrote of agency in the classroom, stating it “is dependent upon opportunity and upon belief that their ideas will be accepted and valued” (p. 27). As teachers, we have thoughtfully fostered a school environment and culture that promotes this type of acceptance, as seen in Zlata’s and Jiya’s stories of confidence in being culture-bearers.

Across the school, the faculty ensures our “curriculum content about ethnically diverse groups is accurate, authentic, and comprehensive” (Gay, 2018, p. 192). This is seen not only in my music ensembles’ repertoire choices, but also in students’ discussions of their history curriculum when they learned about world religions. Students feel seen—and that comes from the authenticity and complexity of the school-wide curriculum as it relates to their individual cultures, ethnicities, and identities.

Competence and Confidence

I noticed many connections between our school culture, cultural responsiveness, and education for gifted students. It is likely that many of my students are gifted, considering the way they engage in challenging and rigorous curricular activities, seeking additional knowledge and competence. Davis (2021) wrote, “gifted students, across groups, are some of the most outspoken, empathetic, and sensitive students in our schools” (p. 3). My own students certainly fit that description. That does necessitate additional thinking, planning, and reflection on my part as their teacher, however. Davis further explains:

Gifted students often navigate these multiple worlds of inequity as they develop intellectually, psychosocially, and academically. Without an understanding of the impact of intersectionality on gifted students’ experiences, teachers often only

consider their intellectual capacity and not how their other identities frame their very existence. (p. 9)

Further, not only do individual teachers need to reflect upon the intersectional ways our students explore the world, but the entire school community would benefit from approaching it the same way:

Cultural competence requires a commitment from all within the school community. This includes having high expectations and demonstrated respect and value for all students, utilizing student-centered instruction, expanding the classroom to the larger community for understanding and collaboration, and having administrators and school leaders who support a level of experimentation that allows teachers to try new teaching and learning strategies that may not have been approved or considered in the past. (Danielian, 2021, p. 26)

Additionally, these students appreciate teachers' higher expectations for them because those expectations mirror their own. The students are eager to prove their own competence.

Repertoire Selection

Teacher: What music have we performed that made you feel more like a musician?

Ivan: A Million Dreams last year. It was one of [assistant teacher]'s favorite pieces, so it was a cool experience to do that with him.

Christopher: Baba Yetu. Our soloist was very passionate and excited about the song, and that pushed the rest of us to sing better for him.

Siddharth: Artza Alinu. It was the first 3-part song we ever did, and it was the first time we all thought we made it to the next level. It was cool.

Suraj: Turtlewood Stomp. We got to experiment together with new sounds and extended techniques, and that was fun.

Michelle: Sleigh Ride. Putting it together with the band was fun and exciting, because it was a piece we knew already.

Authentic

It is vital that the selected repertoire in music ensembles is authentic, especially when the chosen music reflects students' identities and cultures. Campbell (2023) writes that for many of our music students:

Their intercultural understanding is shaped by the experiences they have in music, in all the arts, in literature, and in study of the humanities and the social sciences. Through their experiences in the music of diverse cultures, students learn to value the beauty of commonalities and differences across cultures, which leads to the cultivation of mutual respect and a deepening connectivity of themselves with others. (p. 40)

This is why it is so important that students are exploring music that is an accurate, authentic representation of those cultures.

Comprehensive and Complex

The repertoire performed in a secondary music ensemble is the curriculum, in the same way that a textbook is the curriculum in a math class: the teacher sets their learning objectives and overarching goals and chooses the textbook or performance repertoire to support those goals. The chosen music should be complex and challenging enough to meet the students at the right point of their ZPD.

As students study the music, they should have multiple opportunities to explore it fully. Campbell (2023) writes:

Students are, not surprisingly, curious about where the music comes from and what the music's language, history, and social function might be, and they are drawn to the backstories beyond the music, the motivations of the musicians, and the purposes of the music in a culture or community. (p. 42)

This adds to the comprehensive nature of the repertoire. Students are curious about the contexts in which the music resides: historical context, social context, and personal context—how the music relates to each individual student as they are learning about it.

Learning Experiences

Teacher: What are your favorite things about our music department?

Sita: The flexibility of the way we engage with the music. It's always different.

Nandhini: Learning how to analyze music in DP Music.

Katelyn: When you let us work in sectionals. We set the pace.

Gustav: The chaos. No, really, I love that there's always a million things going on.

Jun: Performance trips! Exploring and performing music in a different context.

Piya: Learning how to compose music.

Frank: The after-school groups. We can learn new instruments!

Agentive

The students in this study did not need any extra incentive to learn their music; they wanted to learn and grow as musicians. Part of that comes from the learning experiences themselves. Rehearsing as a full ensemble may seem like the only correct way to prepare for concerts, but there are many opportunities within the rehearsal space. Students sought the chances for control or influence of their own learning whenever possible, as seen from the vignette above; they enjoyed working in sectionals because they could design their own lessons; they liked the chance to explore different ways of being a musician, like composing; and they appreciated discovering new instruments.

Relevant and Inclusive

Campbell (2018) writes, “music is a uniquely human trait, a fundamental prosocial feature of all people in every society, and an opportunity for the involvement of individuals and communities in expressive artistic practice” (p. 5). Music is part of all of us, and students need chances to explore that in ways that are relevant to their own identities, as well as their own educational and musical journey. Further, “music is a bridge to cultural understanding” (p. 19). Including music from all cultures allows for more supportive understanding among students.

Musical Identity

Teacher: What are you looking forward to at our next concert?

Janvi: Barso Re and Think. Barso Re is a song that I grew up listening to and is one of my favorites to this day. It is one of the songs that makes me celebrate my Indian culture and enjoy Bollywood music all the more. Think is also one of my favorite songs and my dad is a big Aretha Franklin fan. He was always listening to her music around me, which got me to love her music too. Think happens to be one of our favorite songs together, so I can't wait to perform it!

Aaryan: Balleilakka. I've always wanted to sing a Tamil song but we couldn't do that in America in choir. This will be special, because it's about me, and I'm really excited about it.

These students felt a connection to the music we performed, whether it was something that connected to their own cultures and ethnicities or music that reflected another part of their identity. They experienced music together as celebratory and exploratory, respectful and supportive, and intellectual.

Celebratory and Exploratory

These students are enthusiastic about exploring different cultures, even taking time to celebrate one another as they learn, as with the students who were curious about learning the Ukrainian version of *Carol of the Bells*. While learning that piece, we used some of our rehearsal time to connect it to what the students were learning in their history classes about the war between Ukraine and Russia going on at the time. We used the music as a starting point to further our understanding across the curriculum, as well as to celebrate the culture of our Ukrainian choir students. This is because “all music arises in a social context” (Swanwick, 1999, p. 20).

Ladson-Billings (2021) concurred, recommending using “culture as a vehicle for learning” (p. 48). We did this with the Ukrainian choir piece, but also with many others, like *Son of Pandu*. The Indian students had opportunities to explore their own culture through music, discussing the way Arjuna’s story was represented musically and speaking with the composer to gain insight. The students who were not Indian came to know Indian culture through a different lens, a musical way of knowing. Many of them had learned of Indian religions in their ninth-grade history class and studied Indian stories in their literature classes, but musical knowing is a different way of approaching those ideas. We discussed the ways *Son of Pandu* connected to what students already knew.

This integrated with the ways in which my students identified with music, as “music is intricately tied to human identity” (McKoy & Lind, 2023, p. 141). Turino (2008) states: “identity always involves the twin aspects of unifying ourselves (emphasizing similarities) with some people and differentiating ourselves from others” (p. 105). My students were exploring different cultures and finding connections to their own cultures, which helped them feel unified with one another. In the process of

discovering their own musical identities, they were also celebrating themselves and each other, as reflected in both their individual mindsets and their collective culture.

Respectful and Supportive

Along with approaching different cultures and identifying with music in a celebratory and exploratory way, my students were also respectful and supportive of each other. They knew they were learning about each other's cultures and pasts: "music is a medium that can be and often is simply paired or associated with aspects of past experience" (DeNora, 2000, p. 66). If a student did not enjoy the piece of music, they were cognizant of the fact that it might still be meaningful to someone else in the classroom, and therefore were not vocal about that dislike or lack of enjoyment.

Ladson-Billings (2021) wrote that "knowledge emerges in dialectical relationships. Rather than the voice of one authority, meaning is made as a product of dialogue between and among individuals" (pp. 23-24). My students were able to step in as a more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978) or as a culture-bearer (Campbell, 2018), which created multiple voices of authenticity. The rest of the ensemble was always supportive in the way they listened to each other and respectful of learning about each other's cultures. As a teacher, I, too, enthusiastically and respectfully supported my students in taking the role of educator. McKoy and Lind (2023) state: "In the context of education, cultural competence is reflected in teachers who can function, communicate, and coexist effectively in settings with individuals who possess cultural knowledge and skills that differ from their own" (p. 31).

Musically Intellectual

My students approached their music performing, musical identities, and music learning in an intellectual way. They were curious about the challenges and appreciated the rigor involved in the more academic pursuits of the music, like analysis. As they learned more, they incorporated it into their identities. Wenger (1998) posited:

Our identities must be able to absorb our new perspectives and make them part of who we are. And our communities must have a place for us that does justice to the transformations of identity that reflection and excursions can produce. (p. 217)

As their teacher, I sought to provide a safe place for my students to construct their understandings of our music, as well as experiment with and explore new cultures and ways of making music. This is a musically intellectual way of engaging with identity in music, and leads me to what I call an intellectually responsive way of teaching.

Intellectually Responsive Teaching

Teacher: What do we do in choir that affects your musical identity?

Layla: When we learn more difficult music and get confident with it.

Aaliyah: Most choir students don't have a lot of knowledge about music theory, so when we work on the solfege and learn the notes, that helps.

Zlata: Learning to trust yourself with what you know. We weren't super completely comfortable with Svaagat and Dravidian Dithyramb, but we still went out there risking it.

Amira: Last year, you showed us videos of other choirs singing our music, and we wrote about them. It wasn't in-depth analysis, but it was analysis of some kind.

Aditi: Yeah, and that started to open us up to new genres.

Janvi: Yes. And when we look at new music, we learn new aspects of music

theory, too. That helps me feel like a musician. Plus, we're able to explore pieces that come from different cultures and languages. It feels more enriching.

Kashvi: Yeah! Here we do real singing, because we get to embrace different cultures. Sometimes we tell you we get annoyed with all the different languages, but at the end of the day, it's really cool that we get to do it. And you being our teacher? Everyone, even if we don't say it to you, feels safe here. You make us feel comfortable exploring. So, bonus.

To be a culturally responsive teacher for these particular students, I must address the intellectual curiosity they have, as well as their need for rigor and challenge in the curriculum. The following heuristic (Figure 3) illustrates the way I envision intellectually responsive teaching in music: it encompasses the individual mindset, collective culture, repertoire selection, musical learning experiences, and musical identity.

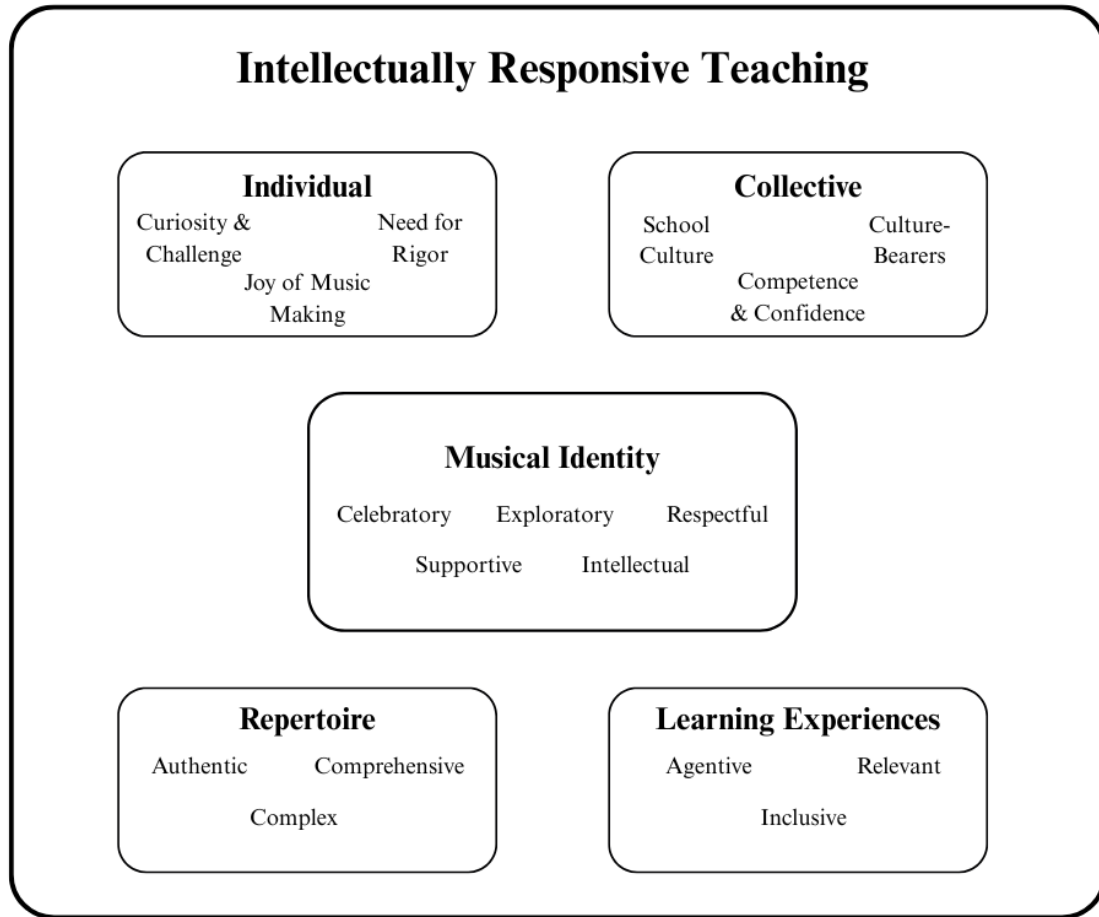


Figure 3. *Intellectually responsive teaching*

Swanwick (1999) wrote:

Musical discourse, while including an element of cultural *reflection* also makes possible cultural *refraction*, seeing and feeling in new ways. We do not merely ‘receive’ culture. We are cultural *interpreters*. A conception of music education as a form of cultural studies or social reinforcement is likely to result in a very different curriculum from that which identifies music as a form of discourse.

Music teaching then becomes not a question of simply handing down a culture but of engaging with traditions in a lively and creative way, in a network of conversations having many different accents. In this conversation we all have a

musical ‘voice’ and we also have to listen to the musical ‘voices’ of our students.

(p. 27)

To be intellectually responsive, I must create opportunities for student voice as well as cultural and intellectual discussions. I have provided moments for students to interpret cultures and different genres of music as an exploratory exchange. Most importantly, I cannot be the sole teacher, or person possessing all the knowledge. These students deserve the chance to share their cultures, too: “accessing firsthand knowledge of each student’s personal experiences, recognizing their family and community connections, and involving them in the learning process support culturally responsive teaching practices” (Roberson, 2021, p. 71). In our ensembles, the students and I learned together:

As a culturally responsive gifted educator, you don’t know everything. That’s the joy in having a continuous improvement mindset in being culturally responsive because you want to continue to learn and to help others learn in the process. It’s not about a checklist. It’s not about a set list of strategies. It’s about having the mindset of growing through cultural competence and helping others do the same. (Roberson, 2021, p. 71)

Next Steps

For music teachers considering ways of implementing *intellectually responsive teaching* in their own classrooms, it is important to consider several key factors: knowledge of the students in the classroom, expansion of the curriculum, opportunities for students to become “the teacher,” and celebrations of diversity.

Knowledge of Students

It is essential for all teachers to spend time getting to know their students. That may look different depending on the subject, but for music, it will involve learning about the types of music students enjoy, the ways in which they identify as musicians, and the

ways in which they learn music. McKoy and Lind (2023) wrote about this level of knowledge:

Developing cultural competence requires that we get to know more about the culture of our students, learn about their worldview, and work to better understand their expectations for schooling. Building on our capacity to create a classroom that reflects different cultural norms requires that we better understand the possibilities for change, and critically examine the rationale for our current practices. (p. 33)

It is our responsibility to honor and validate the lived experiences of our students. We should provide opportunities for them to share their cultures and their interests with us, as “their musical tastes and interests should be considered in curricular choices” (Davis, 2016, p. 278). We can then find ways to incorporate those cultures and interests into the music curriculum, allowing for our students to build connections to what they already know (Piaget, 1952).

Expansion of the Curriculum

McKoy and Lind (2023) wrote:

Expanding the curriculum to include a variety of musical genres, styles, and systems only addressed one aspect of multiculturalism as related to music and music education. The next phase of multiculturalism in music education would, of necessity, focus on developing understandings about how teachers and learners negotiate influential cultural factors during the education process. (p. 19)

This curricular expansion builds upon the knowledge that we as teachers gain from learning about our students’ musical backgrounds. We first need to incorporate our students’ passions, interests, and cultures; we then should include our students’ ways of knowing and engaging with the music. For example, many of my students learn music culturally via oral tradition. While I distribute sheet music and we discuss Western music theory and stylistic elements, I also provide opportunities for them to learn their music

aurally. I consider it a bridge between their cultural knowledge and the music that I think will support their musical growth.

Opportunities for Students

Music teachers have many opportunities to invite their students into curricular and cultural conversations. DeNora (2000) identified the power inherent in those choices: “if music can affect the shape of social agency, then control over music in social settings is a source of social power; it is an opportunity to structure the parameters of action” (p. 20). Allowing students to step into the role of a more knowledgeable other does give them power—though it does not take away from the teacher’s role. It provides students with a sense of ownership and pride.

Teachers can also involve other community members. As an example: if I wanted to perform an Arabic choral piece, I would reach out to our Middle Eastern families and community members first. I would want to ensure that I chose repertoire that is authentic and accurate, as well as appropriate for a school choral music setting. From previous conversations with my own school community, I have learned that some music is meant for religious settings only, and should not be performed in schools. Once I had chosen a piece of music, I would then reach out to my students and community members again for guidance in musical elements and text.

Celebrate Diversity

It is vital that teachers approach diversity in a respectful, celebratory way. McKoy and Lind (2023) explore what that looks like in music: “for music education, this involves broadening the curriculum to include diverse music genres and looking at different ways of promoting or even defining musicality” (p. 34). It is not as difficult to

incorporate different genres and cultures within the musical repertoire, but considering differences in defining musicality or musicianship can require much more education and reflection. Allowing for differences in musicianship provides a much broader sense of diversity within music ensembles. McKoy and Lind further explain why: “when definitions of ‘musician,’ ‘musicianship,’ and who is ‘musical’ are sufficiently broad to encompass a variety of cultural models in the music classroom, learners will benefit” (p. 52).

Our vision for music education is one where our students enthusiastically participate because the class connects in a deep and meaningful way to their identity and to their values. Culturally responsive teaching calls us as music educators to learn who our students are musically as well as individually and to assist them in achieving their musical goals. (McKoy & Lind, 2023, p. 158)

Culturally responsive teaching in the music classroom allows for a much richer, deeper, and more significant experience for all our students. Intellectually responsive teaching in the music classroom allows for celebratory and exploratory experiences, challenge and rigor, and joy.

APPENDIX A

INTERNAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Date: August 22, 2022

Study #: IRB-FY2023-1

Study Title: Music Ensembles and Culturally Responsive Teaching

Submission Type: Initial

IRB Decision: Approved

Research Team:

Nichole Mayes

Deborah VanderLinde

Based on applicable federal regulations, the above referenced study has been determined to involve no more than minimal risk to participants and to be Approved, with the following expedited categories:

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Letter and Consent Document:

This letter along with the three IRB approved (date-stamped) consent documents (consent, assent and parental permission) can be found in Cayuse in the Submission Details page under Letters and Attachments, respectively.

The IRB approved version of the consent documents must be used in consenting participants. Federal regulations require that each participant receive a copy of the consent document unless a waiver is granted by the IRB. Signed consent forms must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project. Please remember that informed consent is a process that continues

throughout the project, starting with recruitment and assurance of participant understanding of the project, and followed by a signed consent form when applicable.

Permission from Research Sites:

Please note the following:

- This IRB approval letter means that the research has met the federal criteria for approval per 45 CFR 46.111 Criteria for IRB Approval of Research.
- Before the research is initiated, permission to conduct research at a given site must be obtained from all research locations listed in the IRB submission. You must keep copies of all such permission letters for your records.
- It is the responsibility of each researcher to follow all applicable policies and procedures of any outside institution where the research will be conducted.

Modifications:

Any changes to the approved project must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation by submitting a MODIFICATION request. Do not collect data while the changes are being reviewed. Data collected during this time cannot be used in research.

Incidents:

All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others, serious and unexpected adverse events, non-compliance issues and/or serious complaints regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB by submitting an INCIDENT report.

You are approved to start the research. Please retain a copy of this notification for your records.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB office.

Thank you.

The Oakland University IRB

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE PERMISSION LETTER

Parent/Guardian Permission to Participate in Research Culturally Responsive Teaching in Music Ensembles

Introduction

In addition to being your child's music teacher this year, I am also a doctoral student pursuing a PhD in Music Education at Oakland University. As part of the requirements for my degree program, I am asked to engage in a research study. I would like to conduct my study in my own classroom, focusing more on students' musical identities and the way that impacts their learning. Students in [Class Name] are invited to participate; this letter seeks your permission.

Your decision to give permission for your child to participate in this study is voluntary. Your child does not have to be in this study. Your decision will not affect your or your child's present or future relationship with the researcher, [School Name], Oakland University, or [School District].

If you are a student or employee at Oakland University, your decision about your child's participation will not affect your grades or employment status.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to learn about students' musical experiences in high school ensembles that rehearse, study, and perform music beyond the Western European Art Music tradition.

Who can participate in this study?

Your child is being asked to participate in the study because your child is enrolled in a music ensemble at [School Name] under the direction of Nichole Mayes.

How long will my child be in the study?

Participation in this study will not require extra time beyond regularly scheduled classes, rehearsals, and performances throughout the 2022-2023 school year. Some students may be asked to participate in solo or small group interviews, lasting no more than an hour, scheduled based on the participants' availability. Interviews are completely voluntary, with no expectation or requirement for participation.

Where will this study take place?

This study will take place in the music room at [School Address].

What will my child be asked to do?

Your child will be asked to participate in their regular classroom routine working within the regular classroom curriculum. Students will rehearse music to prepare for concerts, write and perform homework assignments, write and perform in-class assignments, and participate in class discussions. I will have video and audio recorders set up around the classroom to capture our normal day-to-day classroom interactions. The video and audio recordings will capture the general flow of activity, conversations, and music-making that occurs during class rehearsals. Unlike some research projects, this study will not involve experimental and control groups or anything of that nature. I will be making the recordings and assignments, then I will study them to see what I can learn about the ways students understand and process musical ideas, and how that impacts their musical identity.

I am requesting your permission to allow your child to be video- and audio-recorded as part of this project. The recordings will be used for research purposes only and their contents will be considered confidential material. Only I, as researcher and teacher, will have access to the recordings. I will keep them in a secure place, and they will be destroyed upon completion of the study. Students in the written study will be identified through a pseudonym, chosen by either myself or by the student themselves.

Your child's classroom contributions are not required to be documented on the recordings or classroom assignments. A decision to participate or not will not be connected in any way to your child's opportunities or grade in our music class. **YOU MAY, AT ANY TIME, WITHDRAW FROM THIS STUDY WITHOUT PENALTY.** Your child's name will not appear in any report of the study. Any written reports of the study will be made available to the school and to parents who may be interested in their contents.

Are there any risks to my child?

Research studies may involve different kinds and levels of risks or discomforts. These could be physical, emotional, social, economic or legal risks. For this study, the potential risks and discomforts that we know about are possible emotional discomforts that may come along with class assignments, discussions, or interview questions.

With many research studies, there is a risk that someone who is not part of this research may accidentally see your child's personal information. Safeguards will be in place to minimize this risk by keeping your research records as confidential as possible. When the results of this research are published or presented at conferences, no information will be included that personally identifies your child.

Because the study involves the use of audio and video recordings, those will be kept locked and password-protected throughout the duration of the study. Upon transcribing, student names and identifying information will be hidden through the use of pseudonyms. The recordings will be destroyed once the study is complete.

Are there any benefits to my child?

Although there may be no direct benefits to your child, the results of this study may benefit others in the future.

Will I/my child receive anything for participating?

You/your child will not receive anything for participating in this study.

Who could see my child's information?

Your child's research records may be shared and reviewed by the following groups:

- Representatives of the Oakland University Institutional Review Board and/or other regulatory compliance staff, whose job is to protect people who are in research studies.
- Regulatory authorities who oversee research (Office for Human Research Protections, or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies)
- Because a teacher is a mandatory reporter in circumstances of abuse or potential harm, information about your child may be shared with protective services/agencies as required by law.

De-identified data may be used or distributed to another investigator for future research use without additional permission from you.

When the results of this research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that personally identifies your child.

What if I/my child want to stop participating in this study?

If you/your child want to stop participating in this study, you/your child should contact the researcher because there may be special procedures to follow.

Who do I contact if I have questions about this study?

Principal Investigator: Nichole Mayes, [school email, school phone number]

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Deborah VanderLinde, [email, phone number]

For questions regarding your child's rights as a participant in human subject research, you may contact the Oakland University Institutional Review Board, 248-370-2762.

Signing the parental or legal guardian permission form

Your signature below means that you have read this form, or someone has read it to you, and you agree to give your child permission to participate in the study.

You are not giving up any legal rights by signing this parental permission form. You will be given a copy of this form.

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE SURVEYS

Initial Survey, copied from a Google Form

Title: Identity Questions for Music Ensembles

Information: Answer whichever of these questions you feel comfortable answering. If you don't feel comfortable, don't answer it.

No one, other than me, will see this as identified data. My PhD cohort (my professor, the 2 other students in the PhD program with me) may see this as de-identified data.

Questions:

Student Name

What is your cultural identity (nationality)?

What is the cultural identity of your parents/guardians?

What is your religious identity?

What is the religious identity of your parents/guardians?

What language(s) can you communicate in proficiently?

What language(s) can you communicate in with a more basic level of understanding?

Describe the role of music in your home:

Are there any other ways of identifying yourself that are important to you – and that you feel comfortable sharing?

Do you have any questions for me?

Mid-Year Survey After a Concert

Title: Post-Concert #2 Survey

Information: Please answer honestly. Remember, no one will see this information identified with your name except for me, and no one will see this as de-identified data other than my PhD cohort (there are 4 of us total). If I end up using this data in my dissertation, I'll be speaking with you one-on-one to make sure you're okay with that.

Questions:

Name:

What is your definition of a musician?

What makes someone a musician vs not a musician?

Based on your answers to the previous 2 questions, do you consider yourself a musician? Feel free to add a qualifier if you like.

Is there anything we do in Symphony Orchestra that changes or reinforces that identity of musician or not-a-musician? If yes, what?

Optional question: is there anything we do in DP Music that changes or reinforces that identity? If yes, what?

Shifting gears: why did you come to the IA? (Be honest... "my parents made me" is an acceptable answer if it's the truth!)

Why have you stayed at the IA?

What are your favorite things about our school?

What are your favorite things about our music department or music program?

Given the list below...which piece(s) stand out as "wow, I really felt like a musician when we performed THAT!" and why?

This year Symph: Turtlewood Stomp, Danse Negre, October, your small ensemble piece, American Salute, Ode to Joy, Son of Pandu, Hoe-Down, Perseus, This is Me, The Rose, Paint it Black, Lord of the Rings, Andante Festivo.

Previous years in Symph: Halo Theme, Recuerdos, Triumph, small ensemble piece, Irish Legend, Rikudim, Mohicans, Of Glorious Plumage, Mendelssohn String Symphony, Jig from St Paul's Suite, Across the Vast Eternal Sky, Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Mozart Divertimento, Elegiac Melodies, Allegro Barbaro, Sleigh Ride, Dance of Iscariot, American Princess, Mendelssohn Symphony #5, Pomp & Circumstance

Full Orchestra, this year and previous years: Vortex, Charlie & the Chocolate Factory, Dark Adventure, Peer Gynt Suite, The Pink Panther, Amadeus, Intro & Royal March of the Lions, Maanyav's piece

Previous years in Strings Orchestra: Assemble the Minions, Autumn, Isle of Skye, Isma'a, Lullaby, Steampunk, Waltz of the Wicked, Milonga, Carpe Diem, Shadowgate, Fire in the Forge, Sonata for Strings, The Bird, Hungarian Dance #5, Largo, Odessa, Surprise Symphony, Irish Tune from County Derry, A Hero's Journey

Anything else you'd like to include regarding your identity as a musician?

APPENDIX D

MUSIC

List of music performed during the research study for both ensembles:

Choir

- *Baba Yetu*, Chris Kiagiri and Christopher Tin
- *Barso Re*, A.R. Rahman, arranged by Ethan Sperry
- *Carol of the Bells*, Mykola Leontovich, arranged by Peter J. Wilhousky
- *Dravidian Dithyramb*, Victor Paranjoti
- *Dúlaman*, Irish Folk Song, arranged by Rollo Fisher
- *Homeward Bound*, Marta Keen, arranged by Jay Althouse
- *Shchedryk*, Mykola Leontovich (*Carol of the Bells* in the original Ukrainian text)
- *Skyfall*, Adele Adkins and Paul Epworth, arranged by Paul Langford
 - Performed with the jazz band
- *Stille Nacht/Silent Night*, Franz Gruber, arranged by Greg Gilpin
- *Svaagat*, Victor Paranjoti
- *Think*, Aretha Franklin and Ted White, arranged by Mark Brymer
 - Performed with the jazz band
- *This is Me*, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, arranged by Mac Huff
 - Performed with the orchestra

Orchestra

- *American Salute*, Morton Gould
 - Performed with the band
- *An Ode to Joy Festival*, Ludwig van Beethoven, arranged by Todd Parrish
 - Performed with the band
- *Andante Festivo*, Jean Sibelius
- *Danse Nègre* from *African Suite, Op. 35, No. 4*, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, arranged by Deborah Baker Monday
- *Hoe-Down* from *Rodeo*, Aaron Copland, arranged by Stephen Bulla
- *October*, Eric Whitacre, arranged by Paul Lavender
- *Paint it Black*, The Rolling Stones, arranged by John Reed for the Hampton String Quartet
- *Perseus*, Soon Hee Newbold
- *Son of Pandu*, Shruthi Rajasekar
- *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, Howard Shore, arranged by Bob Cerulli
- *This is Me*, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, arranged by Mac Huff
 - Performed with the choir

- *Turtlewood Stomp*, Matthew Gelfer
- Plus a collection of popular children's tunes, arranged by me, to perform for the local preschool, including:
 - *Bluey* theme song
 - *Let It Go*, from Disney's *Frozen*
 - *Paw Patrol* theme song
 - *Peppa Pig* theme song
 - *Pirates of the Caribbean* theme
 - *Star Wars* theme
 - *The Itsy Bitsy Spider*
 - *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*

List of music performed prior to the research study for both ensembles, music that may be referenced in student stories:

Choir

- *A Festive Madrigal*, William Gooch, arranged by Donald Moore
- *A Million Dreams* from *The Greatest Showman*, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, arranged by Mac Huff
- *Across the Vast Eternal Sky*, Ola Gjeilo
 - Performed with the orchestra
- *Alleluia, Alleluia*, Amy F Bernon
- *Artza Alinu*, Earlene Rentz
- *Aya Ngena*, Traditional Zulu Folk Song, arranged by Ruth Morris Gray
- *Bonse Aba*, Zambian Folk Song, arranged by Victor Johnson
- *Closer to the Flame*, David Lantz III
- *Die Nachtigall*, Felix Mendelssohn, arranged by Russell Robinson
- *Dies Irae*, Ryan Main
- *Don't Stop Believin'*, Journey, arranged by Alan Billingsley
- *Gloria*, David Giardinieri
- *Inveniam Viam*, Ryan Main
- *J'entends le Moulin*, French Canadian Folk Song, arranged by Emily Crocker
- *Loch Lomond*, Scottish Folk Song
- *Niška Banja*, Serbian Folk Song, arranged by Nick Page
- *Sisi Ni Moja*, Jacob Narverud
- *Siyahamba*, South African Folk Song
- *Skye Boat Song*, Scottish Folk Song
- *The Ash Grove*, Welsh Folk Song
- *The Tide Rises*, Jerry Estes
- *The Wayfaring Stranger*, American Folk Song, arranged by Greg Gilpin
- *The Wellerman*, Traditional New Zealand Folk Song, arranged by Jacob Narverud
- *Tongo*, Polynesian Folk Song, arranged by Greg Gilpin

- *Tue, Tue*, Ghanaian Folk Song, arranged by Ruth Morris Gray
- *Yal Asmar Ellon*, Traditional Syrian Song, arranged by Edward Torikian

Orchestra

- *A Hero's Journey*, Soon Hee Newbold
- *Across the Vast Eternal Sky*, Ola Gjeilo
 - Performed with the choir
- *Allegro Barbaro*, Bela Bartok, arranged by Bob Lipton
- *American Princess*, Bob Phillips
- *Assemble the Minions*, Jeffrey S. Bishop
- *Autumn*, Antonio Vivaldi, arranged by Richard Meyer
- *Carpe Diem*, Richard Meyer
- *Divertimento in D Major, K 136*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- *Elegiac Melodies*, Edvard Grieg
- *Fire in the Forge*, Ted Allen
- *Halo Theme*, Marty O'Donnell and Michael Salvatori, arranged by Bob Phillips
- *Hungarian Dance No. 5*, Johannes Brahms, arranged by Merle J Isaac
- *Irish Legend*, Robert Kerr, arranged by Soon Hee Newbold
- *Irish Tune from County Derry*, Percy Grainger, arranged by Douglas E Wagner
- *Isle of Skye*, Doris Gazda
- *Isma'a*, Traditional Arabic Themes, arranged by Leanne Darling
- *Largo from the New World Symphony*, Antonin Dvorak, arranged by Sandra Dackow
- *Lullaby*, William Hofeldt
- *Milonga del Angel*, Astor Piazzolla, arranged by Jim Palmer
- *Odessa*, David Bobrowitz
- *Of Glorious Plumage*, Richard Meyer
- *Pomp and Circumstance*, Edward Elgar, arranged by Merle Isaac
- *Recuerdos de la Alhambra*, Francisco Tarrega, arranged by Tim McCarrick
- *Rikudim*, 4 movements, Jan Van der Roost
- *Shadowgate*, Christian A. Williams
- *Sleigh Ride*, Leroy Anderson
 - Performed with the band
- *Sonata for Strings*, William Hofeldt
- *St. Paul's Suite, Jig*, Gustav Holst
- *Steampunk*, Richard Meyer
- *String Symphony No. 10*, Felix Mendelssohn
- *The Bird, Finale from String Quartet Op. 33 No. 3*, Franz Joseph Haydn, arranged by Matthew Moreno
- *The Dance of Iscariot*, Kirt Mosier
- *The Last of the Mohicans*, Trevor Jones
 - Performed with the band
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, Richard Meyer

- *Triumph*, Armond Wimberly
- *Waltz of the Wicked*, Kirt Mosier

After School Full Orchestra

- *Amadeus!*, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, arranged by Jamin Hoffman
- *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Danny Elfman, arranged by Victor Lopez
- *Dark Adventure*, Ralph Ford
- *Introduction and Royal March of the Lions*, Camille Saint-Saens, arranged by Michael Story
- *Peer Gynt Suite*, Edvard Grieg, arranged by Richard Meyer
- *The Pink Panther*, Henry Mancini, arranged by Victor Lopez
- *Vortex*, Paul Barker
- Plus a violin concerto written by a student

REFERENCES

- Allsup, R. E. (2011). Popular music and classical musicians: Strategies and perspectives. *Music Educators Journal*, 30-4.
- Anderson, R.C., & Pearson, P. D. (1984). *A schema-theoretic view of basic processes in reading comprehension*.
- Bandura, A. (2006). Toward a psychology of human agency. *Association for Psychological Science*, 1 (2), 164-80.
- Barone, T. (1989). Ways of being at risk: The case of Billy Charles Barnett. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71 (2), 147-51.
- Barone, T. (1995). Persuasive writings, vigilant readings, and reconstructed characters: The paradox of trust in educational storysharing. In *Life history and narrative*. The Falmer Press.
- Barone, T. (2001). Touching eternity: The enduring outcomes of teaching. *Teachers College Press*.
- Barone, T. (2007). A return to the gold standard? Questioning the future of narrative construction as educational research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(4), 454-470.
- Barone, T. (2009a). Narrative research. Lecture conducted from Oakland University, Rochester, MI
- Barone, T. (2009b). Narrative research. Lecture conducted from Oakland University, Rochester, MI
- Barone, T., & Eisner, E. (1997). Arts-based educational research. In *Complementary methods for research in education* (R. M. Jaeger, Ed.; 2nd ed.). American Educational Research Association.
- Barone, T., & Eisner, E. W. (2012). *Arts based research*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Behar, R. (1997). The girl in the cast. In *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Beacon Press.
- Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1997). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. Basic Books.
- Bigge, M. L., & Shermis, S. S. (1992). *Learning theories for teachers* (5th ed). Pearson

Longman.

- Blair, D. V. (2009a). Nurturing music learners in Mrs Miller's 'family room': A secondary classroom for students with special needs. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 31(1), 21-37
- Blair, D. V. (2009b). Stepping aside: Teaching in a student-centered classroom. *Music Educators Journal*, 42-5.
- Blair, D. V. (2009c). Learner agency: To understand and be understood. *British Journal of Music Education*, 26 (2), 173-187.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265051709008420>
- Blair, D. V. (2009d). Fostering wakefulness: Narrative as a curricular tool in teacher education. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 10(19).
- Bloom, B. S. (Ed.). (1956). *Taxonomy of educational objectives: Handbook 1. Cognitive domain*. David McKay Company, Inc.
- Boardman, E. (1968, 1990). *Modes of knowledge representation* [Unpublished manuscript]. School of Music, Theatre and Dance, Oakland University.
- Boardman, E. (2001). Generating a theory of music instruction. *Music Educators Journal*, 45-53.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education* (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Bresler, L. (1992). Visual art in primary grades: A portrait and analysis. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 7, 397-414.
- Bresler, L. (1996a). Ethical issues in the conduct and communication of ethnographic classroom research. *Studies in Art Education*, 37(3), 133-144.
- Bresler, L. (1996b). Towards the creation of a new ethical code in qualitative research. *Bulletin of the Center for Research in Music Education*, 130, 17-29.
- Bresler, L. (2006). Toward connectedness: Aesthetically Based Research. *Studies in Art Education*, 48(1), 52-69.
- Brooks, J. G. (2002). *Schooling for life: Reclaiming the essence of learning*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Brooks, J. G., & Brooks, M. G. (2001). *In search of understanding: The case for constructivist classrooms*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.

- Bruner, J. (1966). *Toward a theory of instruction*. Belknap Press.
- Bruner, J. (1977). *The process of education*. Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1990). *Acts of meaning*. Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press.
- Bruner, J. (2002). *Making stories: Law, literature, life*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Campbell, P.S. (2018). *Music, education, and diversity: Bridging cultures and communities*. Teachers College Press.
- Campbell, P.S. (2023). Intercultural understanding through world music pedagogy. *Teaching Music*, 40-43.
- Canter, L. (2011). *Assertive discipline: Positive behavior management for today's classroom*. Solution Tree Press.
- Chen, R. (2009). *Early childhood identity: Construction, culture, & the self*. Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Clandinin, D. J. (2013). *Engaging in narrative inquiry*. Left Coast Press, Inc.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1995a). Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes: Secret, sacred, and cover stories. In *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*. Teachers College Press.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1995b). Educational qualities of the landscape: Desires, tensions, and possibilities. In *Teachers' professional knowledge landscapes*. Teachers College Press.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). *Flow: The psychology of optimal experience*. HarperCollins Publishers.
- Danielian, J. (2021). School climate change: Requiring understanding of our students and

- community. In C.M. Fugate, W.A. Behrens, C. Boswell, & J.L. Davis (Ed.), *Culturally responsive teaching in gifted education: Building cultural competence and serving diverse student populations*, 23-34. Routledge.
- Davis, J.L. (2021). Acknowledging the past, committing to the future. In C.M. Fugate, W.A. Behrens, C. Boswell, & J.L. Davis (Ed.), *Culturally responsive teaching in gifted education: Building cultural competence and serving diverse student populations*, 1-16. Routledge.
- Davis, S. G. (2005). "That thing you do!": Compositional processes of a rock band. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 6 (16).
- Davis, S. G. (2011). Fostering a "musical say": Identity, expression, and decision making in a US school ensemble. In L. Green (Ed.), *Learning, teaching, and musical identity: Voices across cultures*, 267-280.
- Davis, S. G. (2013). Informal learning processes in an elementary music classroom. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 23-50.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.198.0023>
- Davis, S. G. (2016). Children, popular music, and identity. In G. E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (2nd ed), 265-283. Oxford University Press.
- Davis, S. G., & Blair, D. V. (2011). Popular music in American teacher education: A glimpse into a secondary methods course. *International Journal of Music Education*, 29 (2), 124-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0255761410396962>
- DeLorenzo, L.C. (Ed.). (2016). *Giving voice to democracy in music education: Diversity and social justice*. Routledge.
- DeNora, T. (2000). *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge University Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Kappa Delta Pi.
- Dewey, J. (1990). *The school and society and the child and the curriculum*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Dewey, J. (1997). *How we think*. Dover Publications, Inc.
- Dewey, J. (2018). *Democracy and education*. Myers Educational Press, LLC.

- Duke, R. A. (2012). Their own best teachers: How we help and hinder the development of learners' independence. *Music Educators Journal*, 36-41.
- Eisner, E. (2002). *The arts and the creation of mind*. Yale University Press.
- Encyclopedia of Psychology. (n.d.). *Koffka, Kurt*. Retrieved January 28, 2009.
- Fosnot, C. T., & Perry, R. S. (2005). Constructivism: A psychological theory of learning. In C. T. Fosnot (Ed.), *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice*, 8-38.
- Friere, P. (2018). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Gardner, H. (1999). Keynote address. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 9-21.
- Gardner, H. (2005). *Multiple lenses on the mind* [Paper presentation]. ExpoGestion Conference, Bogota, Colombia.
- Garrett, M.L., & Palkki, J. (2021). *Honoring trans and gender-expansive students in music education*. Oxford University Press.
- Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd Ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2023). *Educating for equity and excellence: Enacting culturally responsive teaching*. Teachers College Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.
- Given, L. M. (Ed.). (2008). *The SAGE encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Green, L. (2005). The music curriculum as lived experience: Children's "natural" music-learning process. *Music Educators Journal*, 27-32.
- Green, L. (2011). The globalization and localization of learning, teaching, and musical identity. In *Learning, teaching, and musical identity: Voices across cultures* (L. Green, Ed.). Indiana University Press.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. Jossey-Bass.
- Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. SAGE Publications.

- Hendricks, K.S., & Boyce-Tillman, J. (Eds.). (2018). *Queering freedom: Music, identity, and spirituality*. Peter Lang.
- Hess, J. (2019). *Music education for social change: Constructing an activist music education*. Routledge.
- Hogle, L. (2018). "Going viral": Contagious agency through learned helpfulness in a choral ensemble. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, 7-20.
- Hogle, L. (2019). Seeing musically agentic voices: Tracing to make transparent. *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 20(8).
- Hollie, S. (2018). *Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning: Classroom practices for student success* (2nd Ed.). Shell Education.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2003). *Teachers as researchers: Qualitative inquiry as a path to empowerment* (2nd ed.). RoutledgeFalmer.
- Kladder, J. (2020). Songwriting in modern band?: Considering constructivism as an approach for teaching popular music. *College Music Symposium*, 60 (2).
- Köhler, W. (1971). *The selected papers of Wolfgang Köhler*. Liveright Publishing Corporation.
- Kohn, A. (1999). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2021). *Culturally relevant pedagogy: Asking a different question*. Teachers College Press.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2022). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American Children* (3rd Ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1999). *Philosophy in the flesh: The embodied mind and its challenge to western thought*. Basic Books.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.

- Leavy, P. (2019). *Spark*. The Guilford Press.
- Leavy, P. (2024). *Writing and publishing qualitative research*. The Guilford Press.
- Leavy, P. (Ed.). (2025). *Handbook of arts-based research* (2nd Ed.). The Guilford Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Logos and programme models*. (2026). <https://ibo.org/digital-toolkit/logos-and-programme-models/>
- MacDonald, R., Hargreaves, D., & Miell, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Musical identities*. Oxford University Press.
- Marsh, K. (2011). The permeable classroom: Learning, teaching, and musical identity in a remote Australian aboriginal homelands school. In *Learning, teaching, and musical identity: Voices across cultures* (L. Green, Ed.). Indiana University Press.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. In C. D. Green (Ed.), *Classics in the history of psychology*. (Reprinted from *Psychological Review*, pp. 50, 370-96).
- McKoy, C.L., & Lind, V.R. (2023). *Culturally responsive teaching in music education: From understanding to application* (2nd Ed.). Routledge.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (5th ed.). Longman.
- Mead, G.H. (2015). *Mind, self, & society*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Nichols, J. (2013). Rie's story, Ryan's journey: Music in the life of a transgender student. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 61(3), 262-279.
- Noddings, N. (1991). Stories in dialogue: Caring and interpersonal reasoning. In *Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education*. Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (2013). *Caring: A relational approach to ethics and moral education* (2nd Ed.). University of California Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Peale, R. S. (1885). *Peale's popular educator and cyclopedia of reference: Historical,*

biographical, scientific and statistical, embracing the most approved and simple methods of self-instruction in all departments of useful knowledge. The Home Library Association.

- Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity: One's own. In *Educational Researcher*, 17(7), 17-21.
- Phillips, D. C., & Soltis, J. F. (1991). *Perspectives on learning* (3rd ed). Teachers College Press.
- Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children* (M. Cook, Trans.). International Universities Press, Inc.
- Piaget, J. (1973). *To understand is to invent* (G. Roberts, Trans.). The Viking Press, Inc.
- Plato. (1995). *Meno* (B. Jowett, Trans.). ILT Digital Classics. (Original work published ca. 385 B.C.E.)
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. State University of New York Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In *Life history and narrative* (J.A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski, Eds.). The Falmer Press.
- Regelski, T. A. (2004). *Teaching general music in grades 4-8: A musicianship approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Reimer, B. (2022). *A philosophy of music education: Advancing the vision*. (3rd Ed.). State University of New York Press.
- Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Ritchhart, R. (2015). *Creating cultures of thinking: The 8 forces we must master to truly transform our schools*. Jossey-Bass.
- Ritchhart, R. (2023). *Cultures of thinking in action: 10 mindsets to transform our teaching and students' learning*. Jossey-Bass.
- Ritchhart, R., & Church, M. (2020). *The power of making thinking visible: Practices to engage and empower all learners*. Jossey-Bass.
- Ritchhart, R., Church, M., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Making thinking visible: How to promote engagement, understanding, and independence for all learners*. Jossey-Bass.

- Roberson, N. (2021). Introduction to culturally responsive teaching practices. In C.M. Fugate, W.A. Behrens, C. Boswell, & J.L. Davis (Ed.), *Culturally responsive teaching in gifted education: Building cultural competence and serving diverse student populations*, 67-78. Routledge.
- Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. Oxford University Press.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford University Press.
- Rogoff, B., & Lave, J. (Ed.). (1999). *Everyday cognition: Development in social context*. Harvard University Press.
- Rousseau, J. (2011). *Emile or on education* (B. Foxley, Trans.). Project Gutenberg. (Original work published in 1762).
- Saldaña, J., Finley, S., & Finley, M. (2005). Street rat. In *Ethnodrama: An anthology of reality theatre*. AltaMira Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2008). Second chair: An autoethnodrama. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 30(2), 177-191.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books, Inc.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Shaw, J. T. (2020). *Culturally responsive choral music education: What teachers can learn from nine students' experiences in three choirs*. Routledge
- Shively, J. (2004). In the face of tradition: Questioning the roles of conductors and ensemble members in school bands, choirs, and orchestras. In L. R. Bartel (Ed.), *Questioning the music education paradigm* (pp. 179-90). Canadian Music Educators' Association.
- Skinner, B. F. (1948). Walden two. In D. E. Hamachek (Ed.), *Human dynamics in psychology and education* (pp. 417-31). Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Skinner, B. F. (1955-6). Freedom and the control of men. In D. E. Hamachek (Ed.), *Human dynamics in psychology and education* (pp. 549-63). Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Skinner, B. F. (1961). Why we need teaching machines. In D. E. Hamachek (Ed.),

- Human dynamics in psychology and education* (pp. 219-37). Allyn and Bacon, Inc.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Waveland Press, Inc.
- Stembridge, A. (2020). *Culturally responsive education in the classroom: An equity framework for pedagogy*. Routledge.
- Swanwick, K. (1999). *Teaching music musically*. Routledge.
- Talbot, B.C. (Ed.). (2018). *Marginalized voices in music education*. Routledge.
- Theory of knowledge guide*. (February 2020). <https://ibo.org>
- Turino, T. (2008). *Music as social life: the Politics of participation*. The University of Chicago Press.
- van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. State University of New York Press.
- van Manen, M. (1997). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*, (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- van Manen, M. (2015). *Pedagogical tact: Knowing what to do when you don't know what to do*. Routledge.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. (2012). *Thought and language*. MIT Press.
- Watson, J. B. (1913). Psychology as the behaviorist views it. In W. Dennis (Ed.), *Readings in the history of psychology* (pp. 457-71). Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Harvard Business School Press.
- Wiggins, J. (2004). Letting go – moving forward. *Mountain lake reader: Conversations on the study and practice of music teaching*, 3, 81-95.
- Wiggins, J. (2007). Compositional process in music. In *International handbook of research in arts education*. Springer.

- Wiggins, J. (2015). *Teaching for musical understanding* (3rd ed). Oxford University Press.
- Wiggins, J. (2016). Musical agency. In G. E. McPherson (Ed.), *The child as musician: A handbook of musical development* (2nd ed). Oxford University Press.
- Wiggins, J., Blair, D. V., Ruthman, A., & Shively, J. (2006). A heart to heart about music education practice. *The Mountain Lake Reader*, 82-91.
- Witherell, C. (1991). The self in narrative: A journey into paradox. In *Stories lives tell: Narrative and dialogue in education*. Teachers College Press.
- Wolcott, H. E. (2009). *Writing up qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Woodward, K. (1997). Concepts of identity and difference. In K. Woodward (Ed.), *Identity and difference* (pp. 7-62). SAGE Publications.
- Zemelman, S., Daniels, H., & Hyde, A. (2005). *Best practice: Today's standards for teaching and learning in America's schools* (3rd ed). Heinemann.