A High Achieving Middle School Band at a High Poverty School in Georgia: A Case Study

by

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Abstract

This case study examined the pedagogical and organizational practices of successful middle school band directors teaching at a high-poverty school in Georgia through the lens of Self-determination theory. Inequity within American school systems is evident from the positive correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and student academic achievement (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020; Sirin, 2005; White, 1982). With advantages like funding, increased parental support, and additional resources, students from wealthier communities score higher on standardized tests than low-income communities (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020; Sirin, 2005; White, 1982). This relationship also appears consistent with music students (Bailey, 2018; Dame, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2006; McCarthy, 1980; McGonigal, 2020; Perrine, 2016; Schmidt et al., 2006; Speer, 2012). However, there is little research investigating the phenomenon of high-achieving band programs in high-poverty schools. Too often, the image of high-achieving band programs is one of suburban, predominantly white students even though high-achieving band programs in low-income neighborhoods exist. The research questions were: (a) what are the instructional and organizational practices of the participating band directors, and (b) how do the emergent themes relate to Self-determination theory? This qualitative inquiry used a case study methodology for exploring this unique phenomenon through the lived experiences of high-achieving band directors at a middle school in the Southeastern United States. The study also focused on the accomplishments of a band program that thrives despite its economic barriers. The band program in this case study had a history of superior ratings. While not the sole measure of success, these superior ratings mark the highest level of accomplishment a middle school band can receive at the Georgia Music Educators' Association Large Group Performance Evaluation. The participant band program in this study received these high marks despite being at a school that meets the

high-poverty threshold defined by the National Center for Education Statistics (2022). A constructivist approach to the emergent design guided the data analysis. Three emergent themes corresponded with Self-determination Theory: (a) competency, (b) autonomy, and (c) relatedness. Findings revealed five key observations. These observations were: (a) a positive classroom environment, (b) an effort to establish student autonomy, (c) a long band director tenure, (d) local school and district support, and (e) an effort to understand and accommodate the local community. Implications discussed include suggestions for future research, band director professional development, and school funding.

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List of Abbreviations

BI	Background Information
CAQDAS	Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CCSD	Carter County School District
CTLS	Carter Teaching and Learning System
ESOL	English to Speakers of Other Languages
FAF	Fresh Air Friday
FRPL	Free or Reduced-priced Lunch
GaDOE	Georgia Department of Education
GMEA	Georgia Music Educators' Association
IP	Instructional Practices
LGPE	Large Group Performance Evaluation
OP	Organizational Practices
PBIS	Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports
PTA	Parent-teacher Association
SDT	Self-determination Theory
SEL	Social-emotional Learning
SES	Socioeconomic Status
TAPS	Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards
TKES	Teacher Keys Effectiveness System

Chapter 1. Introduction

Historical Context

A positive step for equity in American schools was the Supreme Court's unanimous decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The court overturned the 1896 ruling, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which maintained the "separate but equal" doctrine in Louisiana law (1896). This ruling allowed for integrating minority students into white public schools. Racial segregation in American public schools existed since the end of the Civil War. An overturned ruling, *Plessy v. Ferguson,* emboldened southern lawmakers to sustain and enact new Jim Crow laws to enforce public facilities' segregation. The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to eliminate the separate but equal practice, a Jim Crow tradition, allowed for integrating all schools and further promoted equal access to quality education. However, by the start of the following school year, there was almost no observable difference in American schools' integration. The integration of schools became a long and contentious process following *Brown v. Board of Education*, especially in the southeastern United States, because of state and local lawmakers (Davis, 2004). At the onset of desegregation, many southern black communities felt they would still maintain their community identities with the barriers removed. However, when the courts began enforcing integration, black students were often bussed out of their communities to integrate into white schools instead of attending their nearest neighborhood school. At their new schools, the black students became the cultural minority. Many in southern black communities felt bussing black children to white schools was a process of cultural assimilation (Groulx, 2016).

Since the landmark 1954 ruling, considerable contrast in education quality among schools throughout the United States remains. Within the country's diverse communities, schools critically differ in funding, staffing, and facility quality. Many in underprivileged rural and urban

communities do not have access to the same quality of schools found in more affluent suburban neighborhoods (Davis, 2004). The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (2018) reported students from low-income communities were more likely to have less experienced teachers, deteriorating facilities, and old classroom materials. Additionally, parents contribute to the economic stratification of school attendance zones. When school attendance zones have drastically different income levels within their neighborhoods, wealthier parents often send their children to a private school, magnet school, or charter school (Owen, Readon, & Jencks, 2016). This behavior can exacerbate the economic, racial, and ethnic segregation between school attendance zones.

While racial segregation in schools is prevalent in the literature, economic segregation receives less attention. Economic segregation is where neighborhoods exist within similar social classes based on wealth. This type of segregation can mirror racial segregation because neighborhoods with similar household incomes often exist within homogenous racial groups. Many communities fund their local school districts with property taxes. This funding method creates a wide variation in school districts' financial resources because more expensive neighborhoods can contribute more from property taxes to their local schools. Low-income communities often cannot generate the same tax income to fund their schools as wealthier communities. The American school funding system, parents' behaviors, and economic stratification create school attendance zones. These boundaries often lack racial and economic diversity and can negatively affect students from low-income and minority families (Owen, Readon, & Jencks, 2016).

Socio-economic status (SES) is one of the most predictive variables of student success. Students in low-income communities traditionally have lower scores on standardized tests

(Caldas & Bankston, 1997; Coleman et al., 1966; Kinney, 2008; Klingele & Warrick, 1990; Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020; Randolf & Prejean-Harris, 2017; Sirin, 2005; White, 1982). In contrast, schools in high SES communities have advantages like increased parental involvement (Arnold et al., 2008; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987), increased school spending, and more experienced teachers (Siers, 2010). Unfortunately, these are privileges inaccessible to many children in low-income neighborhoods.

High-Poverty Schools

The inequalities in American schools contribute to a positive correlation between communities' socioeconomic status (SES) and students' academic success, evident through decades of research (Coleman et al., 1966; Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020; Sirin, 2005; White, 1982). A provision of the 1964 Civil Rights Act asked for a survey to assess the scope of educational opportunities in the United States (Coleman et al., 1966). As a result, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned James Coleman, a sociologist from Johns Hopkins University, and his team to evaluate the effects of racial, religious, and economic segregation on student achievement. The massive and contentious study published on the July 4th weekend in 1966 revealed data from approximately 600,000 student participants, 50,000 teachers, and over 4,000 school districts. Researchers have affirmed these findings since the report's controversial publication over fifty years ago (Pinquart & Ebeling, 2020; Sirin, 2005; White, 1982). Coleman and his team concluded that a student's family's educational background and economic status were the most influential factor in a student's academic success (Coleman et al.,1966).

The Coleman Report led to widespread pessimism in education. Many interpreted the results to suggest that a student's economic situation predetermines their academic success before attending their first school day (Atteberry & McEachin, 2020). Coleman warned that his

study did not account for student growth measured over time because his data showed schools only represented 10 to 20% of the variance in student achievement. More recent studies replicated Coleman's data collection methodology but measured student growth over time (Atteberry & McEachin, 2020; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1988). Research since the report suggests that schools can account for up to 80% of student achievement variability when measuring student growth over time. This result is especially evident in mathematics classes (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1988). These promising results have positive implications for collective teacher efficacy, suggesting schools and their teachers can make a difference in student outcomes.

Many other factors contribute to student achievement. For example, teacher turnover and effectiveness affect student learning, especially those teaching in low SES communities. Schools in high-poverty areas have a higher teacher turnover rate than the national average (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Rosenholtz, 1985; Scafidi, Sjoquist, Stinebrickner, 2007). Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2019) used school staffing data from the National Center for Education Statistics to evaluate which teachers left schools and which students were the most impacted. They found schools in the South were the most impacted by teacher turnover. Additionally, schools affected by high teacher turnover rates were schools in low-income areas with high minority enrollment.

High teacher turnover rates are especially concerning given adverse school responses. Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, and Carver (2019) found schools with high turnover rates typically hire inexperienced teachers. Additionally, they may increase class sizes or consolidate classes by reducing course offerings. Teacher experience correlates positively with student achievement (Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Podolsky et al., 2019). Therefore, teacher turnover negatively impacts student achievement because of schools' higher rate of inexperienced teachers.

Researchers from Stanford University and The Learning Policy Institute analyzed student performance data from California schools in 2019 (Podolsky et al., 2019). In their analysis, they normalized student performance data, controlling for SES. The resultant data identified outlier school districts because they outperformed their expected results. In addition, they found teacher experience was the most significant variable positively associated with high-performing schools, especially those with high minority populations.

Additionally, Podolsky et al. evaluated substandard teacher credentials with student achievement. They defined substandard credentials as teachers who have emergency credentials, intern credentials, and waivers. They found that for every 10% increase in teachers with substandard credentials, student achievement fell by 0.10 standard deviations in minority students. The researchers in this study highlighted the importance of high-quality, experienced teachers. Unfortunately, students in low SES communities may not always have the same equitable access to high-credentialed teachers that students in high SES do.

Measuring Poverty

Before examining high-poverty schools and their band programs, it is essential to develop a valid way of measuring poverty and create an operational definition of "high poverty." The National School Lunch Program is an entitlement program that offers students low-cost or free lunches to children at public schools, nonprofit private schools, and childcare facilities. The percentage of students enrolled in free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is frequently a proxy for measuring schools' poverty rate. Since poverty statistics are often estimates and are not as widely available as FRPL data, FRPL is a standard measurement used by researchers and policymakers in education (the National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

Knowing the difference between FRPL and poverty rates is essential even though there is a positive correlation (the National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Many students who qualify for FRPL fall above the poverty threshold. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), in 2017, approximately 18.7% of public-school students lived in poverty, while 52.6% of students were eligible for FRPL, an amount over twice the poverty rate. Several reasons explain the difference between the percentage of students receiving FRPL and the percentage of students who live in poverty. In contrast, students may qualify for reduced lunch even if their parents' income is 185% over the poverty threshold. For example, the 2020 federal poverty threshold for a family of four in the contiguous United States is a household income of $26,200. A student may qualify for reduced-price lunch if their household income is $48,470 for a family of four (the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2021). Additionally, Some students in non-poor households may qualify for FRPL for being foster children, participating in the Head Start Program, are migrants, or attending a school that qualifies for community eligibility even though the student otherwise would not. With all these inclusions, the FRPL percentage more than doubles the national poverty rate (the National Center for Education Statistics, 2022), indicating an overestimate of poverty.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2022) maintains that FRPL percentages are still valuable for researchers because they originate from poverty rates and are more readily available than other metrics. The center classifies a high-poverty school as having more than 75% of its students enrolled in the FRPL program. Since Title 1 schools may have a threshold as low as 55% of the student body on FRPL, the Title 1 label alone is insufficient to identify schools in high poverty areas. This study will use the National Center for Education Statistics'

recommended definition of high poverty by identifying schools with more than 75% of the student body enrolled in FRPL.

The relationship between SES, poverty, FRPL, and academic achievement appears to be consistent in music classrooms, suggesting the socioeconomic status of a community may provide a barrier to students' musical achievement (Bailey, 2018; Dame, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2006; McCarthy, 1980; Perrine, 2016; Schmidt et al., 2006; Speer, 2012). Band programs in low SES schools tend to receive lower festival evaluation ratings. Researchers suggest that lower festival ratings of schools in low-income communities might be associated with decreased funding, fewer students taking private lessons, fewer musical opportunities, and lower parental support (Bailey, 2018; Deisler, 2011; Perrine, 2016; Spier, 2012). However, there is a gap in the literature exploring the unique phenomenon of high-achieving secondary ensembles in low SES schools. Too often, the image of high-achieving band programs is one of suburban, predominantly white students. Yet, high-achieving band programs in low-income neighborhoods exist.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the pedagogical and organizational practices of successful middle school band directors teaching at a high-poverty school in Georgia through the lens of Self-determination theory. Examining successful band programs in high-poverty schools may lead to a greater understanding of effective teaching practices. A case study is a valuable tool in exploring this unique topic through high-achieving band directors' lived experiences (Ravich & Carl, 2019). This study's "lived experiences" refer to data collected from interviews, observations, and artifact collection. Yin (2018) explained that case studies "are preferred when the relevant behavior still cannot be manipulated and when the desire is to study some

contemporary event or set of events" (p. 43). The gap in the literature for high-performing, high-poverty bands represent a contemporary event.

This research design provided some much-needed focus on the accomplishments of band programs that thrive despite economic barriers. This study aimed to examine the instructional and organizational practices of successful middle school band directors teaching in high-poverty schools in the southeastern United States. Studying these practices helps understand why the participating directors are successful given the many challenges outside their loci of control. There were two research questions in this study.

The research questions are:

1. What are the instructional and organizational practices of the participant band directors?
2. How do the emergent themes relate to Self-determination Theory?

Initially, I sought to understand how the participants' instructional and organizational practices are effective for band directors in high-poverty schools. In addition to examining instructional band pedagogy, the present study added the dimension of high-poverty schools, which present additional challenges like classroom management, scarcity of resources, and parental support. An inquiry into such organizational practices as discipline policies, parent communication, and fundraising may show how the participating directors create the program-wide foundation, allowing high-achieving bands to perform at high levels. In addition to highlighting the instructional and organizational practices of successful band directors, I asked how the emergent data related to the construct of Self-determination Theory. The data showed how the directors' practices interrelated and how their common practices related to the established literature on effective instructional and organizational practices in the band classroom and high-poverty schools and Self-determination Theory.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature and Conceptual Framework

Effective Instruction in the Band Classroom

Several examples in the research literature describe effective instructional practices in the band classroom (Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Juchniewicz et al., 2014; Mitsza et al., 2010; Parulekar, 2014; Pontious, 1982; Shaley, 2020). The literature typically describes effective band instruction as having more rehearsal time devoted to students performing on instruments than the director giving verbal instruction, spending ample time in warm-ups, developing ensemble tone (Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Pontious, 1982), and the non-musical traits of maintaining high expectations and clear communication (Diesler, 2011; Miksza et al., 2010; Paulekar, 2014; Shanley, 2020).

Pontious (1982) investigated the verbal behaviors of Illinois band directors ($N = 5$) who met his criteria for being "outstanding" teachers. These participants received superior ratings in the previous three years and had a minimum of five years of experience in the classroom. Five of the twenty-one directors in his research area that qualified for the study agreed to let Pontious videotape their rehearsal sessions. After analyzing the videos of the first thirty minutes of the participants' rehearsals, he found these "outstanding" directors had an average of 58% of the instructional time having the band perform, and 42% included the directors talking. Results indicated that rhythm was the most frequent topic of verbal instruction.

Goolsby (1996) expanded Pontious' work (1982) by video recording and analyzing sixty rehearsals from three groups of Georgia band directors. The groups of teachers were (a) student teachers, (b) novice teachers, and (c) experienced teachers at both high schools and middle schools. He identified experienced teachers as individuals with at least eight years of experience in the classroom, had comprehensive programs (i.e., a jazz band, at least two levels of concert

bands, and a marching band), earned superior ratings, and actively hosted student teachers. His analysis indicated that experienced teachers spent more time on musical performance than novice and student-teacher groups. They spent about twice as much time having the students perform on instruments than giving verbal instruction. They also gave non-verbal feedback and displayed modeling behaviors. Experienced teachers were more likely to spend more time in warm-ups. When they would stop the ensemble, they would be very brief in their directions. This study's findings were consistent with previous research (Pontiuos, 1982), indicating effective band directors spent more time having the students play than talking.

A 2010 survey of Colorado band directors (Miksza et al., 2010) asked practicing band directors (N = 235) for their opinions on what personal characteristics are effective for band teachers. The researchers found band directors consistently ranked teaching and personal skills higher than musical skills. The item, *maintain high musical standards,* was the highest-ranked characteristic by the respondents. Juchniewicz et al. (2014) had a similar research design to the Colorado study. However, they already identified effective band directors before sending their survey. Rather than band director traits, Juchniewicz et al. were interested in the rehearsal characteristics of specifically "superior" band directors. Keeping with the literature's precedent for participant selection (Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Pontious, 1982; Saunders & Worthington, 1990), the researchers used publicly available data to identify participants whose bands received a superior rating four out of the previous five years. One hundred and thirty-one out of 250, who met the criteria, returned the questionnaire asking them to describe what aspects of a band rehearsal they believed to be the most important. These high school and middle school participants taught in Florida, Kentucky, and North Carolina. A coded analysis of the open-response questionnaire revealed a pattern consistent with Goolsby's findings (1997) that

effective band directors value spending time on music fundamentals, especially with developing ensemble tone production. Additionally, both groups of band directors emphasized balance, blending, and rhythmic accuracy.

Two studies investigated effective teaching practices in band classrooms and how principals and band directors agree on these practices as teacher evaluation indicators. Parulekar (2014) and Shanley's replication (2020) surveyed teachers and principals, asking them to rate their band director and band programs' beliefs for teacher evaluation effectiveness on a seven-point Likert-type scale. Both researchers divided these indicators into the three domains of teacher attributes, student learning outcomes, and band program outcomes. In addition, Shanley added a demographic component to his survey. Shanley conducted his survey among Iowa schools, while the geographic scope of Parulekar's was Ohio. The results of both studies were very similar. Both studies found effective communication and high expectations among the top band director attributes. These non-musical teacher attributes appeared consistently in prior band education research (Deisler, 2011; Miksza et al., 2010).

Interestingly, both researchers (Paulekar, 2014; Shanley, 2020) found principals rated retaining band students higher than the directors. Shanley suggested band directors might feel that retaining students surpass teachers' control due to feeder program quality, parental support, and scheduling issues. He also indicated principals should have a more open dialogue with directors about attrition and retention concerns. Additionally, principals were more likely than band directors to believe that competitive outcomes (all-state and regional honor band section, solo and ensemble competitions, and band competitions) were indicators of band director success. Also, Shanley argued band directors were more acutely aware of adjudication's subjective nature. Finally, he felt band directors believed other festival and competition factors

were outside their control. On the other hand, band directors are often acutely aware of challenges outside their control due to the economics of the community they teach. Decades of research in music education show similar findings to other academic research about a positive correlation between SES and music performance (Bailey, 2018; Dame, 2010; Fitzpatrick, 2006; McCarthy, 1980; Perrine, 2016; Schmidt et al., 2006; Speer, 2012).

A Colorado study (Hamann et al., 1990) evaluated high school instrumental and choral ensembles' musical achievement in their classroom environments. The team used the *Classroom Environment Scale form R* (CESR) from prior research to assess self-reported measures of classroom environments. The participants were a group of randomized teachers and students (*N* = 1,843) from Colorado high school instrumental and choral programs. The ratings the ensembles received at the Colorado state-sanctioned music festivals defined musical achievement in the study.

The researchers found musical achievement was highest when the classrooms appeared to be student-centered. An example was when the students believed that the teachers cared. They also found a well-structured classroom with well-organized activities and assignments was associated with higher musical achievement. The classroom structure allowed the students to feel the freedom to work independently, ask questions, and encourage engagement in activities. The researchers also found when the students were socially connected to the class and had friends, they were more engaged with the program, and their ensemble was more likely to receive high ratings at the state-sanctioned festivals.

Teaching Music in High-poverty Schools

Teaching music in high-poverty schools is a frequent concern of researchers (Albert, 2006; Baker, 2008; Butler et al., 2007; Dame, 2010; Deisler, 2011; Klinedinst, 1991; McCarthy,

1980; Perrine, 2016; Phillips, 2003; Schmidt et al., 2006; Smith, 1997; Speer, 2012). McCarthy (1980) conducted a quasi-experimental study investigating achievement gains of fifth and sixth-grade midwestern students (*N*=1,199) on the Colwell's Music Achievement Test (Colwell, 1970, as cited in McCarthy, 1980). The students participated in either individual or classroom instruction. His analysis showed individualized instruction had a stronger correlation to gains in reading scores than classroom instruction. This finding had implications for high-poverty band students since many students might not have access to private lessons. In McCarthy's regression equation for posttest MAT scores, only standardized test reading scores and socioeconomic status were significant predictors along with pretest scores. It is essential to note that socioeconomic status was a significant predictor, yet ethnic and racial backgrounds did not affect music achievement. Additionally, McCarthy examined the data concerning attrition from this longitudinal study. He found an association between students from low-income neighborhoods and higher dropout rates in instrumental music programs.

A researcher in Pennsylvania (Klinedinst, 1991) also investigated musical performance achievement and student retention in instrumental music classes. Klinedinst examined eleven predictor variables after seven months of instruction and their associations with adjudicator ratings of student performance achievement, teacher ratings of student performance achievement, and beginning musicians' retention. Fifth-grade beginning instrumental students (*N* = 205) from the Cumberland Valley School District in Pennsylvania were participants in the study. A stepwise discriminant analysis of the data showed socioeconomic status was a statistically significant predictor of student retention. In addition, students from high socioeconomic status family backgrounds were more likely to continue in instrumental music.

Klinedinst (1991) also found a significant correlation between socioeconomic status and the teacher's assessment of student musical achievement; however, it was a weaker correlation (r = -.18, p < .01) compared with other studies in the music education literature. Perhaps one reason for this weak correlation is the relatively homogenous sampling of the schools in the Cumberland Valley School District during the study. Klinedinst stated that the area consisted of "white, middle to upper-middle income families" (1991, p. 227). He ran a Tukey multiple-comparison to test the between-school differences in socioeconomic status. Klinedinst concluded that "any differences existing between schools would have a minimal effect on the results of the study" and therefore, "the schools were not treated as different populations" (p. 231). The students in this study attended schools in middle-to-high SES neighborhoods. Even though students in the investigation potentially came from low-income backgrounds, some of the high-poverty effects were possibly negated. These potential nullified effects included teacher experience and access to quality materials. If Klinedist wanted to include socioeconomic status as a possible predictor of student musical achievement and retention, a more diverse sample of schools would have made a more compelling study.

Several researchers contributed to the growing literature concerning musical achievement and socioeconomic status. Dame (2010) investigated the impact of socioeconomic status on Texas UIL contest ratings. He gathered school poverty information from the Texas Education Agency's accountability ratings. He found a strong negative correlation between socioeconomic status and contest ratings. Using similar Texas UIL contest data, Speer (2012) analyzed contest ratings from high school and middle school concert bands (N = 173). He found that schools with higher FRPL rates traditionally received lower band contest ratings. Bands from schools with 75% or higher FRPL rates were frequently the most poorly rated at UIL contests. McGonigal

(2020) and Schmidt et al. (2006) had similar findings with their investigations of public-school music programs and contest ratings. They found that schools in economically depressed areas traditionally received lower ratings at state music festivals.

The potentially inequitable treatment of high-poverty schools at music festivals is a common concern for music educators. Perrine (2016) examined the validity of festival ratings with non-musical characteristics of bands in Florida. He evaluated the features of band size, minority enrollment, FRPL percentage, and school enrollment against festival ratings, participation, and literature difficulty. Perrine found that schools with high FRPL percentages were likely to perform less challenging literature, received lower ratings, and were more likely not to participate in music festivals. Inequitable treatment of low SES communities from band adjudication is concerning because festival ratings are prevalent when evaluating musical ensembles' performance quality.

Students in low SES communities may have restricted access to high-quality music programs. Smith (1997) collected data on the availability of string orchestra programs from 14,183 school districts in the United States. She found that low-socioeconomic-level school districts were the least likely to have string instruction. When programs are available, there are frequently costs associated with instrumental music participation. For example, the costs of obtaining or renting an instrument and materials are out of reach for many children from low-income families (Albert, 2006). Other financial barriers may be registration fees and private lessons (Phillips, 2003). In addition to financial barriers to entry for participation, there are several challenges for programs in high-poverty schools. Experts agree that to address these challenges educators need to empathize with their students' cultures and learning styles to address these challenges (Baker, 2008; Hunt et al., 2003).

Compared to the established literature on effective instructional practices in a band classroom, pedagogical research in high-poverty music classrooms shows several additional themes. For example, Baker (2008) examined teacher beliefs of music educators in high-poverty, exclusively urban schools. She asked the urban music teachers (*N*=158) what they believed were their most significant challenges and what traits an educator needed to succeed in an urban school music classroom. When describing qualities that make up an effective urban music educator, the participants listed empathy, patience, and flexibility as the most frequent responses. Additionally, the teachers reported their biggest challenges were discipline issues, uninvolved parents, and insufficient funding.

Butler et al. (2007) suggested music teachers must be culturally reflective when teaching in a modern multicultural classroom. Also, they need to understand that learners from different backgrounds come to knowledge differently. Finally, teachers must also see themselves in a socio-cultural context and consider how their students perceive them. Investigations into high-achieving high-poverty music programs may show some pedagogical contrasts to the frequent responses of maintaining high expectations, clear communication, adequate warm-up time, and developing ensemble tone. Implementing instructional methods effectively with students, who may not have the same privileges as students from wealthier households, may add value to music educators' instructional practices everywhere.

High-performing High-poverty Schools

The research literature shows effective practices in academically high-performing schools in low-income areas (Asera & Johnson, 1999; Coburn et al., 2002; Hoy et al., 2006). These examples are not specific to music, however. Researchers from the U.S. Department of Education (Asera & Johnson, 1999) identified nine elementary schools nationally as high-risk

and high-achieving. These schools varied in size and location, but all were Title 1, urban, and attended by minority students. All schools had high scores in mathematics and reading. A team of researchers conducted a case study for each school. They interviewed teachers, parents, and administrators. They observed classrooms, observed hallways, and reviewed achievement data. After looking for trends within the data, the researchers recommended:

1. Build the capacity of principals to provide instructional leadership.
2. Channel resources in ways that provide additional instructional leadership to schools.
3. Create clear, measurable, and rigorous school accountability provisions.
4. Ensure that accountability provisions are accompanied by adequate strategies to build capacity and provide support.
5. Along with accountability, provide schools adequate flexibility and support to use that flexibility well.
6. Infuse the tenets of comprehensive school reform into other federal education programs.
7. Use legislation, policy, and technical assistance to help educators create regular opportunities for true professional development.
8. Provide resources for increasing the quantity of time made available for instruction.
9. Strengthen legislation and provide technical assistance to encourage schools to build the capacity of teachers and parents for increasing parental involvement at school.

In a similar study, the California assembly contracted researchers (Izumi, Coburn, & Cox, 2002) to investigate the reasons for high-performing, high-poverty schools throughout the state. They interviewed administrators and teachers from the purposely selected schools. These schools had 80% or more of the school population on the FRPL program and received high evaluations from the state board of education. Based on this data analysis, the California state assembly

made several recommendations for high-poverty schools. For example, they suggested that principals need to have a clear vision of the school, districts need to invest in teacher professional development, schools need effective discipline practices, and teacher instruction should emulate proven research-based practices (Izumi, Coburn, & Cox, 2002). Interestingly, these findings were similar to the 1999 U.S. Department of Education investigation.

Hoy et al. (2006) developed a construct known as academic optimism. They defined it as "the academic emphasis of the school, the faculty's collective efficacy, and the faculty's trust in parents and students" (p. 426). The school's academic emphasis is the rigor and the intensity in the school's effort to push student achievement. A school's collective efficacy describes how teachers and staff feel about their ability to influence student achievement positively. Finally, the faculty's trust in parents and students is how much a school's staff believes that parents and students will be equal, active partners in the students' education.

After developing and defining academic optimism as a construct, Hoy et al. (2006) surveyed teachers, administrators, and superintendents from a diverse sample of schools (N = 96). The researchers used their tool to explain student achievement while controlling for socioeconomic status, prior achievement, and urbanicity. They found that the environments of high-performing schools in economically disadvantaged and urban communities reflected high academic optimism. Academic optimism has received little attention in music education research. Examining a music classroom scenario, like that of the Hoy et al. study, may lead to implications for improved music instruction in disadvantaged schools.

High-achieving Band Programs in High-poverty Schools

In one of the few studies published about high-achieving band programs in high-poverty schools, Deisler (2011) conducted a comparative analysis of successful band directors in high

and low-income communities. Her quantitative analysis compared high school band students from five high-poverty schools to five low-poverty schools. Participants believed a band director's high expectations to be the most influential on a band program's success. Other high common indicators were the band director's knowledge and the band director's personality. The participants ranked adequate funding, fundraisers, and private lessons the lowest. Deisler found that band students and their directors from different SES communities varied only slightly in their responses when asked what contributes to a band program's success. She found low SES students were more likely to rate *a tradition of success* and *band director knowledge* than high SES students. Low SES students were also more likely to rate characteristics about the positive value of band in their lives than students in high SES schools.

Much of the existing research literature characterizes high-achieving classrooms in general education academic research; few studies explored relationships in high-achieving musical ensembles at the secondary level. While some have investigated high-achieving schools in high-poverty areas, interest in high-achieving music ensembles in high-poverty schools is a gap in the research. Deisler's (2011) study helps understand the directors' mindsets of high-performing bands at high-poverty schools, but more research is necessary to investigate their programs' specific features.

Self-determination Theory

Self-determination Theory is a theory for motivation concerning an individual's agency, decisions, and psychological needs. It is a meta-construct that suggests humans have three primary psychological needs: *competency, relatedness,* and *autonomy* (Deci & Ryan, 2000). People meet these three needs to varying degrees. *Competency* is a person's need to feel accomplished in tasks of perceived value. *Relatedness* is an individual's need to feel connected to

a community or group. Additionally, one desires to feel understood and cared for by a group. Finally, *Autonomy* is a person's desire to have free agency in their choices, including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These three components satisfy an individual's psychological needs.

How much motivation an individual has is not a concern of SDT but rather the quality of motivation. The theory states that attributions for agency lie on a continuum from non-internalized to internalized. Which type of motivation is of interest and whether that motivation is autonomous or not. When motivation is autonomous, people feel they are acting on their sense of willingness. This feeling protects their sense of self (Silva et al., 2014). Autonomy for an individual can exist, even if the motivation is not intrinsic. For example, a band student may practice his scales because he may feel guilty if he does not. In this example, the avoidance of guilt is an extrinsic motivator; however, the student acts of his own free will to practice his scales. A person can act autonomously with most extrinsic motivations, meaning they have the agency to perform or not.

Deci and Ryan (2000) explained extrinsic and intrinsic motivations are not necessarily dichotomously productive or non-productive. They argued against viewing extrinsic motivations as bad and intrinsic motivations as good. They said it is not necessarily binary because extrinsic motivations exist on a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum is their construct, *non-regulation*, which is where an individual lacks motivation or autonomy. On this end is apathy, incompetence, or a loss of control. The spectrum then progresses through four stages of autonomous extrinsic motivation:

1. *External Regulation* – An individual does something for external rewards or the avoidance of punishment

2. *Introjected Regulation* – An individual does something because they seek approval, avoid disproval, feel they must, or experience guilt if they do not
3. *Identified Regulation* – An individual does something because they know it will be useful in accomplishing goals
4. *Integrated Regulation* – An individual does something because it aligns with their self-identified values

Finally, *intrinsic regulation* is on the far end of the motivational spectrum. This construct represents intrinsic motivation. It is where an individual does something out of enjoyment for the task. Deci and Ryan argued that some motivators may feel intrinsic but are extrinsic. For example, students may practice their scales because they see their value and understand why they are essential. This attitude of utility is an example of *identified regulation.* The student acts autonomously, but the reward is a sense of value, an extrinsic motivator. Students can transition behaviors from being extrinsically motivated to intrinsically motivated over time. Thus, teachers can build intrinsic motivation by using extrinsic rewards and encouraging the process of internalization.

Confidence in an activity builds when an educator provides the correct scaffolding support. An example is appropriate feedback and correction (Ryan et al., 2008). A strength of SDT is that "it proposes processes of processes of behavior change that can be targeted in different health behavior interventions" (Silva et al., 2014, p. 172). These processes can be in the form of instructional scaffolding. With the right interventions, effective instructional scaffolding can influence behavioral internalization (Ryan et al., 2008).

Silva et al. (2014) briefly described this scaffolding support under the three domains of SDT. In *autonomy*, they described appropriate scaffolding as relevance, respect, choice, and

avoidance control. Instruction is relevant when students understand the rationale for the activity. Students feel respected in a class when teachers acknowledge their perspectives and personhoods. When teachers give students the freedom to follow their interests, they have a choice. Finally, avoidance control is when an educator does not use authoritarian methods like guilt control and coerciveness.

Appropriate scaffolding mechanisms for competence are clarity of expectations, optimal challenge, feedback, and skills training. When teachers establish realistic goals and clarify behavioral expectations, that is clarity of expectations. Optimal challenge is assigning tasks to meet the individual learning needs of each student. Feedback is when a teacher makes relevant non-judgmental corrections to a student. Lastly, skills training provides support through corrections and repetitions.

Silvia et al. (2014) described SDT's final construct of relatedness with five scaffolding mechanisms. They are empathy, affection, attunement, the dedication of resources, and dependability. Empathy is when an educator attempts to see a student's experience from their perspective. Affection is when the educator genuinely shows concern for the child's well-being. Attunement is when the educator gathers information about the child. Finally, dependability is when the educator makes themselves available to the child.

In SDT, confidence and autonomy are considerations for long-term behavioral internalization. Autonomy and confidence have a symbiotic relationship because autonomy influences competence. For example, individuals willfully acting will likely experience change and new competencies (Markland et al., 2005). If building musical competency is a concern for music educators, developing autonomously motivated musicians should be of interest. Additionally, MacIntyre and Potter (2013) suggest that musical competency can satisfy the basic

needs and a person's psychological sense of self. Therefore, adapted for education, Silva et al.'s suggestions for support may have far-reaching implications for the music classroom. They are practical suggestions that can influence behavioral change in students. Additionally, Silva et al.'s suggestions for influencing behavioral change may lead to a promising instrument for music program evaluation through the lens of SDT.

In addition to SDT potentially providing a framework for influencing behavioral change in music classrooms and program evaluation, it can help educators understand the motivations of music students. Furthermore, recent research suggests that *Self-determination Theory* (SDT) is an appropriate framework for understanding motivation in music education (Evans, 2015; MacIntyre et al., 2018). For example, Renwick and McPherson (2002) applied SDT to examine the practice habits of an adolescent female in their case study. When the teacher gave the child a sense of autonomy, her practice habits improved markedly. Furthermore, when she had the opportunity to choose her music, they observed her being strategic and deliberate with her practice. Additionally, her practice was more structured and enjoyable. This result was contrary to when she was not given agency in her repertoire selection. Then, her practice was unsystematic and not as effective. These researchers suggested that autonomy satisfies the psychological needs of music students.

A study involving SDT in music education (MacIntyre et al., 2018) examined the motivations of adult musicians (N = 188) and the way those motivations interacted. They developed a scale using four of the constructs from Self-determination Theory. They adapted *intrinsic, identified, introjected, and extrinsic regulation* for the Self-determination portion of their tool. In addition to the self-determination section of the questionnaire, they included items related to *desire to learn, motivational intensity, perceived competence for music, musical self-*

esteem, and *willingness to play.* Participants answered a 58-item questionnaire with Likert scale responses. They found that SDT's constructs of internal regulations had strong positive correlations with other motivational constructs. *For example, intrinsic* and *identified* had stronger links to *motivational intensity, music self-esteem, and willingness to play* than the external regulations of *introjected* and *extrinsic regulation.* The researchers suggested that their study implied that SDT was an adequate theory to examine motivations in music.

Music education research is one of many domains explored in the literature concerning SDT. The theory has a sizable amount of research in education, medicine, sports, and business. Given the difficulty of learning music and the activity's discipline, motivational theories and constructs are of interest to music education researchers. Therefore, it should not be surprising that research in this meta-theory interests music educators. The existing research on SDT in music education is small but growing. However, Evans and Liu (2019) eloquently described music education's current impact on SDT research by saying, "On the other, music education has extended SDT's reach by testing its motivational validity in a relatively uncharted context" (2019, p. 86).

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study focused on successful band programs' instructional and organizational practices in high-poverty schools through the lens of Self-determination Theory. A successful, high-poverty band program, measured by consistent superior ratings, may contribute much to the literature about effective teaching in high-poverty schools. An in-depth study of band directors' instructional and organizational procedures has implications for effective teaching practices that might reduce musical achievement gaps. These teaching practices may have even broader

implications of effectiveness in any school environment because of the students' and teachers' barriers they overcome.

My positionality as a middle school band director at a Title 1 school influenced this study's design. As someone who currently teaches band at a Title 1 middle school, I have experience in the phenomenon. Interactions between myself and the research participants guided the emergent and reiterative process of data collecting. With my experience, a constructivist approach to a narrative analysis will allow me to examine band directors' lived experiences through the lens of my personal experiences as a band director with a successful program in a low-income community. Additionally, Middle schools were of particular interest because of the additional obstacles regarding student motivation and my positionality. I added the delimitation of focusing only on middle school band programs because research shows there is a sizable drop in student motivation and negative perceptions of self-efficacy during the transition from elementary school to middle school (E. Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Boswell, 1991; Eccles, Midgley, & Adler, 1984; Wigfield & Eccles, 1991). This decline in motivation presents additional challenges to educators.

I adapted Self-determination theory as this study's theoretical framework after much reflection and a reiterative data analysis. Its components of *autonomy, competence, and relatedness* corresponded appropriately to the emerging themes in my qualitative dataset. I used this theory to simultaneously organize my existing dataset while further exploring additional meaning in my study. Once I adapted this theoretical framework, the meta-construct of SDT provided a powerful lens to complete my narrative analysis. The scaffolding suggestions in the literature (Silva et al., 2014) provided a mechanism for relating this study's findings to SDT.

Additionally, there is a new interest in SDT among music education researchers. My use of Self-determination Theory in this study adds to the growing music education literature on the topic.

Investigating high-achieving-high-poverty programs is necessary because of the lack of relevant research literature on the phenomenon. Also, given the general representation of predominantly white, suburban bands as successful bands, educators' collective perceptions of what makes a high-achieving band program may lack representation. A qualitative study of high-achieving band programs in high-poverty middle schools and their directors helps in-service teachers understand the characteristics and practices that make successful band programs, especially in low-income areas. SDT provides a robust structure for evaluating the motivational systems implemented by band programs and a method for influencing future behavioral change in their students. These methods for student behavioral change from SDT are best practices. Replicating how a band program at a high-poverty school applies Self-determination theory to motivate its students to achieve may reduce band achievement gaps in other low-income communities.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology and Design

Methodology

In this case study, I sought to highlight the procedures of the participant band directors by observing their instructional and organizational practices and how they might reveal emergent themes related to SDT. I used narrative inquiry from multiple sources of triangulated evidence. Multiple sources included band director interviews, a principal interview, a parent interview, a student focus-group interview, classroom observations, and artifact collection. It was important to focus my research on the participants' lived perspectives, so case study methodology with its emergent design was appropriate. The existing research literature regarding effective instruction in band classrooms and high-poverty schools helped establish the first research question. The previous literature was a "guide for defining the case" (Yin, 2018, p.67). The *case,* or the *units of analysis,* is the Summerset Middle School Band. I designed the first research question to be broad enough to produce a rich qualitative data set. This research question and the data collection instruments were grounded in the existing research on effective band instruction and high-poverty schools.

This study used an emergent design. Creswell and Poth advised case study researchers to "embrace dynamic and emergent procedures" (2018, p. 86). They suggested researchers using an emergent design should prepare to alter their procedures as the data emerges. Additionally, they stated:

> The investigator participates in a form of social and human science research that does not follow specific procedures and is constantly changing. This might complicate telling others about study plans and how others judge the study when completed (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.86).

This philosophy of embracing emergent procedures was especially true for this case study. Originally, I designed this dissertation as a multiple case study. However, due to limited access to schools resulting from the global COVID-19 pandemic, I had to adjust it to a single case study.

The second research question was, "how do the emergent themes relate to Self-determination theory?" The emergent data revealed a theoretical proposition. Iterative memoing, reflection, and ongoing literature review ultimately revealed Self-determination Theory as the theoretical proposition. A *theoretical proposition* is a reasonable initial assumption grounded in prior research, which proposes a potential link between concepts not tested in experimental research (Yin, 2018). In this case, the reasonable assumption relates to the second research question. I adopted this proposition as the theoretical framework, which focused the study's direction and data analysis. A narrative analysis described these emergent themes in this study. Analyzing the emergent themes and how they might relate to SDT provided a link between a prior theory and this study. Yin (2018) stated:

> A good case study researcher should pursue such propositions and take advantage of this benefit, whether the case study is to be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. The use of theory and theoretical propositions in doing case studies can be an immense aid in defining the appropriate research design and data to be collected. (p. 77)

Even though I did not design the first research question and the protocols with SDT in mind, adapting the framework provided structure for determining how to interpret the data, yielding productive implications for best practices and future research.

Participants

In this study, the school district, the school, the band directors, and the interviewed parent have pseudonyms. I referred to the student focus group participants as respondents one through eight. The use of pseudonyms was a limitation I had to follow from the participating school district's office of research and grants policy. Additionally, it helps protect the identities of all parties involved.

Concentrating on a single band program via qualitative methodology allowed me to narrow my breadth while increasing my research depth. The current pandemic was a significant limitation in this research. Zoom conferences with the participants provided safety given recent complications with the COVID-19 pandemic. I completed the interview with the head band director, Dr. Miller, early in this study when a virtual conference on Zoom was the safest means to interact. Later, as vaccines became prevalent, the Carter County School District graciously allowed me to collect data in person at Summerset Middle School. All interviews were in person except for the head band director and the band parent participant. Mrs. Mourdock, the band parent participant, interviewed with me via Zoom because it was more convenient for her due to a busy schedule. The school's principal and band directors allowed me to observe their classroom environments, conduct interviews, and generate data based on their lived experiences.

I used superior ratings at contests, festivals, or large-group performance evaluations to define high-achieving band programs for participant selection. Using superior ratings as participant selection criteria maintains consistency with participant selection criteria for prior research (Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Juchniewicz et al., 2014; Pontious, 1982; Saunders & Worthington, 1990). In addition, adjudication ratings are readily available by contacting state music educator associations or visiting their websites. However, I had to use snowball sampling to identify potential participants in the southeastern states that did not have performance rating

data on their websites. In those states, I asked colleagues to recommend potential participants. Next, I verified with the candidates that they met my study's criteria. This was the case for Georgia and my study's participant school.

Potential band director participants needed an overall superior rating with the school's top ensemble for four out of the previous five years. If the school did not participate in adjudication during the COVID-19 pandemic, I made considerations with my selection criteria. In this case, I did not require a consecutive five years. If there was a split decision with three judges, the overall rating is superior if two of the three adjudicators award the highest mark. The potential participants met the following criteria:

- teaches band at a high-poverty middle school as defined by the National Center for Education Statistics
- teaches at a school located in the southeastern United States as defined by the southeastern division of the National Association for Music Education
- has been at the school for at least five years before data collection for this study began. This requirement means that the band director would have been at their current school since at least the fall of 2016.
- has earned superior ratings with their top ensemble at performance evaluation four out of the past five years

After reviewing publicly available performance evaluations in the southeastern states, I eliminated all potential participants who taught at schools with less than 75% FRPL. Using publicly available data, I could identify only thirty-two potential participants in the southeastern United States who taught at high-poverty schools and had recently received superior ratings in performance evaluation. With this narrower list, I reached out to the potential participants via

email and social media to inquire how long they have been at their current school. Twenty-eight responded.

Out of the twenty-eight, only ten had been at their schools since the fall of 2016. Eighteen participants indicated they were no longer at the school of interest or had not been there for at least five years. Five of the remaining ten agreed to participate in the study. Two were from the metropolitan Atlanta area, one from Columbia, South Carolina, and two from the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale metropolitan area. After gaining IRB approval from Auburn University, I sought to gain local school district and principal support to conduct research involving children from each of the five potential participants. Unfortunately, only one school district granted me full access to conduct my research. This potential participant was one of the two in the metropolitan Atlanta area.

Dr. Lance Miller is a veteran teacher of thirty-three years. He is a white male in his fifties. At the time of data collection, he was in his seventeenth year as the director of bands at Summerset Middle School and was the longest-tenured music teacher the school has ever had on staff. He has a doctorate in teacher leadership and technology, a master's degree in wind conducting, and a bachelor's degree in music education. Additionally, Dr. Miller has taught high school and middle school bands in various SES settings. Before moving to Georgia, he taught for 15 years in Florida. However, Summerset Middle School had the highest FRPL percentage out of any school he has worked.

Dr. Miller's coworker and associate band director, Madison Wolfe, has been at Summerset Middle School for four years. She is a white female in her thirties. The previous associate band director retired at Summerset and is now an active composer for young bands. Mrs. Wolfe is currently in her eleventh year of teaching. She spent her entire career teaching at

the middle school level. Both her bachelor's and master's degrees are from Florida State University. Like Dr. Miller, she is a clarinetist.

Chris Nix, a veteran educator in the Carter County School District since 1998, was the school's principal. He had a bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Tennessee and a specialist degree in administrative leadership from Kennesaw State University. He spent most of his time at Title 1 schools. When I interviewed him, he was in his 25th year as an educator in the Carter County School District and his sixth year as the principal at Summerset Middle School.

Jane Mourdock was a parent who agreed to an interview. She was the current Parent-teacher Association President and had all her children participate in Summerset's instrumental programs. She decided to do a Zoom interview with me due to her busy schedule. She was at her child's baseball practice, who was a trumpet player in the sixth-grade band. In addition, she had an older child who went through the Summerset band program, playing percussion. She conferenced with me in her car while waiting for her son to finish practice.

The final interview conducted was the student focus-group interview. This interview consisted of two eighth-grade students and four seventh-grade students. The band directors recommended these students due to the perception they would be polite and actively engaged in a conversation with me. Additionally, they were the students who returned the signed parent consent documents and were not missing crucial instructional time for the interview. The student musicians included two bass clarinetists, two trumpetists, a tubist, and a trombonist. Two of them were female, and four of them were male. As an extra precaution to protect the children's identities, I referred to them as respondents one through six in the interview, recording, and transcript.

Setting

I delimited the regional scope of the study to the southeast and, ultimately, Georgia for various reasons. First, this study investigated high-poverty schools that existed in economically disadvantaged communities. The southeastern United States provides a rich historical context to these communities with segregation and integration (Groulx, 2016). Also, with qualitative research, the lead investigator's positionality and identity play a role in the data collection. This role leads experts to consider the researcher an instrument in the data collection process (Cresswell & Poth, 2018). Finally, since I am currently a middle school band director in Georgia, the school's proximity posed fewer costs and time barriers to travel and conducting my study.

Initially, I designed this study to search for participants throughout the southeast. I originally designed this study to be a multiple case study with five participant band programs. However, I experienced design challenges due to emerging limitations from the COVID-19 pandemic. Out of the five band programs, only one school district granted me access to conduct the student focus-group interview and classroom observations. Under the guidance of my advisor and with the committee's approval, we agreed to adjust the study to a single case study. I narrowed the study's scope to one participant band program but increased its breadth with additional data sources.

A program from the southeast was appropriate because of the quality of the data available from the state music educators' associations' concert band contests and evaluations. These state organizations' intra-rater reliability is evident because of their strict selection process and required adjudicator training. In addition, most southeastern music educators' associations and band performance ratings are available on their websites. When data for super ratings was not readily available on state music education websites, I contacted colleagues and professionals to

refer me to band directors with programs who might qualify for the study, which was the case for this study's participating band program. Fortunately, The historical context of high-poverty schools in the southeast, my positionality as a middle school band director in the region, the availability of professional colleagues to aid in snowball sampling, and the quality of concert band evaluation data made a band program in Georgia an ideal choice for this study's setting.

A middle school band program at a high-poverty school in a large urban and suburban school district in the metropolitan Atlanta area is the setting for the study. The school has a student body of 1018 students. Sixty percent of the student body is Hispanic, thirty-five percent is black, and approximately five percent is white. During the 2019-2020 school year, Summerset Middle School had an FRLP of 83.85 percent, putting it within the threshold to be considered a high-poverty school according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The 2019-2020 school year is used in this study for FRPL because that was the last data from the Georgia Department of Education before the global COVID-19 pandemic. The date of that report was October 1st, 2019. After the global pandemic and the start of the 2020-2021 school year, the Carter County School District (CCSD) provided free breakfast and lunch to all students in the school district. This support meant parents did not need to file for free or reduced lunches and heavily skewed the data. For example, with the current school year, reported on October 5th, 2021, Summerset's FRLP was only 31.18 percent. This staggering change was a result of heavily skewed and poor data reporting.

Dr. Miller and his assistant band director, Madison Wolfe, taught six band classes daily. Around three hundred students were enrolled in the band program annually, accounting for nearly thirty percent of the entire school student body. In the sixth grade, Dr. Miller taught two homogeneously grouped beginning brass classes, while the assistant director taught the two

homogeneously grouped beginning woodwind classes. The directors split the seventh-grade students into two ability-based bands. The upper band was their seventh-grade Symphonic Band, while the lower group is their seventh-grade concert band. They split the eighth-grade bands similarly with an eighth-grade Symphonic Band and Concert Band.

Data Collection

A social constructivist framework guided the process of data collection and transcription. This research centers on the belief that the band director's behaviors, beliefs, social interactions during instruction, and actions affect the band program's success. The triangulated data in this study are the fieldwork observations, artifact collection, a participant semi-structured interview, a student focus-group interview, a principal semi-structured interview, and a parent focus-group interview. The classroom observations are the fieldwork, which "entails the process of collecting data in a natural setting" (Ravich & Carl, 2019, p. 535). Classroom observations occurred during both band directors' rehearsals. I was allowed access to the rehearsals and recorded my field observations with written memos, paying close attention to instructional time usage, band director pedagogy, the room layout, audio and visual devices, teacher behaviors, and student behaviors. Observed student behaviors were engagement, class participation, interactions with other students and the teacher, and the general mood of the room.

Duffy and Watson (2000) recommended semi-structured interviews for qualitative research because the data drives the questions; however, there is ample open discussion. Artifacts from Dr. Miller's band program include handouts, written procedures, forms, and curriculum materials. The band director's instructional practices describe his pedagogy, students' relations, and instructional time. In contrast, the band directors' organizational practices describe discipline procedures, communication, the set-up of their classrooms, and fundraising efforts.

The underlying philosophies that guided the interview protocols arose from the prior literature and the theoretical proposition. The band director interview, the principal interview, the parent interview, and the focus group interview protocol contained items linked to instructional practices, organizational practices, and beliefs in creating a systematic structure enabling a positive classroom environment.

The four interview protocols for this study are in the appendices. The first research question and the existent literature guided the design of the protocols. Table 1 lists all the band director interview questions and links them to each research question's components. Table 2 is the principal interview protocol. Both Table 1 and Table 2 have a similar design and use BI, IP, and OP codes. BI stands for background information. IP denotes questions linked to instructional procedures. OP are questions related to organizational procedures. The final questions are wrap-up questions for the interview.

Table 1

Band Director Interview Protocol Matrix – The Relationship to Research Question no. 1

# and Description	BI	IP	OP
1 – Name	X		
2 – Background	X		
3 – Challenges	X	X	X
4 – Class Structure			X
5 – Classroom Management			X
6 – Beginner Setup			X
7 – Communication			X
8 – Social Media			X
9 – Academic Accountability		X	X

10 – Assessments		X		
11 – Instructional Time		X		
12 – Rehearsal Beliefs		X		
13 – Curriculum		X		
14 – Repertoire Selection		X		
15 – Instructional Rigor		X		
16 – Student Interactions #1		X		
17 – Student Interactions #2				X
18 – Student Motivation		X		
19 – Community				X
20 – Additional Strategies #1		X		
21 – Additional Strategies #2				X
22 – Additional Information		X		X
23 – Questions	X			
24 – Member Checking	X			

Note: The full interview protocol is in Appendix A.
BI = Background Information and Follow-up
IP = Instructional Practices
OP = Organizational Practices

As a practicing band director, I was concerned with tact while developing my principal interview protocol (Appendix C). I did not want to ask questions that required expertise in band programs. The abundance of band content knowledge might have put the principal interviewee in an uncomfortable position with poorly designed questions. Additionally, I wanted to ask questions that he could respond to with rich information. After I made a draft of the protocol, adapted from the band director protocol, I sent the draft to a reviewer. She was my former principal and the wife of a retired band director who consulted on the questions' pacing, tact, and

appropriateness. This process added to the validity of this protocol as a data collection instrument.

Additionally, I conducted a pilot study for the principal interview protocol with an additional reviewer. The school administrator used in this pilot study was a retired assistant principal and a former band director colleague. She was an expert on an administrator's positionality when evaluating the performance of a band director. During the pilot study, I tested the pacing and clarity of the questions. I also received feedback from her on the content of the questions.

Table 2

Principal Interview Protocol Matrix – The Relationship to Research Question no. 1

# and Description	BI	IP	OP
1 – Name	X		
2 – Background	X		
3 – Challenges	X	X	X
4 – Class Structure			X
5 – Administrative Support			X
6 – Communication			X
7 – Social Media			X
8 – Director Responsibilities			X
9 – Procedural Beliefs			X
10 – Community		X	X
11 – Student Rapport #1		X	
12 – Classroom Routines		X	X
13 – Instructional Rigor		X	
14 – Student Accountability		X	X

15 – Addressing Needs		X	X
16 – Student Rapport #2		X	
17 – Classroom Management		X	
18 – Instructional Time		X	
19 – Instructional Techniques		X	
20 – Student Motivation		X	
21 – Additional Information		X	X
22 – Questions	X		
23 – Member Checking	X		

Note: The full interview protocol is in Appendix C.
BI = Background Information and Follow-up
IP = Instructional Practices
OP = Organizational Practices

Table 3 outlines how each student focus-group question links to the research questions. Additionally, Table 4 summarizes the parent interview protocol. The student focus-group protocol and the parent interview protocol have similar structures. The tables representing these protocols have the added codes of IQ and CQ. IQ stands for introductory and transition questions. CQ stands for closing questions. The parent interview protocol (Appendix B) was initially a focus group. However, I was unable to get the parents of the participant band program to agree on a meeting time for the interview. I made three attempts at setting up this focus group interview. Ultimately, I could only interview one band parent and adapted a protocol designed for a focus group. The interviewed parent, Mrs. Mourdock, was an excellent participant because she was the president of the Parent-teacher Association and had multiple students involved in band and orchestra.

Table 3

Parent Interview Protocol Matrix – The Relationship to Research Question no. 1

# and Description	IQ	IP	OP	CQ
1 – Child Information	X			
2 – Involvement	X			
3 – Quitting Band	X			
4 – Being a Band Parent	X			
5 – Classroom Environment #1		X	X	
6 – Student Motivation #1		X	X	
7 – Classroom Environment #2		X	X	
8 – Student Motivation #2		X	X	
9 – Instructional Beliefs #1		X		
10 – Student Rapport		X		
11 – Instructional Beliefs #2		X		
12 – Organizational Beliefs #1			X	
13 – Communication			X	
14 – Organizational Beliefs #2			X	
15 – Important Take-aways				X
16 – Additional Information				X

Note: The full interview protocol is in Appendix B.
IQ = Introduction and Transition Questions
IP = Instructional Practices
OP = Organizational Practices
CQ = Closing Questions

Example band director instructional practices were observation notes on instrument pedagogy, curriculum maps, ensemble skills pedagogy, instructional time usage, and band students' interpersonal interactions. The artifacts used to analyze Dr. Miller's organizational practices were the classroom set-up and environment, the band handbook or class syllabus,

assessments, communication with band program stakeholders, any online or social media presence, concert programs, and written discipline procedures.

Table 4

Focus Group Protocol Matrix – The Relationship of each Question to the Research Questions

# and Description	IQ	IP	OP	CQ
1 - Background	X			
2 – Joining Band	X			
3 – Band Experience	X			
4 – Classroom Environment #1		X		
5 – Student Motivation #1		X	X	
6 – Classroom Environment #2		X		
7 – Student Motivation #2		X	X	
8 – Instructional Beliefs #1		X		
9 – Student Engagement		X		
10 – Student Comprehension		X		
11 – Organizational Beliefs #1			X	
12 – Communication			X	
13 – Classroom Procedures			X	
14 – Important Take-aways				X
15 – Additional Information				X

Note: The full interview protocol is in Appendix D.
IQ = Introduction and Transition Questions
IP = Instructional Practices
OP = Organizational Practices
CQ = Closing Questions

I limited the instructional practices in this study to descriptions and observations of classroom instruction. These descriptions were criteria I found evidence of in my field research. Examples of these are *classroom environment* and *academic accountability*. I created a field observation template (Appendix E) based on the Georgia Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards (TAPS). School administrators use this rubric to evaluate practicing Georgia teachers. Domains from my TAPS adapted field observation template are content knowledge and delivery, organization, student engagement, student rapport, teaching methods, and classroom procedures.

Data Analysis

I employed an emergent and reiterative data analysis process. Martin (1986) advises researchers not to expect a linear process with a qualitative design. My data analysis process was non-linear because I had to continuously reread transcripts, consolidate codes, formed new groupings, and reassess my analysis after bracketing my biases. I reviewed the data until I reached data saturation and revealed no new codes or themes. The four semi-structured interviews, the focus-group interview, classroom artifacts, and field notes from the classroom observations generated a large amount of narrative data. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) helped support the initial open-coding and analysis of the data. I used *Atlas.ti*, helped strengthen the study's trustworthiness by standardizing the initial coding procedures.

A preliminary review of the data occurred during the initial coding. Broad, generalized patterns informed the direction of future data collections. I looked for any themes that might emerge or seem promising. I consulted colleagues to peer-review these early categories and themes. With the help of *Atlas.ti*, I used suggestions from Yin (2018) for my data analysis. These suggestions included putting information into themes and subtheme arrays, creating a matrix of

various categories, creating a visual display, and tabulating the frequency of events. These processes occurred until data saturation. After a lengthy process of reiterative analysis, I organized the themes according to the three Self-determination theory constructs. These themes were *competency, autonomy,* and *relatedness* (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Once saturation occurred and the coding fit into the emergent themes related to SDT, a qualitative narrative for the phenomenon developed from the synthesized data (Birks & Mills, 2014).

The research questions and data collection instruments generated a vast amount of qualitative data. This study's two research questions guided me to deductive and inductive coding. During the initial deductive coding process, codes were created and assigned to the data. Peer debriefers provided insight on emergent themes and code groupings. The first research question, "What are the instructional and organizational practices of the participant band directors?" provided a framework for my initial coding. My questions in the four interview protocols were grounded in this first research question, which provided a structure for the initial codes of instructional practices and organizational practices.

My analysis from classroom observations, artifacts, and interviews provided a framework for my instructional and organizational practices codes. There were several rounds of coding and recoding. I continually cross-checked all code for redundancy during my reiterative analysis process. I frequently merged and consolidated the codes as I organized the extensive data set of qualitative information. Initially, I grouped the emergent codes according to research question number one. The codes primarily fell into two categories: (a) instructional practices and (b) organizational practices. However, additional codes not related to research question number one, like *band culture* and ethnic and *cultural considerations,* emerged from the data.

The second research question, “how do the emergent themes relate to Self-determination Theory?” required an inductive coding analysis. Emergent themes from the data resulted from the existing structure of the dataset. In conjunction with data gathered from research question number one, the emergent codes aided me in inferring an emergent theme. Finally, I grouped the codes into themes according to an emergent theoretical framework, Self-determination Theory (SDT). Iterative memoing, reflection, and ongoing literature review ultimately revealed Self-determination Theory as the theoretical proposition, and I consolidated all codes into the following constructs: (a) Competency, (b) Autonomy, and (c) Relatedness. Literature on SDT typically lists the three constructs in the order of:

1. Autonomy
2. Competency
3. Relatedness

These constructs are not hierarchical, however. For this dissertation, I wrote chapter four with the following sections:

1. Competency
2. Autonomy
3. Relatedness

In this order, I listed the constructs as my emergent themes because I used narrative inquiry to share my observations, experience, and participants' lived experiences.

Trustworthiness

The term *trustworthiness* is the degree to which the researcher and the reader can feel confident the qualitative research captures an experience or phenomenon (Morrow, 2005). It often takes the place of reliability in qualitative research. Levitt et al. (2017) conducted a meta-

analysis of qualitative methods and proposed the term *methodological integrity* as their foundation for establishing *trustworthiness*. Additionally, several scholars' works (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Levitt et al., 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2019; Yin, 2018) guided this qualitative research process, strengthening the *methodological integrity* of this study.

Levitt et al. (2017) use *integrity* to describe the methodological basis of confidence the reader has in which the research captures an experience related to its topic. They advise (2019, p.9) *integrity* is "established when research designs and procedures support the research goals" and concerns "all aspects of research." It includes the topic, the literature review, the research questions, participant selection, and data collection and analysis. Initially, a committee of experts reviewed this study and held it to Auburn University's high standard for fulfillment as part of a Doctor of Philosophy degree. This study's literature review, the research questions, and the methodology went through several phases of feedback and revisions under a committee's guidance. Additionally, the research design and questions guided all data collection aspects.

Integrity has the two constituent components of *fidelity* and *utility. Fidelity* is how close the qualitative researcher becomes to the subject matter and how the existing data constructs the findings. I established *Fidelity* with my positionality and the multiple data sources I used to collect the data. The triangulated data sources eventually highlighted variations in how the findings differed from my expectations. As a middle school band director, my positionality placed me close to the subject. Even when not actively researching the subject matter, I immersed myself in the subject matter due to my teaching position. However, I was transparent about my experience and considered how my perspective might influence my data analysis. Peers reviewed my coding and findings to bracket my own bias. This process helped ensure that I did not imply my biased interpretation of the successes of the participant band director.

According to Levitt et al. (2017), *utility* refers to the research design's effectiveness and appropriateness in achieving a study's goal. The case study design came after carefully considering other methodologies derived from the research questions. The final coding and data analysis also made a case for the utility of the study. As a result, the methodology used in this case study led to relevant findings that were meaningful and can contribute to the existing body of literature.

The protocols were all peer-reviewed. The student focus-group protocol had a pilot study. I found a neighboring school whose band director allowed me to test the focus-group protocol with eight participating eighth-graders. No data were recorded or collected during this interview. Instead, I assessed my protocol questions during the pilot study focusing on the interview duration and student engagement. Upon receiving feedback from my pilot study, I adjusted the pacing and wording of the questions. In addition, I had a colleague, a fellow Ph.D. candidate, and a veteran middle school band director peer-review the focus-group protocol. Using a pilot study and having a peer-reviewer increased the validity of the data collection instrument.

During this study, I operated under the assumption that participants would respond truthfully and accurately. After the semi-structured interviews, I transcribed the recordings and sent transcripts to the participants to confirm their interviews' intent, language, and tone. These member-checking procedures helped establish the interview protocol's validity and the data analysis's trustworthiness. In addition, the team of three peer debriefers reviewed all coding throughout the analysis process. Since I am a middle school band director with experience teaching children from high-poverty neighborhoods, it was essential for me to remain reflexive in my research. I kept a self-reflexive journal through this process to continually evaluate my biases and assumptions. I also engaged in conversations with colleagues, team members, and my

faculty advisor to address my biases and assumptions that may stem from my positionality in the study.

Chapter 4. Findings

I designed this study to explore band directors' instructional and organizational practices at a high-poverty school with a high-performing program. Additionally, I wanted to see what themes emerged from the data from a constructivist approach. Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 35) describe the constructivist approach as an "emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes." My inductive inquiry ultimately led me to adopt Self-determination Theory as the appropriate theoretical framework for the study. Findings from this study produced predictable and unpredictable codes. For example, I was not surprised to find the emergent code *Recruiting and Retention* because of my positionality as a practicing middle school band director. However, *Ethnic and Cultural Inclusiveness* was a code I did not anticipate.

Ultimately, I consolidated data into 16 codes and categorized them into three themes according to Self-determination Theory. Table 5 lists the three SDT themes with the emergent codes I attached to them. I included a frequency count for each code. The section on competency serves as an introduction to the band program and a description of the classroom instruction. Section two, autonomy, describes student motivation in the Summerset Middle School Band. Section three's theme is relatedness. This section is about the Summerset band program's community. Table 6 lists the code frequency for each theme. Additionally, I used in vivo coding to label each section for my narrative analysis.

Table 5

Code Frequencies – The Relationship of each Code to the Themes

Code	Theme	Count
Program Organization	Competency	17
Recruiting and Retention	Competency	21
Budget and Inventory	Competency	12
Academic Accountability	Competency	23
Instructional Pedagogy	Competency	61
High Poverty Challenges	Competency	33
Mastery	Autonomy	23
Intrinsic Motivation	Autonomy	21
Extrinsic Motivation	Autonomy	36
Agency	Autonomy	16
Motivational Beliefs	Autonomy	26
Character Education	Relatedness	32
Classroom Environment	Relatedness	23
Classroom Management	Relatedness	34
Stakeholder Communications	Relatedness	31
Ethnic and Cultural Considerations	Relatedness	20

"The area code in which you reside should not determine the quality of instruction that you get" – Competency: The Organization and Pedagogy of the Summerset Band

The theme *Competency* has the following code groupings associated with it:

- High Poverty Challenges
- Program Organization

- Recruiting and Retention
- Budget and Inventory
- Academic Accountability
- Instructional Pedagogy

It is an appropriate theme for these subsections because the data revealed the band directors as skillful and competent in their jobs. The theme also refers to the pursuit of building musical competency in the students. The band directors' classroom pedagogy and use of assessments establish this notion. I chose the in vivo code "*the area code in which you reside should not determine the quality of instruction you get"* for this theme. It is a quote from my interview with Summerset's principal, Mr. Nix. I felt it was an appropriately summative philosophy of the school and a thriving band program that defies limitations.

Table 6

Code Frequency by Theme

Theme	Description	Count
Competency	The organization and pedagogy of the Summerset Band	167
Autonomy	Student Motivation in the Summerset Band	122
Relatedness	The Summerset Band community	140

S-School and District Attributes
BC-Band Culture
T-Teacher Attributes

High Poverty Challenges

The Carter County School District is large and economically diverse. With twenty-four middle schools, Carter County's school with the lowest FRLP is 4.3%, while the highest has an

FRLP of 88.04%. The average FRLP for middle schools in the district is 41.94%. Summerset had the second-highest percentage in the district. Given the challenges Summerset faces, a moment from Mr. Nix's interview stood out. It was when he told me, "The area code in which you reside should not determine the quality of instruction that you get or the type of facility that you go to each day." This philosophy appeared to permeate the building and the band program. At 83.85% FRPL, Summerset Middle School served one of the most impoverished communities in the school district. It was the only Title 1 school in Dr. Miller's career. During our interview, he told me about a time when he was at a more affluent school, Hunter's Creek Middle School in Orlando, Florida. There, he had a co-worker that previously taught at a high-poverty school. He recounted their conversation for me:

> I had a lady that I've worked with at Hunter's Creek. She had come to Hunter's Creek from a high-poverty school, and she said, "I promise you; you'll never find a group of kids more thankful for what you do for them than what you're going to find there," and I think there's truth in that.

The principal at Summerset, Mr. Nix, worked at schools in many high-income and low-income communities previously in his career. He spoke to me about some of the differences in these communities. Mr. Nix felt his band directors at Summerset would be even more successful if their community was better engaged with their school. He drew upon his experiences from schools in high SES communities to make this assertion. He also communicated that the money parents in high SES communities spent on private music lessons were advantageous. He said many band parents in those communities do not just want their children to be in the band, "they want them to be the first seat in their section of the band." This parent involvement and the means to afford private lessons is a privilege that bands in high-poverty communities often do

not have. Additionally, band students in high-income areas have access to quality musical instruments.

Mr. Nix, like the band directors in his building, understood the importance of having a large inventory of quality band instruments. Hearing this from a principal was reassuring. Summerset's instruments were available to students who could not obtain their own. He applauded his band directors for constantly adding to their inventory of instruments. This praise was because not all their kids could rent or purchase their own. Additionally, he stated:

> They know kids that need financial assistance as far as buying books. [Dr. Miller has] come to me before knowing that folks are in different situations and either asking how I can assist him or letting me know that they need assistance.

Mrs. Wolfe, the assistant band director, spoke with me on this topic. She told me they often helped with classroom supplies like reeds. Additionally, she said:

> I know one of the challenges is just financial means of the families, and so here at Summerset, we provide a lot of school-owned instruments that students are welcome to use free of charge. Occasionally, we'll have students that can't afford other materials and we'll help them out with that.

Even though the school district financially supported the band program, Mr. Nix and Dr. Miller advised fundraising at their school can be challenging. Dr. Miller believed that his program is not as capable of fundraising large amounts as other programs in high SES communities. Dr. Miller talked about his program's fundraising efforts:

> Because we don't have a lot of money from fundraisers, we can't bring a lot of clinicians to help us with stuff when we get ready for band festival. We might bring in guest conductors once or twice, and we can do that.

Additionally, he compared his fundraising efforts to schools in higher SES communities:

> Fundraisers are especially hard. …An average fundraiser for the band program – the best we've ever done in 17 years was $4,000.00. The average is $2,000.00 to $3,000.00 somewhere in the middle. That's hard because I hear nearby schools making $15,000.00 a year. They're selling cheesecakes, cookie dough, and pastries. We've sold those since 2008, probably. Sold them every year, and people loved them. The people that buy them love and want them but can't get the kids bought into it. Just to give you kind of what it looks like school-wide.

One of the closest neighboring schools to Summerset is a very different community with an FRLP of only 22.89%. This neighbor was the school Dr. Miller was referring to when talking about how successful other bands in the area can be. Dr. Miller frequently mentioned this school during our conversations. This higher SES school was well-known for its band program because of many state, regional, and national performances. Dr. Miller also mentioned parent involvement compared to other schools in high SES communities. He said:

> The schools where the parents have more money, you tend to have more parent involvement. Sometimes that's good. Sometimes it's not good, but then you go to the high need schools, and you rarely get parent involvement which is good and bad sometimes.

Mrs. Wolfe and he both indicated they wished the parents were more involved in helping with the program. Mrs. Wolfe suspected that this lack of involvement permeated attitudes about concert attendance. She said, "a lot of the kids just get dropped off, and the parents come pick them up afterward." She indicated that this perceived attitude made her feel sad for the students. She also mentioned:

> … sometimes the challenge is connecting with parents. They tend to have hectic work schedules, and so getting that parental support sometimes could be a challenge, but I found for the most part the parents are very invested in how they child does in school, wanting to help them be better.

Dr. Miller also shared his impressions of the parents when it comes to their attitudes about school:

> Nobody has ever said this to me, but sometimes, it feels like [the parents believe], "… We send them to school for you to teach them, so you teach them and send them home, and we'll feed them and do our part here." Nobody said that, but that's just how kind of how it feels sometimes, so I've always jokingly said, "We don't have anybody blasting the doors down yelling at us," but it'd be nice if some people would offer to help.

However, he countered this statement by remarking the other day that he had a parent reach out to him. The parent asked what supplies the band program might need to be donated. During this part of the conversation, Dr. Miller wanted to make sure I understood that even though he wished the parents were more involved, some were very helpful. Like Mrs. Wolfe, Dr. Miller felt that the parents generally wanted what was best for their children. He said the parents supported him when he made calls regarding discipline concerns. He mentioned that he had never had a parent blame him or tell him it was his fault for disruptive student behaviors.

The transient nature of the Summerset Middle School community frequently appeared in many of my conversations with the participants. Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe kept a running list of all the students who moved away during the school year. During one of my visits, they showed me this list. By March 28th, the Summerset band had already had thirty-four students move away. Mrs. Wolfe told me:

> Sometimes it's sad when you only have those two bass clarinet players or that one oboe player, and then they move away, or your rockstar trumpet player moves away. I find it more challenging, though, when new students move in… Especially depending on where they move in from, it totally changes the dynamic of the room, and so trying to get them on board with how we do things here that might be different than where they came from. That's another thing when we have a new student, trying to get other students in the room to make them feel welcome. "Hey, can you help them and show them how we do this." Pushing that off on another kid.

Additionally, Mr. Nix also commented about the high transiency rate of his school:

> I know that Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe talked about [their transiency rate] this year. That's really hurting their numbers because if [band students] start with us and then they leave, we don't always get kids who come in. … Their numbers just continue to dwindle with that transiency, and that hurts their overall ability to have a functioning band program. To a certain extent, it just hurts their numbers.

Both band directors mentioned it could be hard for students to practice at home. They said that since many of their students lived in apartments with small quarters, it could be difficult for them to practice. In the student focus-group interview, I asked one student if they were able to bring their instrument home. They said, "I can't really take it home that much." She said she made up for this by trying to find recordings of the concert music on the internet. She would then listen to the recording, imagining her part. Mrs. Wolfe had some things to say about this topic:

> Some other challenges I've noticed is just with the ability to go home and practice. Some of our students, they don't have a home environment where they have a quiet place to practice their instruments.

During the interview, Mrs. Wolfe told me a sad story about one of her students who lived in their parents' car:

> Last year, I had a student living in a car. She would just sit in the trunk of her car and practice occasionally, but we try to combat that by opening the band room every day so students can come in, use the band room for morning practice whenever they choose to do so.

Mr. Nix spoke about this topic with me:

> [Dr. Miller] knows the kids that don't have supportive home environments for practice time. I mean, they open up the band room in the morning for kids to come practice. They got a lot of kids who are coming in the morning to practice.

The directors at Summerset worked to accommodate the children so they could practice. They opened the band room to the students whenever they could. This was the first thing I noticed on the first day of my field observations. I arrived before the first class started. Both rooms had students in the rooms practicing.

Program Organization

Summerset Middle School uses a middle school model. The implication of this model for band programs means there is no mixing of grade levels. On the other hand, in a junior high model, the students can be in classes with students of different grade levels. Junior high schools can have ability-based bands with mixed grade levels, from their most advanced band to their beginning band. Alternatively, a middle school band program is akin to having three separate band programs independently: a sixth-grade band, a seventh-grade band, and an eighth-grade band. The administration at Summerset gave Dr. Miller autonomy in deciding how to schedule

and structure his classes. Mr. Nix shared with me some of his beliefs about giving him this autonomy:

> We as an administration [leave the scheduling] totally up to him how he does that. He and Madison. …They do the high and the low band, and they make all those decisions. I mean they tell us where those kids need to be scheduled, and we schedule it, and we work with the other programs to make sure there's a balance within those grade-level connections classes.

Each grade level at Summerset had two classes. Every class has both band directors co-teaching. When their numbers were down in previous years, one teacher would have to teach at least one section of music appreciation for non-band students. They would have to do this if the band, chorus, and orchestra numbers were low. As a result, too many non-band students needed placements in the other connections classes (art, physical education, health, etc.). Many schools in the Carter Count School District solve this problem by utilizing one of the band co-teachers. In Summerset's case, they created a music appreciation class using one of the band directors. The last time their numbers were low, the administration approached them about reinstating the music appreciation class again. Dr. Miller told me about his clever solution:

> Sunday afternoon, the answer hit me. I called her [the assistant band director at the time], and I said, "You're going to be teaching general music through the performance of band instruments. We're going to take whatever we have left, the school instruments, and you're going to take them and go, 'Which one do you want to play because this is what you're going to be doing until Christmas?" By Christmas, that class of 35, only two of them didn't continue. We took them and said, "You are all brass players, come with me."

> Every day they would come into my room, and all the woodwinds would go to her room, and we just taught band like normal.

There were a total of six classes in the Summerset band. The two beginning band classes were in the sixth grade. Seventh grade had an on-level class (concert band) and an advanced class (symphonic band). The same was true for the eighth grade. Mrs. Wolfe explained to me the structure of their classes:

> We'll see like all of the 8th grade come in the morning. In the middle of the day, we see 7th grade, and at the end of the day, 6th grade. We kind of do ability grouping with the 7th and 8th graders to an extent. Sometimes the higher-achieving students will be placed in one band class and lower-achieving in the other. The 6th graders are just - they're all mixed together when they come to school. We put them in band class before we know what instrument they're going to play, so the best we can do with that is dividing them based on if they play with one instrument or brass or percussion.

The directors reported they started the students on all traditional band instruments. These instruments were:

- Flute
- Oboe
- Bassoon
- Soprano Clarinet
- Bass Clarinet
- Alto Saxophone
- Tenor Saxophone
- Baritone Saxophone

- Trumpet
- French Horn
- Trombone
- Euphonium
- Tuba
- Percussion

Even though there were two beginning band classes, there were four beginning band groupings. Each class period had two groups. For example, there were two periods of the brass-percussion class and two periods of the woodwind class. Dr. Miller taught the brass and percussion students during the first beginning band class, while Mrs. Wolfe taught the woodwinds. They repeated this set-up for the second hour. I asked why they started the beginners on all instruments when some middle school bands restrict instruments. Both directors told me their method had always worked for them. Mrs. Wolfe commented further on this topic:

> We figured that if they can do it and if they love it, why not? Some of the kids, they really flock to the bari-saxophone, and they love it. If they have the physical capabilities of holding it, then we go for it.

The students had several opportunities to perform and practice music outside of class. Before school, from 8:00 am to 8:45 am, the band directors hosted a jazz band for which students could sign up. They also occasionally had a mariachi band and a clarinet choir in which the students participated. In addition, the clarinet choir performed yearly at an annual school fundraiser hosted by a local Chick-fil-A. Mr. Nix communicated his gratitude for Dr. Miller's support in this school-wide fundraising event.

The sixth-grade students who wanted additional performance opportunities had the option to be in a band that practiced after school on Wednesdays. This group of beginning students, The Summerset 6th Grade Band, practiced Wednesday from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm weekly from early January to mid-March. Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe took them to LGPE and exclaimed that they had an excellent experience. However, they stopped rehearsing mid-March because the directors focused on other activities after the band's LGPE performance. Dr. Miller consistently brought up the 6th-grade Band in many conversations with me. He appeared to be very proud of this aspect of his band program. During our Zoom interview, he shared some thoughts about this sixth-grade band:

> Now that little sixth-grade band we take to LGPE, they do 10 rehearsals after school, and they sign up, and they pay $10.00 to help for LGPE and pay for their lunch. That night, we get them Chick-fil-A and bring it back to school catered in like that, but those are the kids that sign up who want to be there. So, they'll come to those 10 rehearsals. It's pretty amazing.

Later in the conversation, he added thoughts about taking such a young band to LGPE:

> In the first year, we took the sixth-grade band. The nice thing about Georgia and you can decide at the last minute if you want to do it for a rating or not. I said, "Let's do it for a rating. They're fine." Because they're an elementary band, but I'm like, "We don't have to tell them it was for a rating. Let's just see what happens." Then the day before, I'm like, "I think we should sight read." We tend to go over and had to do it with them a little bit, and we kicked it around, and doggone, if they didn't get a superior in a sight-reading, they get straight superiors. [Laughter] I was like, "What in the world?" We just laughed. We couldn't believe it. It helped a little bit, too, that [a local colleague] was the sight-

reading judge of the year, and he said, “I’ve confirmed it with the head judge, and for an elementary band, this has a key change, and it goes off in a place beginners don’t need to be so we’re just going to do the first half of the song.” “Okay.” That was really fun. We were just so proud of them.

Recruitment and Retention

On the second day of my field observations at Summerset, I was fortunate to witness a recruiting event. Some of their feeder elementary schools were taking a field trip to Summerset. This trip was an orientation event for the fifth-grade students starting the sixth grade after the summer break. Summerset does this orientation for three days in the Spring for all six of their feeder elementary schools.

During the orientation event, I observed the rising sixth-grade students meet with some sixth-grade teachers, the administration, and the counselors and toured the facility. At the start of this orientation, the students exited their school buses and headed straight to the auditorium. When they entered the facility, the eighth-grade band and orchestra were on stage, waiting to perform for the elementary students. The students could not see the middle school performers because the ensembles were behind the stage curtains.

At the presentation’s start, the principal, Mr. Nix, stood up and talked about the connections classes. He then personally encouraged the students to join the music programs. It was the school’s Spirit Week, so the faculty had different themes to wear each day of the week. The theme for that day was sports jerseys, so Mr. Nix was wearing a Baltimore Orioles baseball jersey. He discussed their successes and introduced the teachers. This presentation was one of the rising sixth-grade students' first impressions of Summerset. One of the first things they heard

upon stepping foot on Summerset's campus was why they should join a music program. This message came straight from the principal.

After the principal gave his presentation, the chorus, band, and orchestra performed for the young students. Dr. Miller then gave another presentation about joining the music classes and answered some questions from the fifth-grade students. The band practiced for this presentation and recruiting event for a few days. They performed *the Avengers.* During rehearsal the day prior, I observed Dr. Miller talking about the importance of this performance. He told his eighth-grade students that this performance was a recruiting activity. He also told his students that the fifth-graders joining the band was essential because "they will be freshman your senior year of high school."

In a later conversation with Mr. Nix, I admitted that I was impressed that he took the time to recruit on behalf of the music classes. He said, "I support [the band directors] with different recruiting methods, sending stuff out for them, encouraging them to go to different schools, and different ways to promote their program." Even though he never participated in band, Mr. Nix was a band parent and had his children go through neighboring schools' programs. During our conversation, he also shared his beliefs on how instrumental music classes affect academics. He mentioned that he believes learning an instrument allows children to build confidence because it can be a difficult task. Therefore, if they could accomplish learning an instrument, he thought it should increase the student's confidence to achieve academic goals. He shared with me:

> [Music is] one of the things that I think is essential and that I try to really push to the parents every time I get in front of them, especially our rising sixth-grade parents that we had last night at our open house. Because most of these kids have never picked up an instrument in their life. They don't know how to read music, anything like that, and for

them to go in there and within several months and by a holiday concert able to read music and play music together sounds great. I think there's an intrinsic motivation that that gives kids. It's like, "Wow, if I can do this – I didn't know – I didn't know how to play the French horn six months ago. If I can do this, then I can do math. Middle school is not going to be that hard. I can tackle things." So, I think it gives them a sense of accomplishment very quickly and really is rewarding. They see that the hard work they're putting in, that they're getting out something.

Jane Mourdock was a band parent that I was able to interview. Several of her children were members of the band and orchestra programs at Summerset. Additionally, she was the school's Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) president. Therefore, she was very involved with her children's school. I asked her about why she wanted her students to join the band. She told me, "I wanted them to play an instrument, and I know that sixth-grade was the only chance there really was to get into the band, and I just wanted them to have the opportunity to learn something new." Additionally, we discussed the extra-curricular sports that she has her children involved in. She mentioned that band was an activity that was not as much of a burden on her time as sports. She said:

> My son plays baseball also, which is like a huge burden on traveling, ongoing everywhere, practices games, tournaments, so that's like a large burden, and it takes a huge chunk of time out of my day. Whereas the band, I personally, as a parent, don't have to do anything but come to the concerts in the afternoons or maybe try to get him to his rehearsals if they're before school or pick them up after school, which is a lot easier for me.

The sixth-grade placements occurred during the first week of school. The students could choose band, orchestra, or chorus. During that week, they did not have connections. The faculty split the students into rotating groups for their connections classes that week. These groups learned about all nonperforming arts and performing arts classes. In their rotations, the students viewed a presentation about digital citizenship, growth mindset, and social-emotional learning (SEL). They also had a team talk with their administrator to discuss the discipline expectations of the students' new school. When they came to band and orchestra, the students witnessed demonstrations of all the instruments. Dr. Miller added:

> We have a flyer we give out in music classes that explains – I feel like it's important for parents to know what they're signing up for - and the kids too - what it's going to cost, all those kinds of things, especially in the high-needs school. That's due by Friday of that week, and then on Monday, we start beginners.

The band students were in their classes by the second week of school. They could take an instrumental class and chorus but not two instrumental courses. The school placed the students in ensemble classes before the band and orchestra students chose their instruments. They did not select an instrument until the second Saturday of the school year. During the second week of school (the first week the students were in their ensemble classes), they spent the week learning about instruments, breathing exercises, and participating in music theory. The music theory lessons consisted of learning about the notes on the staff and rhythms. The following Saturday, the band directors host their annual instrument test drive. During this event, they hired music teacher colleagues to assist the directors. There, the students had the opportunity to try out the various instruments. At the end of the event, the students turned in a form where they ranked their top three instrument selections. With those forms, the band directors chose the instruments

for the students based on the new sixth-grade band's instrumentation needs. Dr. Miller told me that he held this instrument test drive day since teaching in Orange County, Florida, in 1998.

Usually, the Summerset Middle School band had one hundred to one-hundred-and-twenty students enrolled in the beginning classes. The band directors consistently recruited one-third to one-half of all sixth-grade students to join the band. These recruiting numbers are impressive, especially considering that Summerset is a high-poverty school. Many programs in high-poverty schools struggle with recruiting due to the relatively high cost of participation in the band activity. Summerset's recruiting statistics are impressive, even if the school was in a high SES community.

I also inquired about the band's retention with the various participants. With six band classes of approximately three hundred students and thirty percent of the student body enrolled, the band directors diligently kept their students in their program. I asked Mrs. Mourdock if her children ever considered quitting band. She said it never occurred to them because they loved it. All participants in the student focus group echoed this sentiment. They described band as fun and mentioned how much they enjoy the music they get to play. One student remarked, "I found [band] to be a very enjoyable experience, so I chose to stay and go on playing and doing it in the seventh grade."

In addition to recruiting and retaining students for their program, the Summerset directors encouraged the students to join the high school band. The eighth-grade students performed at their feeder high school at a football game one night every fall. They performed with the high school's marching band and referred to this event as *eighth-grade night.* The students interacted with the high school students, hearing from their older peers about why they should remain in band. Additionally, the eighth-graders experienced and witnessed exciting activities available to

them if they continued with band in high school. According to the band directors, this was usually a fun night for the middle school band students. They felt it had a positive effect on encouraging the students to remain in band past middle school. Outside of the Summerset Middle School band room, a photo collage of the students performing with the high school band was on the wall. In the pictures were Summerset students wearing sousaphones and battery percussion. The band directors kept this photo collage up for the rest of the school year after the event.

Budget and Inventory

The band directors at Summerset Middle School got a yearly instructional budget from the Carter County School District. The district has a supervisor of instrumental music who oversees this allotment. The Summerset Band received approximately $18,000.00 U.S. dollars in instructional funds yearly. This amount varied from year to year, contingent on the size of the band program from the previous school year. Dr. Miller has the autonomy to spend these instructional funds on instruments, repairs, and curriculum materials for the band students. Mr. Nix, the school's principal, indicated that Dr. Miller managed this district allotment well. In addition to band instructional funds from the school district, Dr. Miller sometimes received support from his local school. Mr. Nix said, "I've given him money when it's been available. I've also worked with him to find different sources of money to help supplement what he already gets." Additionally, Mr. Nix said:

> I try to put [the band directors] in a place to succeed. So, financially if there are things that they need, I do my best to get them those things. Dr. Miller has some very innovative ideas in ways of promoting the band program and just doing things in the community.

> I'm always supportive, and I go to him with ideas like our spirit nights having a small group of band folks up there to play for families as they come to Chick-fil-A.

Despite having the challenges typically associated with being at a high-poverty school, the directors at Summerset were privileged because of their school's and district's financial support. Dr. Miller remarked on this:

> Thank goodness Carter [County Schools] gives us enough money to do stuff, so we bought a lot of instruments. Well, now, more kids are starting to buy them, although I'm not crazy about brands, but they're buying them, so we were able to stockpile – I got trombones so a kid can have a trombone at school and a trombone at home. We have 25 tubas, but each one of them – we've got four full-sized. One of them is a four-valve. We've got two full-sized rotors that only eight graders can use, and then all the rest of them are three-quarter-sized tubas. The plan is every tuba player takes a tuba home at the beginning of the year and brings it back for the spring concert. We've been doing that for a number of years.

Every high school and middle school gets a generous amount from the school district for their band programs. As a result, many band programs in the Carter County School District have comparable-sized extensive instrument inventories. This financial support makes the county an attractive destination to work for many band directors around Georgia.

The approximately $18,000.00 U.S. dollars in CCSD instructional funds and the money the program fundraises helped the band directors add to, maintain, and repair a very extensive inventory. For example, the band program had twenty-five tubas in its inventory. Counts of all school-owned brass and woodwind instruments are in Table 7. Table 8 lists counts for the school's percussion equipment. In addition, many students had a school-owned instrument

assigned to them at school and at home. Dr. Miller told me he was not spending as much on tuba repairs once he had enough tubas to assign to each child to keep home for the school year.

Table 7

Summerset Band Wind Instrument Inventory

Instrument	Type	Count
Alto Saxophone	Woodwind	11
Baritone Saxophone	Woodwind	5
Bass Clarinet	Woodwind	23
Bassoon	Woodwind	9
Clarinet	Woodwind	52
Cornet	Brass	1
Euphonium	Brass	21
Flugelhorn	Brass	1
Flute	Woodwind	27
French Horn	Brass	19
Oboe	Woodwind	10
Piccolo	Woodwind	3
Tenor Saxophone	Woodwind	12
Trombone	Brass	39
Trumpet	Brass	22
Tuba	Brass	25
Total wind instruments in the inventory		280

Mrs. Wolfe gave me some insight into how the directors could use their resources to help the needy families at her school:

> I know one of the challenges is just financial means of the families, and so here at Summerset, we provide a lot of school-owned instruments that students are welcome to use free of charge. Occasionally, we'll have students that can't afford other materials, and we'll help them out with that.

She also remarked on how fortunate she believes the children at her school are to have the large band instrument inventory and the funds spent on their classroom:

> I think what helps is with our students, we also try to get them to appreciate what they have, and we work really hard to make sure that they have quality instruments and quality furniture and quality music stands, and just try to get them to understand like how fortunate they are to have these things. When I taught in Texas, we didn't have nearly as nice instruments for kids to use. I think that helps a lot, just letting them know like, "Hey, you're so fortunate you have all this stuff for you, and not everyone gets that."

Table 8

Summerset Band Percussion Equipment Inventory

Instrument	Type	Count
Bass Drum Stand	Percussion	1
Bell Kit	Percussion	7
Bongos	Percussion	2
Chimes	Percussion	1
Concert Bass Drum	Percussion	2
Concert Bells	Percussion	2
Concert Toms (set of 10", 12", 14", & 15")	Percussion	1
Congas w/ stand	Percussion	2
Drum Set	Percussion	2

Electronic Keyboard	Percussion	1
Gong	Percussion	1
Marimba	Percussion	2
Snare Drum	Percussion	7
Timpani (set of 23”, 26”, 29”, & 32”)	Percussion	1
Trap Table	Percussion	2
Vibraphone	Percussion	1

Academic Accountability

Throughout my field observations, the band directors exhibited a concern for academic accountability with their students. At Summerset, the school leadership established that sixty percent of a student’s grade needs to be summative assessment and forty percent formative. The summative grading at Summerset was the students’ performance at concerts and unit performance assessments. These summative assessments accounted for sixty percent of the students’ grades every semester. Every grade level at Summerset usually had four performances a year. One of these performances was called the Large Group Performance Evaluation (LGPE), a state performance assessment sanctioned by the Georgia Music Educators’ Association (GMEA). During the 2021-2022 school year, Summerset was one of only two schools with all three grade levels attending and performing at LGPE. Most schools did not have their sixth-grade bands perform at the event. The band directors at Summerset often communicated the importance of preparing for assessment at LGPE. Dr. Miller commented on how he prepares the LGPE literature with performance assessments:

> I would take the three LGPE songs and divide them each one in the thirds. That was nine playing tests, and you have like 10 weeks to do them. My thought was if I hear you play

> every note, I just know you can play the notes and rhythms. I can fix the rest of it in class. I think that worked. The challenge was me having time to sit and listen to, what was it, 500-something playing tests.

Forty percent of the students' grades were ensemble skills and weekly technique tests. These weekly checkpoints were primarily technique exams and scales. Dr. Miller described formative assessment in his class:

> So, we try to do weekly by weekly test on something. Right now, it's scales, and forty percent of the grade is — and those are formative. The other formative is every week we give them a grade for ensemble skills, which is showing up and doing your thing, playing, having your music, be involved, that kind of stuff, and not my favorite thing to do because I think a kid can screw up a few tests but if they participate, if they're playing and doing their part, and showing up with their stuff, they get 20 points a day, I'm not going to give them zero points if they showed up. So, it skews it hard to being like a higher.

They had a compassionate policy for late work. The students could make up missed assignments for full credit. Mrs. Wolfe stated, "We give endless opportunities for students to make up missing assignments. If they're missing a playing test or if they'll score poorly on a playing test, they can try to do it again and bring their grade up." Additionally, she felt they put much onus on the students to complete and turn in their assignments. She continued:

> It's mostly on them. I'll give them gentle reminders during class like, "Hey, make sure you're – if you're missing those assignments, turn them in." I'll even pull aside certain kids individually and say, "You're still missing three of your assignments. Let's get it done." Ultimately, it's on them.

The directors used to use online software called *Flipgrid* for performance assessments. The students would log in and see the assignments posted for them. This would be a music passage that they needed to perform. They would then record a video through the browser software and submit it. The students could record and submit the videos on their phones or computers. *Flipgrid* does not grade the performance submissions for the teachers, however. When the directors used this method of performance assessment submission, they would have to view and grade each video individually. Dr, Miller lamented that grading weekly playing tests for approximately three hundred students could be very time-consuming.

At the time of this study, the school district was one-to-one with technology for the students. This means that every child in the school district had a Dell laptop checked out. They could carry these laptops between school and home. Before the district went one-to-one with technology, the band directors had to accommodate students who did not have the technology at home to submit the weekly *Flipgrid* playing tests. Dr. Miller purchased some iMac desktops and iPads for children who could not submit the tests from home. He made these available to the children during classroom time and morning practice time so they would have the opportunity to turn in their assignments on time.

The school district has a platform for students and teachers called the *Carter Teaching and Learning System* (CTLS). This software enables teachers to make online unit and lesson plans, accepts assignments through *Microsoft Office* applications, and exports grades to the district's grade book platform, *Synergy*. The school district rolled out *CTLS* at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic as a way students could attend school virtually. Through this software, the teachers in the district can host *Zoom* classroom meetings, assess students, and create assignments. Additionally, the platform has a video submission feature embedded into it. Once

the district created this feature, the band directors used the i software for video submission instead of *Flipgrid*. This made grading the vast amount of weekly playing tests easier. In addition, the band directors could provide performance feedback directly into the platform, and the assigned grade would automatically export to the *Synergy* grade book. This alleviated the need to inter feedback and comments into two different platforms, affectively saving the band directors valuable time. Even though *CTLS* saved the directors some time with grading, it was still too time-consuming. The directors had to grade three-hundred video submissions every time they assigned a performance assessment. With a band program as large as theirs, the directors at Summerset needed software that would utilize artificial intelligence to grade the students quickly and efficiently.

At the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year, the district music coordinator had the school district purchase a license subscription to *MusicFirst* for every band, orchestra, and chorus student in the county. The county made this subscription available for high school and middle school students. This *MusicFirst* subscription included access to a powerful assessment tool called *PracticeFirst. PracticeFirst* is browser-based music assessment software. Teachers can assign a musical passage for an assessment. The software uses artificial intelligence to grade the student musician for correct notes and rhythms. *PracticeFirst* is very similar to older software called *SmartMusic. SmartMusic* has been around for decades in various forms. Dr. Miller conducted his doctoral dissertation on the applications of *SmartMusic* in the band classroom, so he had expertise with this type of instructional technology. He told me that he no longer used *SmartMusic* because he was no longer happy with the product. He cited recent changes in the software that made it less user-friendly. *PracticeFirst* was now a better product than *SmartMusic*, according to the directors at Summerset.

When directors, like the ones at Summerset, have nearly three-hundred students to grade weekly playing tests, applications like *PracticeFirst* and *SmartMusic* can save hours of time grading. The band directors at Summerset adopted *PracticeFirst* for their weekly formative assessments once it was available to them. Since students had district-issued laptops and subscriptions to music assessment software, fewer barriers prevented students from accessing the classroom's instructional technology.

Occasionally, the students had in-class playing tests for their weekly assessments. The band directors used a rubric to assess these playing tests. There was a large poster on the door to the instrument storage room with the rubric displayed for the band students (Table 9). This rubric adapted language understandable to young band students. Additionally, it was positively worded. This display made it transparent to the students about the expectations and what each category meant.

Table 9

Summerset MS Band Instrumental Music Performance Rubric – Individual Playing Tests

Category	40 Points	30 Points	20 Points	10 Points
Playing Tests	**Mastery:** Flawless or one small mistake (a flubbed and quickly fixed note). Posture and embouchure are correct.	**Proficient:** 1-2 mistakes but understanding of concepts. Posture and embouchure are mostly correct.	**Developing:** 3-4 mistakes or 1 concept error (missed key signature or a repeated rhythm mistake). Posture and embouchure are inconsistent.	**Not There Yet:** 5+ mistakes, but you tried. Posture and embouchure are incorrect.

Continual formative assessments were standard features of the Summerset band rehearsals I observed. Both band directors made constant corrections. In every rehearsal, both band directors participated in instruction. They taught in a district where most middle schools have at least two band directors, which was undoubtedly a unique privilege. Other high-poverty schools may not have such a privilege in other parts of the country. I observed one band director in every class leading the rehearsal from the conductor's podium. At the same time, the other walked around the room at Summerset. This practice allowed them to provide individualized and full-group instruction simultaneously.

Summerset's principal held music teachers in high regard for their ability to give quick and immediate feedback to their students. In addition, he considered music teachers to be masters of formative instruction. He added:

> They warm-up and then I always think the band course and orchestra teachers are the masters of formative instruction before that was even really a thing in schools. I mean, all they do is continually have kids play. They listen, evaluate, they stop, they provide feedback, they give some individual feedback and sections or it's the whole group. I mean, it's just a continual cycle of feedback to those students throughout class.

His beliefs about music teachers were consistent with what I observed in the school's band classes. During my observations, I noticed the band directors making formative corrections about style, fingerings, specific instrumental embouchures, and rhythms. Every time they stopped; they made a correction. The students received these corrections well. I observed Dr. Miller giving many non-verbal cues and corrections during music-making. He often provided feedback on entrances, style, and tempi while conducting. Usually, the directors would ask questions of the young musicians that required them to participate. I observed Mrs. Wolfe asking her students to

think metacognitively. For example, she told her students to ask themselves if they were breathing to their full lung capacities. Dr. Miller would check for engagement and comprehension when saying things like, “Show me with your fingers how many pulses a dotted half receives.” During my interview with Mrs. Wolfe, she elaborated on their interactions with students when giving formative feedback and metacognitive questioning:

> We try to focus when we’re doing the long tones on bettering the tone quality that they’re producing, and the brass support and just focus. We tell them a lot, “Most important thing at all times is playing with a good sound.” We kind of drill that into them, like always above everything else, just playing with a good sound. We work a lot on that, and it’s just like listening lately, especially with the fourth period, and then a lot of listening and matching. Sometimes we’ll intentionally have them play it wrong so they can hear what that sounds like, and they kind of hone it in and fix it. I don’t know. For me, listening, getting them to listen and like, “Where’s the melody? Can you hear it? Are you matching the style? Are you matching articulation?

The directors constantly gave the students feedback during the music and when not playing. This feedback was kind, with great awareness of the children’s self-esteem and personal growth. In addition, I observed the band directors consistently exhibiting this caring demeanor with students.

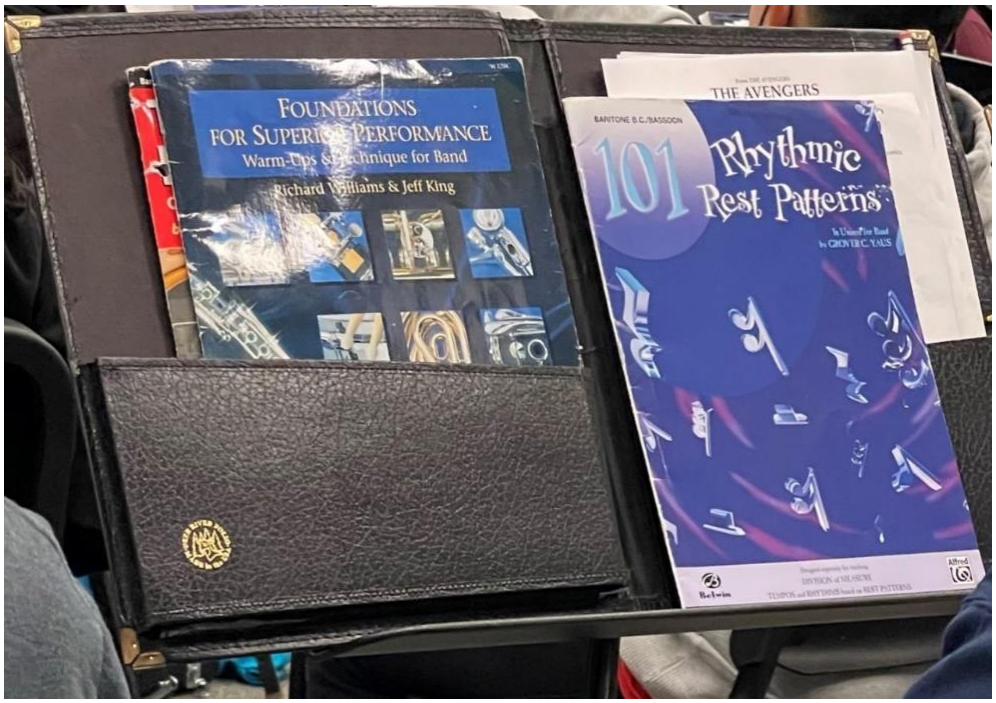
Instructional Pedagogy

The band directors at Summerset used an array of instructional materials. In addition to the concert literature, the students used numerous method books and resources to supplement the curriculum. The sixth-grade beginners started with a method book, *Tradition of Excellence*, by Bruce Pearson and Ryan Nowlan. This method was the only book they required the students to

purchase. The band program supplied the rest of the books and supplemental materials with classroom sets. Mrs. Wolfe mentioned they liked the accompaniment tracks in *Tradition of Excellence* that students play along with. In addition, most exercises in the book had background music tracks recorded by professional musicians. She also mentioned the accompaniment tracks featured authentic instruments when the musical exercises were from ethnic and world music.

Figure 1

The Summerset 8th-Grade Band Concert Folders



The students in the sixth-grade band also performed and rehearsed using the *Band Expressions* method book. Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe had a classroom set they passed out to the students because this book was out of print. *Band Expressions*, by Robert W. Smith, Susan Smith, Michael Story, Garland Markham, and Richard Crain, was an ambitious band curriculum.

Like *Tradition of Excellence*, it also had quality accompaniment tracks with professional musicians. The entire curriculum came with extensive lesson plans and extra supplemental materials. These supplements included overhead projectors, accompaniment track CDs, flashcards, and other visual devices. Most beginning method books utilize many of the same songs because they are public domain. However, *Band Expressions* had many unique songs its publisher, Warner Brothers, purchased the rights to print. These increased the cost of the curriculum for band programs. Dr. Miller and I reminisced about our love for this curriculum and our disappointment that it is out of print.

The sixth and seventh-grade students used a black binder to keep their instructional materials (See Figure 1). Mrs. Wolfe explained:

> We try to organize the students, and they each receive a binder, a three-ring binder at the beginning of the year, and everything goes in the binder. Their book, we hole-punch it, and it goes in the binder. They had sheet protectors, and every handout we give them goes in the binder.

Instead of the binders, the eighth-grade students used Deer River concert folders supplied by the band program to organize their materials. Their curriculum contained mostly supplemental material. It included a rhythm book called *101 Rhythmic Rest Patterns* by Grover Yaus. Dr. Miller said they noticed the students were having issues counting rhythms, so they added this book into the curriculum. According to him, this was a positive addition to their curriculum.

Another book the eighth-grade students used was *Foundations for Superior Performance* by Richard Williams and Jeff King. This text was not a method book but a supplemental book featuring variations of lip slurs, scale exercises, long tones, and chorales. It was a standard supplemental book for high school and middle school bands. Dr. Miller told me he selected this

book because the authors did an excellent job implementing brass lip-slurs with woodwind technique exercises. He told me that he felt the brass players were less accurate if he did not do lip slurs daily. This book allowed the band to simultaneously achieve pedagogically appropriate exercises with brass, woodwinds, and percussion. Therefore, this book had practical activities for brass players while also providing a framework for the rest of the band to be productive.

Each class's musical repertoire was also an essential component of the curriculum. The students agreed that the band directors chose a fun and exciting repertoire that makes the class enjoyable. One piece they consistently brought up in our focus group was *Raspa.* This piece, not to be mistaken for the traditional Mexican folk song and dance, was part of a ten-part work from *Ritmos de la Tierra.* This piece, translated as "rhythms of the earth," was a collection of ten Columbian and Latin American songs adapted for younger bands. Upon looking at previous concert programs, there was a pattern of the Summerset band directors programming music from Latin America in their concerts. They also included a mix of band standards frequently played at performance evaluations, pop music, and movie theme songs.

Mrs. Wolfe explained, "We try to appeal to the students' taste a little bit. We pull in a lot of music from other cultures and hopefully relate to someone in the room a little bit." Dr. Miller considered repertoire selection to be one of the ways he motivates students. First, he gave them several developmentally appropriate musical pieces he thought they would like. Dr. Miller then exposed the students to them and asked which ones they preferred. He said he also pays attention to what they practice in the band room before school. He liked to hear what they gravitate to before deciding on repertoire selection. Mrs. Wolfe said she also directed the students to the publishers' websites and invited them to explore music on their own time. She then told them to inform the directors if they found any music they liked.

I asked Dr. Miller what he thought was the most crucial aspect of a band rehearsal. He did not hesitate before telling me it was the fundamentals. Both Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe iterated the importance of the warm-ups and the structure of the warm-up routine. He told me an analogy he uses with his students:

> If you can get more stuff done in the fundamentals, then they should be able to play the songs. I've been preaching this for years; I said it just last week. …Scales are really the tools you need to play your music. If you can play the scales, you can play the notes."

When speaking of teaching technique, Dr. Miller added, "I got really big a couple of years ago in doing scales, arpeggios, and thirds. That's what the advanced band does. They play scales, arpeggios, and thirds." He added that he teaches two-octave scales when he can. When speaking of teaching the chromatic scale, he said, "I teach the chromatic scale using fingering charts. That way, they can just start on the fingering chart and figure it out."

I observed this routine in every class. Dr. Miller admitted that this routine changed depending on where they were in the school year and the concert cycle. However, he added, "I still try to do as much of the basic warmup as we can. When I don't do either lip slurs or Flow Studies, the brass players are less accurate." The routine consisted of long tones, a *Remington* warm-up, the Chicowitz *Flow Studies,* scales, and rhythmic sight-reading exercises. The *Remington* warm-up was a familiar concert band warm-up that originated as an exercise for trombone players to practice tuning their slide positions. When the whole band performed the *Remington,* they began by sustaining a concert F. The students then worked their way chromatically lower, returning to the F between each note until they finished with a concert Bb.

Mrs. Wolfe, who believed an established routine was helpful to her students, went through the four scales required for GMEA District Honor Band and All-State Band auditions.

Then, Mrs. Wolfe had the students turn their stands around and play the scales memorized. This added rigor to their scale warm-up. GMEA District Honor Band and All-State Band Auditions required scale memorization. One student briefly described their warm-up routine:

> For our warmups, we usually go through a daily fundamental of us playing each and every note that we have on our instrument. Then, we move on to scales and try to see what we can - not to see, but to know what we're doing well while going through it, and if not, we'll try again because we know that we weren't playing proper enough the first time. So, we'll go back and fix the mistakes that we've made, and then will go on playing the music parts that we need to play for concert coming up. We'll just keep going back and forth trying to fix mistakes and try to get the best sound that we can.

The two band directors were similar in instructional pacing and pedagogy. They also had the same established routine between the two of them. Both directors started the rehearsals with the Remmington warm-ups. Both had a focus on scales. Both utilized curriculum materials and then went to the supplemental materials. Both band directors had announcements at the end of their warm-up routine or as they were transitioning to another activity. During my classroom observations, I noted the repetitions both directors utilized. Dr. Miller shared some beliefs about the use of repetition:

> [An instructional strategy that] gets us to the high level, I guess, it is repetition. Just doing a lot of stuff. Fixing it and just doing it and do it. A lot of our kids will not go home and practice. So, we have to do that for them. So, if we can fix as much as we can on the front end and then just get the repetition going, then I think we're okay.

It was common to see the directors rehearse a passage until the students had it comfortably under their fingers and then repeat it a couple of times to build confidence. While one director would

lead the children through repetitions, the other director would frequently walk around the room, checking on the children and modeling good playing on their instrument. Even though both band directors are clarinetists, I observed them both frequently modeling their playing on trumpet. Occasionally, Dr. Miller would use the trombone.

Mrs. Wolfe explained she liked to approach her classroom instruction in the same manner that she would give a private clarinet lesson. She explained:

> Some of what I do, I think, came from private instruction strategies. I did a lot of teaching private lessons before becoming a full-time band director, and so I think some of the stuff that I do during class is more like what you would find in a private lesson as far as breaking down the music into the tiny little details and how you might attack the beginning of certain notes. Some of that I kind of get from my private music teaching background, and I think that helps them a lot to think more musically. In the 6th grade classes, I do a lot of breaking up into duets or learning a solo or learning this trio, and then they have time where they up and work on that on their own. Then we all sit, and they come in front of the room and they perform it for the class. We did that a lot. They like it. When I ask for a student - the class to volunteer to play, almost every single one of them wants to play, and so then we end up taking half the class to go down the row so everyone can play, but they like it and that's a chance for them to cheer on each other. If someone makes a mistake or play something horribly, we always try to find that thing that they did really well and kind of focus on, "Okay. This went really well. You did that great. So now next time you're going to add this thing."

In addition to her approach, Mrs. Wolfe often used video demonstrations in her instruction. During the band directors' planning period, on one of my first observation days, Mrs.

Wolfe searched for online videos of tango dances on YouTube. She consulted with Dr. Miller and me on the appropriateness of the various videos. She wanted to find a suitable dance video for her seventh-grade band class to watch. The students in the advanced seventh-grade band were learning a new piece, *Blue Orchid*, by William Owens. It was a tango for band. At the beginning of class, she showed the students the selected YouTube video. First, she talked about how the music was a dance. Then, she spoke briefly about the tango and the music's style. In a later conversation, Mrs. Wolfe told me that she liked to occasionally show videos to the students to model style and sometimes to provide historical perspectives.

In addition to these instructional strategies, I noticed Mrs. Wolfe asking the students many questions that required metacognitive thought. Modeling on trumpets, I saw her ask the students, "What do we want to hear? A or B?" She then went on to perform two different variations for the students. This instructional device requires children to assimilate prior knowledge and construct an opinion about musicality based on their experiences. She mentioned to me:

> Sometimes we'll intentionally have them play it wrong so they can hear what that sounds like, and they kind of hone it in and fix it. … For me, listening, getting them to listen and like, "Where's the melody? Can you hear it? Are you matching the style? Are you matching articulation?"

After interacting with the students, she then encouraged the children to mark their music and make reminders to themselves. At another time in the same rehearsal, Mrs. Wolfe thanked the trumpets for playing and asked them, "Can you hear the clarinets?" At that moment, she was trying to get them to think about their volume and role in the ensemble. Dr. Miller interjected, "All the dynamic levels need to come way down. We can have the emotion and energy, but we

have to play softer." This interaction indicated how the two directors effectively co-taught a class and their use of metacognitive questioning. During another band rehearsal, Mrs. Wolfe asked the students, "What is the picture we are trying to paint? Is it more ominous or heroic?" These questioning strategies appeared to be a prominent characteristic of Mrs. Wolfe's teaching pedagogy.

I noticed several instances of Dr. Miller asking the students to interact with him. For example, while checking for engagement and focus, he told the students, "Take a minute and find an accidental and then share with a friend the fingering for that note." At one point, when the students were rehearsing music to the Marvel franchise, *the Avengers*, Dr. Miller asked the students who had seen *End Game.* He then described the movie's final scene, the epic battle. He used this description to convey the power and intensity of the music.

Dr. Miller told me that he added rigor to the curriculum by making his instruction age-appropriate. He told me a specific example, "we try to up the game on seventh grade on rhythms. By the time we get to eighth [grade], I try to expand the scale ranges as we go through over time." My classroom observations and the artifacts that I collected reflected this sentiment. For example, I observed that the older students at Summerset played more challenging exercises and literature than the younger students.

When I asked the principal how the band directors increased academic rigor in their classroom, he echoed Dr. Miller's sentiment. He told me, "I think they meet kids where they're at, and they know the kids' ability." Later in the conversation, he spoke explicitly about Dr. Miller's use of rigor. He felt Dr. Miller constantly challenged his students, especially those in the advanced ensembles. Additionally, Mr. Nix commented on how Dr. Miller encourages the students to audition for extra-curricular activities like honor band and all-state band.

"I love the instrument I play" – Autonomy: Student Motivation in the Summerset Band Program

I identified *Student Motivation* as an emergent sub-theme because this was one of the most frequent codes in my analysis. I created *Mastery, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation,* and *Student Agency* subcodes to organize the data. The well-documented negative change in motivation in the transition from elementary school to middle school (E. Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Boswell, 1991; Eccles, Midgley, & Adler, 1984; Wigfield & Eccles, 1991) made student motivation of particular concern with the participating middle school band program. This change in academic motivation is especially true in high-poverty schools (Seidman et al., 1994). The middle school years can be tough transitional years for students. Summerset Middle School principal, Mr. Nix, spoke to me about how he likes to see his students involved in clubs and organizations. He believed school organizations help create a sense of community in the school with children who might otherwise have little motivation for being at school. When speaking of the impact of music education on middle school students, he said, "I think that those life skills and just non-academic skills that they get in those three programs are very essential to the middle school students' development." He told me he has always wanted strong music programs in his various administrative positions.

Mastery

I observed and reflected on the practices of the Summerset band directors that encourage mastery learning and mastery learning goals. *Mastery Learning* is the belief that given enough time and appropriate interventions, all students can learn content (Airasian, Bloom, & Carroll, 1971). An educator can implement a mastery philosophy by using goals and assessments. However, the main caveat is that they would need to provide individualized support and move on

to new tasks only when the students master the previous ones. To achieve mastery in their classrooms, educators must set clear, achievable short-term and long-term goals. Additionally, the teacher would need to provide as much instruction and structure as necessary for the students to master the content before moving to the next skill. A student plainly stated that their band directors help them try to be the best they can be.

A common example of mastery teaching in an instrumental music classroom is a pass-off system for assessment. Students usually go at their own pace, performing short musical examples for their directors. If they complete the passage with competency, they will "pass it off." If not, the student would receive feedback. Then, the student would practice the passage and attempt it again. This process is in-line with a mastery philosophy because the student receives individualized support to accomplish a task but does not move on to the next task until they master the current one.

Dr. Miller used a pass-off system when he taught in Orlando. He reported having great success with the system then. However, his school in Florida was very different from Summerset. He tried to use a pass-off system several times at Summerset but was not as successful with his population of students. He felt like his students at Summerset were not as intrinsically motivated as those from his higher SES school in Florida. Instead, Dr. Miller used a playing test system at Summerset with live assessments and *MusicFirst* software assessments. He and Mrs. Wolfe have a policy that the students can make up any assignment for full credit. This practice reflects mastery learning. Given enough time, students had the opportunity to complete the task. Mrs. Wolfe claimed, "We give [the students] endless opportunities to make up missing assignments."

There were a few other examples of how the band program at Summerset is a mastery-based classroom. Mrs. Wolfe established her expertise as a private lesson music instructor early in her career. She told me that she would often model what their home practicing looks like for her students in class. This practice also contributes to their classroom philosophy of mastery because the home practice became deliberate and task-related. The students consistently shared with me that the directors encourage them to practice. Mrs. Mourdock commented to me on the growth she has seen in her son with his at-home practicing:

> I've seen the way the kids have grown, especially in sixth grade, starting out in August where I know from my son, he couldn't even barely play a note, and now it's March, he can play any and every song, and I think that's also due to how much he practices as well. He puts in a lot of time practicing.

The directors created opportunities to practice and receive feedback outside of class. If the students wanted to practice, they could come to the band room before school or attend band during their Wednesday Power Hour. This Power Hour is a school-wide activity designed to be academic enrichment. Once a week, for one hour on Wednesdays, the students chose an enrichment activity hosted by various teachers around the building. In addition, the band directors host open practices during Power Hour for the students who are not already committed to making up tests and projects with other teachers in the building.

Another feature of Summerset's mastery-based band classroom is that the directors encourage the students to memorize the music. This practice promotes mastery. When students know a musical passage well, they do not need to spend vast cognitive resources on the notes and rhythms. They can then focus on more complex cognitive tasks like musical phrasing and

emotional inflections. Memorizing music for performance helps students accomplish mastery of the material (Anderman et al., 2002; Lehmann et al., 2007).

A *mastery goal orientation* is when students are intrinsically motivated by the subject and the pursuit of intellectual development. With this orientation, an intrinsic motivation inspires individuals to complete a task to pursue improvement or continued mastery of a subject (Molden & Dweck, 2000; Midgley, 2002). Anderman and Maehr (2004) state that a task-focus, mastery goal orientation is ideal for learners. However, *performance goal orientation* is when demonstrating competency with their peers motivates students.

Chair placements are a common practice in many schools' band and orchestra classrooms. This practice encourages a performance goal orientation with students. However, it can negatively alter a band classroom's climate and create a competitive environment. This approach stresses public competition amongst peers and potentially creates a social hierarchy among band students. If a band director can teach students to be competitive with themselves rather than others, the classroom atmosphere may become more positive (Hruska, 2011). Even though the directors at Summerset Middle School have the students in ability-based classes, they do not have chair placements. Most of the directors' colleagues in the school district use chair placements. The absence of chair placements makes the Summerset band unique among other schools in the area and one that promotes a mastery goal orientation. Students who adopt a mastery goal orientation have more positive attitudes towards learning and are more effective in academic success than students with a performance goal orientation (Ames & Archer, 1988; Elliott & Dweck, 1988).

Intrinsic Motivation

The students in the focus group consistently voiced they enjoyed band. One student said, "I love the instrument I play, and I want to continue playing it." They described their band class as fun, a journey, and a really enjoyable experience. These statements are indicative of students who internalized their motivation. Additionally, these statements are internal rewards. This internalization is intrinsic motivation. Another student spoke up and offered a specific example of how the students are intrinsically motivated and the expectations of their musical ensemble:

> They motivate us by telling us that we can be the best that we want to be, but we have to show that we want to be the best, that we can while trying to perform or doing anything that it all depends on us.

The students' apparent dedication to their band classroom was evident as they spoke of their love of it and their intent to remain in the program. One student participant even voiced that they believe children in the band and orchestra try harder in those classes than in other ones. When speaking about their band directors, another student mentioned:

> They tell us to motivate ourselves to try to reach the best of our potential that we could in band, so then we can like be proud of ourselves. So, then we could see like how good and how great we've moved on since we've started.

Research suggests that teachers with a strong passion for the activity will have a more focused engagement and invest more time in it (Fredricks et al., 2010; Hobbs, 2012). Jane Mourdock spoke on her perception of Dr. Miller's passion for his classroom:

> Dr. Miller has this enthusiasm for band that - I don't know that I would have that same enthusiasm, but I think it's his love for band that also – and the kids see that, and then in turn, you know, makes them love their instrument, want to play, want to practice and just, like, my son never puts his trumpet down at home. I'm always hearing it upstairs or

> downstairs. He sleeps with it, so he's really in tune with his instrument and I think that Dr. Miller' enthusiasm about band helps with that.

The band directors at Summerset used a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators with their students. Through this study's data collection and analysis, I found many ways the directors balance intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. For example, Mr. Nix discussed how Dr. Miller used both motivational techniques:

> He does use some of those extrinsic rewards like PBIS and different things like that. I think they do motivational things down there as far as giving some students some tangible things. I mean, they'll get band wristbands and stuff like that. I also think they do a great job of intrinsically motivating kids and … building that sense of accomplishment in them and getting the kids to see the intrinsic reward that their practice is paying off. That they're advancing within their playing, and they're advancing probably at a rate that's very much aligned to the effort and the time that they're putting into it. … I think he does a good job of motivating kids without a lot of intrinsic stuff, which in middle school is challenging, especially in the area that we're living in, and I think in a middle school such as ours where based on the population we serve, I think can be challenging, and that's something I've found that has been very challenging overall the last couple of years with the pandemic is the motivation of the students to work hard.

Extrinsic Motivation

Summerset Middle being a PBIS school means much attention was placed on extrinsic rewards to encourage positive student behaviors. The way the school awarded children was with school cash. The students could earn this virtual currency for exhibiting positive, pro-social classroom behaviors. For example, if a teacher observed a student picking up trash, they might

reward the student with one dollar of school cash. The teachers awarded and tracked the school cash through the PBIS Rewards app. The students could redeem school cash for treats and rewards with their earned currency. This system is an example of external regulation. The students act autonomously but engage in the behavior for a reward.

Every Friday, the students had the opportunity to purchase an extra recess with their earned school cash. This reward was called *Fresh-Air Friday* (FAF). Mrs. Wolfe described this to me along with some other opportunities that the students have to spend their school cash:

> On Fridays usually, but throughout the year, there are different things they can purchase with their [school] cash. Like they can get a bag of chips or popcorn or various things. Every other Friday, we do Fresh Air Friday to get to the outside, and so they have to buy it with [school] cash. Certain teachers will have school stores where you can buy things like pencils or erasers or things with [school] cash.

The Carter County School District purchased the PBIS Rewards software for all schools electing to be PBIS schools. Teachers could award students school cash in the app or submit office referrals. They could do this on their smartphones or web browsers. Mr. Nix chatted with me briefly about Dr. Miller's support of the school's PBIS program and his use of extrinsic rewards:

> So, we're a PBIS school. So, he follows that. There's positive incentives to give out. I don't know. I'd have to look. I don't know how much he gives out school cash. But he's very much a proponent of the PBIS program and the things that we do. … He holds kids accountable, and again, it goes back to those relationships and the expectations they have and staying the course because of those things. He rarely has a lot of behaviors, serious behavior concerns in his classroom that can't be dealt with just the individual

conversation to a student or make parent phone call home. But he's supportive of the process that we have in place, again then in his classroom.

In addition to the school's PBIS framework for establishing positive extrinsic incentives, the band directors had other methods of rewarding students. Grades are standard extrinsic rewards, but Mrs. Wolfe said they do not rely on grades extensively because they felt their community did not value them as much as other motivators. Dr. Miller would sometimes use candy to influence behaviors. For example, he would stand at the door during dismissal and reward children with starbursts for taking their instruments home. He explained that he did this to encourage good habits and routines with the children.

The directors tried to figure out new incentives for the children continually. Their ideas consisted of a mixture of tangible rewards and praise. Praise is an example of extrinsic motivation. The students in the focus group spoke about how both directors would be kind and give them positive messages for inspiration. They also said the teachers would send positive messages to the parents through *CTLS* about how well the students would be doing in class.

Dr. Miller told me about other ideas he had to reward the children. For example, he would make index cards with notes or instrument fingerings with the answer on the back. Then, he would randomly use these cards to quiz the kids and award them a starburst. During my fieldwork, they investigated creating a scale club for the students. They talked about how they wanted to reward and acknowledge students for every scale they learned. Dr. Miller got this idea from another band director in Carter County. Interestingly, she was also one of his former students from Orlando, Florida.

Agency

A way the directors at Summerset allowed for agency in their classroom was by involving the students in the repertoire selection process. Both band directors brought this activity up with me. Mrs. Wolfe said:

> We try to appeal to the student taste a little bit. We pull in a lot of music from other cultures and hopefully relate to someone in the room a little bit. Student choice as well. We tell them like, "Hey, go check out this website. If you hear a song that you like, let us know. We'll look into getting it for you." We kind of know the style we're going for, and we'll hand out two or three pieces in that style, and then we'll let the students say like, "Hey, what do you guys think about this one? Do you like that?" A lot of it is like we'll give them options that we know are at their level, but then we kind of let them have the final say what they want to play.

Dr. Miller described this process for LGPE music selection:

> I've done this for years. I go pick a bunch of songs I'm willing to play. There's some stuff I don't want to hear. I don't want to play it. I don't like it. I don't think it's worth spending the time on. So, I try to pick a bunch of music that I'm willing to let them play. … we'll say, "Okay. We've got to play a march, and we've got to play two pieces that are different. So, take out a piece of paper. On one side, write "march" and on the other side, write "others" and every time we play these and sightread them, I want you to write down what you like about it and what you don't like, and we'll go through and do that." Sometimes in December. Then when we get back, we're starting to narrow it done. I go, "Okay. I need you to pick." Usually, I can guide it where I think it needs to go because I can see if we sightread it and it sounded bad, if we couldn't get through it, that's probably not what we want, but I think letting them choose it — and I also try to listen, if they've

> got a bunch of music in their folder, what they're playing, what they're practicing before school and so the notes and the pieces will gravitate towards that. Like I said, attainable goals, picking music they like, helping them learn music they don't think they'll like, but they would learn to like.

Student motivation is a complex topic. The band directors at Summerset used many methods to motivate their students. They had a mastery-based classroom. They used a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Additionally, the directors promoted student agency in their classroom by involving the children in the process of repertoire selection. When I asked Jane Mourdock her final thoughts on Dr. Miller, Mrs. Mourdock responded:

> Dr. Miller and how the class perceives him and how he motivates them to want to play. That was that's one of my big takeaways because I think, without him, maybe the kids would not have as much motivation. Because I'm just going to say this, being an orchestra and a band parent, my orchestra kid never brings home her instrument, versus my band kid who brings it home every single day, you know? Which is totally different, you know? So, I think Dr. Miller definitely is a huge part of that.

"Thank your neighbor for making beautiful music with you today" – Relatedness: The Summerset Band Community

During my purposive selection process for potential participants, band director tenure was the limitation that excluded the greatest number of potential participants. First, I found high-poverty schools with band programs that received superior ratings. I then identified programs with band directors who spent at least the previous five years employed at their school. Including participants with at least five years of tenure eliminated most potential participants. Finding a high-performing, high-poverty middle school band with a band director who spent five years or

more at the school became rare. The potential directors were unique in their cases. At the time of this study, Dr. Miller, who was in his seventeenth year at Summerset Middle School, had enough time to generate a classroom culture. His long tenure at Summerset allowed him to establish himself and his program as an institution in the building. A sense of community was a common trend in the data analysis. Mr. Nix remarked about Dr. Miller's long tenure at the school and his popularity with the students:

> He's been here for a long time, but when we get kids that come back and just want to see teachers, … there are a couple of teachers in the academic wing that are really popular with kids that have been here for a while. They want to come see. But one of the folks they always want to see is they always want to see Dr. Miller.

For this reason, the principal says he does what he can to "continue the pipeline of students" to have a great band program at his school.

The band directors at Summerset utilized student performing groups to serve the school and build upon the building's culture. They would rehearse a small group during Power-hour during the Christmas season. Power-hour was the study hall that students attended every Wednesday. They would use this group to play Christmas carols for the library staff and cafeteria workers. They also support the principal's school-wide fundraising efforts with the small ensemble that performs for Summerset-night at the local Chick-fil-A. The students told me they would frequently perform for the school in the hallways. Another example of the directors using small ensembles of students as an outreach for the band program was at the beginning of the school year. They had a small group of eighth-grade students perform in the cafeteria for the new sixth-grade students.

Every year the directors planned a spring concert for the community. Instead of holding the concerts in the auditorium, they hosted them outside. Parents would bring their younger children and pets to these events. Dr. Miller told me it would not be unusual to see the younger kids playing and climbing trees while the bands played. In front of the school, they would have a Kona Ice food truck available to provide treats for the families. Kona Ice was a local food truck parked at events and sold flavored shaved ice. When remarking about the joyous nature of Summerset Band community concerts, Mrs. Wolfe added:

> A lot of families with young kids that come, so there's always going to be that kind of like chatter and noise and little kids squalling, but I think that's … part of the excitement in the audience as well, and it's always fun to see little kids dancing when they hear a song they like and dance along. It's always fun.

These concerts would also be learning events for their community. A conversation that came up a few times during data collection was how the band directors and students teach audience etiquette to families. Mrs. Wolfe clearly stated:

> At the beginning of each concert, we have students who do this little spiel. They get up in front of the stage, and they kind of go over what's expected as far as audience etiquette – silencing your cellphones, please don't talk while we're playing. If you need to use your phone, please exit the theater, try not to come in and out during the music, wait until between songs. We'll have students that do those announcements in both English, and then another student does it in Spanish. It seems like that's been helping.

After making that remark, I then pressed her with a follow-up question. I asked, "do you feel like that's a necessity?" She responded:

> I think … for many of our families, it's their first time. Like not only our students are new to performing concerts, but the families are new to experiencing and listening to concerts, and so teaching them that as well is quite necessary.

When I asked Mrs. Mourdock about the audience etiquette talks, she responded:

> Yes, they do [have the talks]. In English and in Spanish, they have multiple students just reiterated, turn off your phone, no talking, if the baby is crying, please step out, please wait, until the song is over before you clap or wait – you know. Things of that nature.

Character Education and Teamwork

The band directors at Summerset taught their students concepts other than music in several instances. These concepts included pride, kindness, compassion, and teamwork. In addition, the directors expounded on character education with their students. One example of their investment in character education was their reflective procedure for disruptive students. When students were disruptive, they had to reflect on their behavior by filling out writing prompts on a worksheet. This practice of isolating behavior and correcting it through a reflective assignment is consistent with the school's adapted PBIS framework. It is less punitive and more redemptive.

Upon viewing the cleanliness and the order of the band facilities, it seemed the directors at Summerset had a lot of pride in their band program. For example, after the 8th-grade Concert Band rehearsal, I noted how the students reset all the chairs and music stands on their way to the next class. After observing this behavior, I noticed this procedure in all the other band classes. Mrs. Mourdock acknowledged that the directors taught the children to have pride in themselves and their band program. She felt that this character education had implications for students performing outside the school. When I asked her about when she attended band trips as a

chaperone, she discussed with me her thoughts about the Summerset Band students on LGPE field trips:

> They definitely trained the kids on how to keep their composure amongst all the other schools. When, because there's so many kids around and I noticed that like some of the other kids from other schools, they may say something to our students, because our band uniforms aren't maybe as traditional. They're just in a red polo and black pants, versus some who wear three-piece suits, or those dresses or gowns or whatever you call them.

She was referring to the difference in concert attire between the middle school performing groups at LGPE. Since the Carter County School District is very economically diverse, there is a wide variety of concert attire from the various middle schools that attend LGPE. It is not uncommon to see schools from affluent neighborhoods in three-piece suits, tuxes, or concert dresses. Mrs. Mourdock spoke of how the directors tell the students to keep their composure at this public event. The directors encouraged the children to have pride in themselves even when it may be apparent that other students are more economically privileged.

During my interview with the student focus group, the idea of perseverance was common in the students' responses. For example, Dr. Miller told me he likes saying, "Amateurs practice until they get it right. Professionals practice until it won't go wrong." This phrase was on a poster posted in the band room. The poster had a collection of sayings from famous musicians with the quote used by Dr. Miller in the center (Figure 2).

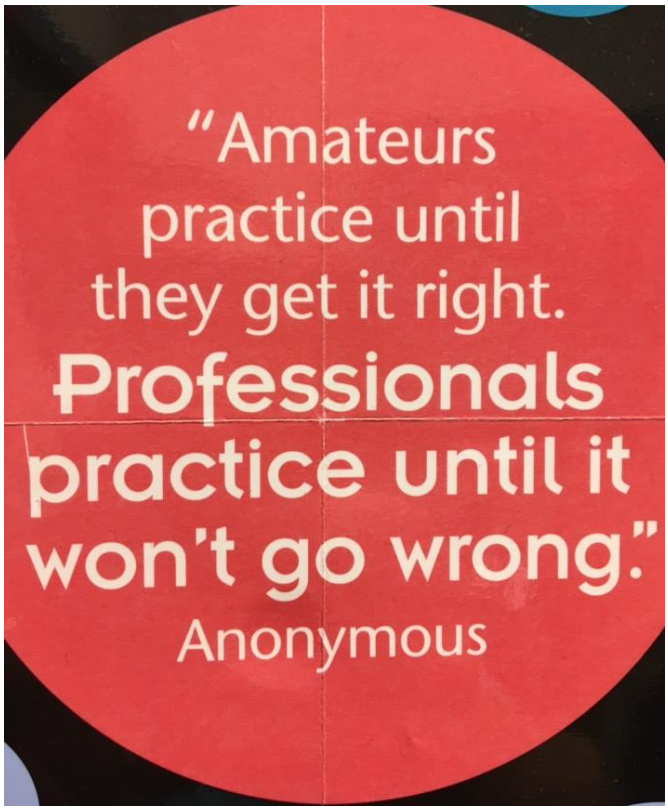
The directors talked about perseverance in non-band aspects of the students' lives. In conjunction with the directors' apparent interest in the students' lives outside of the band classroom, the directors showed interest in the students' academic success. One student remarked, "A lot of times, they talk about doing well in school, or even if you don't want to play

anymore to … continue to do things so that you won't give up easily." The students agreed that their band directors discussed persevering in life and school. Another student mentioned:

> Dr. Miller or Mrs. Wolfe will tell us about past experiences. … Talking about how things may not be as great as to one point, but things will get better like moving along, and that certain problems happen in life, and you still have to try to move on from them.

Figure 2

A Motivational Poster on the Summerset Band Room Wall



Another trend that emerged was the concept of teaching kindness to the children. When speaking about their band directors, one child explained, "they talk to us about being good people and not

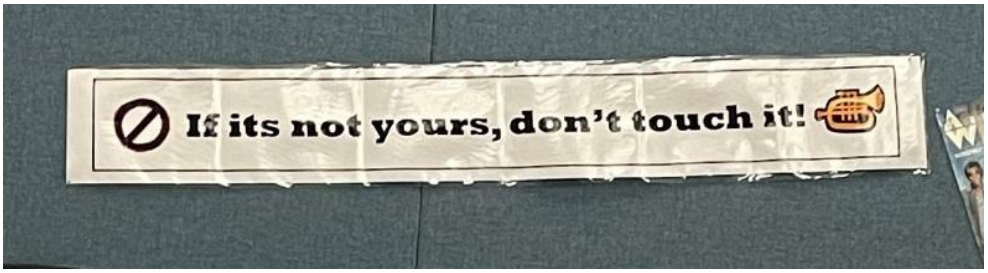
treating others unfairly." Another student in the focus group mentioned that the directors also discussed respecting each other's personal belongings. For example, the directors made and posted a laminated sign on the wall acoustic panels that read, "If it's not yours, don't touch it!" (Figure 3).

Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe extended the notion of respect and kindness to the students traveling on trips like LGPE. A student mentioned that their directors advised them to be kind and considerate to other bands, even if others might not do the same. Mrs. Wolfe discussed with me how she instructed the children to conduct themselves at LGPE:

> When we went to LGPE [I would say], "Hey, those other kids, they work just as hard as you did to prepare for today, so when you see them in the hall, tell them good luck or congratulate them on their performance because we're all a team." You'll never know who's going to be on your team, especially since our kids move a lot. It's like you might be sitting in that room one day with those kids, so just building that sense of community as far as band.

Figure 3

A Classroom Expectations Poster in the Summerset Band Room



She was referring to how transient her school was. She suggested that if her students saw a child from another school, the other student could transfer to Summerset and be a part of their team. Mrs. Mourdock commented that the directors tried to instill "a respect for the other bands. If you're sitting in the audience watching, to have like a certain respect for them, no talking, no going in and out."

In a rehearsal I observed at Summerset, I saw Dr. Miller isolate the trumpets on a melodic passage in *the Avengers.* He went down the line, asking the students to play individually and offering suggestions. While doing this, there was no talking or snickering in the ensemble. I noted how none of the students reacted to the individual trumpet players performing by themselves on the passage. My impression of the room was that it had an atmosphere of tolerance and compassion from the other students. While the individual trumpet players performed, they did not look overly stressed or concerned about performing in front of their peers. Instead, they looked relaxed, as if this was routine for them. The band room was a safe place to perform by themselves and receive feedback in front of their peers.

I asked the student focus group about being non-judgmental to their peers. One respondent said, "[the band directors] always tell us that if somebody messes up while they're playing, don't really judge them, you just support them… Because since we're all part of a team, we support them and help them." Another student talked about how the directors would make the band listen to concert recordings the day after performances. The directors would talk about what the students did well and what they could do better. Additionally, the directors would ask the students for feedback, including them in the performance analysis conversation. However, the directors would encourage the students to be kind to each other when critiquing the recording to the group.

At the conclusion of a rehearsal, Dr. Miller briefly paused after giving an end-of-class speech. The students were frozen, giving their teacher their full engagement. He looked as if he was trying to decide what to say next. A student quickly interjected, “you have a good day.” His band director smiled, nodded, and echoed, “you have a good day.” The students quickly moved and began packing up as if they were waiting for the routine’s magic words.

Mrs. Wolfe had a different end-of-class routine. She adapted this routine after observing one of the band directors from the University of Georgia. The collegiate band director agreed to visit Summerset Middle School and clinic the ensembles for a day as they prepared for LGPE. Inviting local collegiate directors to guest conduct secondary bands was common practice in Atlanta area band rooms. Mrs. Wolfe recounted what she learned from this professor and adapted a procedure for her classroom:

> I started doing this lately, and I got it from Jackie Hartenberger at UGA. She always has her students turn to each other and say, … “Thank your neighbor for making beautiful music with you today.” We kind of do that. Occasionally, I’ll be like, “Hey, turn to your neighbor and say, ‘Nice work today, or thanks for playing awesome music with me today.’” Stuff like that. So, building that community.

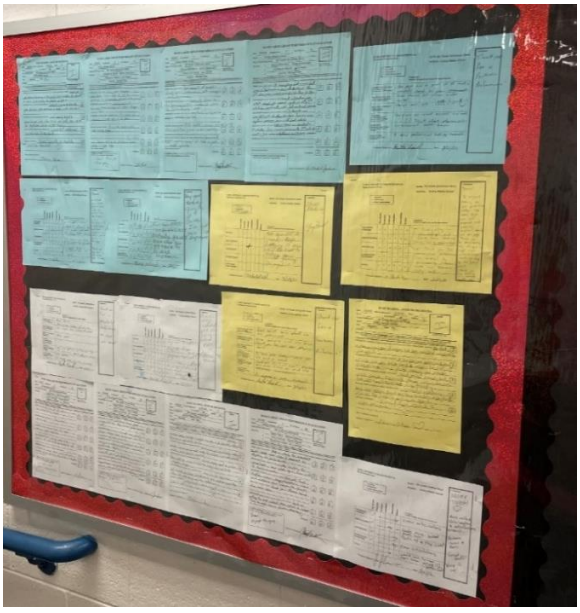
I observed her asking her students to thank each other at the end of the rehearsal.

During the seventh-grade advanced band rehearsal, she said, “Thank you to the two trumpet players that nailed measure seventeen. Just imagine if all six of you were playing.” This encounter was an attempt to praise student effort and disarmingly critique the students not engaged. Additionally, with these phrases, she built upon the notion of teamwork in her class. She was skilled at giving this type of compliment-critique while simultaneously building upon her theme of teamwork. She told me:

> We try to promote the whole team aspect of band. “Your team’s counting on you, and every single one of you is important to the success of the performance.” Mostly through peer pressure.

Figure 4

Adjudication Sheets for the 2022 GMEA Large Group Performance Evaluation



Mrs. Wolfe shared some additional strategies that she uses:

> There’s a couple of students that will go up to a kid and be like, “Hey, man, that was really good. You did really good on that.” If they don’t do it on their own and we notice something really well, we’re like, “Didn’t the flute sound amazing when they played that? Let’s give them band applause because that was awesome,” or, “Yes, they nailed it. Do you hear it? The trombone has nailed that note. Band applause.” Just getting them to kind of cheer for each other… I do, and we do that a lot, [which] kind of goes back to that motivation aspect too. We’re really big on supporting your teammate when they do

something well. Sometimes the students will just do it spontaneously when they hear something. The 6th graders are always really good at this. When they hear someone did something really well, they do that band applause for them. We have them do the band applause with their feet.

Figure 5

Summerset Middle School Instrument Lockers

Classroom Environment

Some of the most intriguing findings from my fieldwork at Summerset related to classroom environment. There were three emergent sub-codes when I analyzed the data concerning the classroom environment. These were positivity, humor, and calmness. I found the Summerset band room to be a welcoming, positive environment for children. The physical

spaces of all the band facilities were clean and organized. On the wall outside the band facilities in the main hallway, the band directors posted the current year's LGPE adjudication sheets (Figure 4). Next to these sheets were photos of the students' football game performance at the high school they fed. The band directors posted the LGPE adjudication sheets so the students could read the constructive feedback. Additionally, the students could take pride in knowing that all three grade levels earned superior ratings (See Figure 4).

The band facilities included the main band room with an attached instrument storage room. The main band room had a mixture of old and new Wenger music instrument lockers flanking two walls of the facility. One of the first things I noticed was the instruments faced the same way in the lockers. This order gave the impression that this organization had clear procedures and exacting standards. There were no extraneous items in the lockers except the instruments and the students' music binders (See Figure 5). Dr. Miller told me he tried to build time in the class transitions for the students to fix their chairs and stands at the end of class, so the room looks neat for the next period. My overall impression of the facilities was that they were clean, organized, and well-utilized. It was an attractive room. Mr. Nix had thoughts about the attractiveness of the band room. He also shared his philosophy on school beautification:

> He wants an attractive room. I mean, right now, we're doing an initiative where we're trying to change out all the lockers in his room or in the band room for the kids to put their instruments because he very much feels the same way I do. We have the same philosophy that the area code in which you reside should not determine the quality of instruction that you get or the type of facility that you go to each day. I very much tried to beautify the school and do a lot of different things to upgrade it on our own with some district assistance. And he has the same philosophy. So, he wants the kids to know that he

wants - that he wants them to have a nice space and that it's a place that's comfortable for them.

There was also a band directors' office. Both Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe shared this office. Opposite the band directors' office was a large ensemble room. The directors used this room for pull-out sectionals and to split their classes for differentiated instruction. Attached to this large ensemble room was a small room housing the band program's music library. On the walls of the main band room were some pedagogical visual displays. One was the order of flats (BEADGCF), and another was the Circle of Fourths. Across one of the walls were GMEA placards commemorating high ratings from former state adjudications at LGPE. Next to the placards was a picture of a student clarinetist selected for the Georgia All-State Band in 2012. Next to the all-state clarinetist photo was a frame with an empty silhouette titled "Who's Next?" It was clear that this was meant to inspire future Summerset band students to become the next all-state musician at their school (Figure 6). It was not surprising that the school has only had one all-state player in the past decade, considering the close association between socioeconomic status and individual music achievement (Bailey, 2018).

Figure 6

Summerset Middle School Clarinetist accepted in the Georgia All-State Band

During the student focus-group interview, the students recounted how they felt encouraged by their teachers. They thought that the teachers were positive toward them. This finding was consistent with my classroom observations. One student, when asked about what their directors are like during class, explained:

> If we're ever practicing a song and we mess up, they'll help us get it right. They'll keep going through it and helping us. They provide us with support, and they make it feel like it is not a stressful experience. They keep the band on track, and as they said, Dr. Miller, they tell jokes to make it feel like a fun experience.

I asked the student focus group a follow-up question, asking if the directors were positive. They all agreed the directors were positive. One student claimed, "They give us tips and tricks to reach our best potential playing our instruments, and both band directors try to make band the most enjoyable experience possible." Another student added, "The directors support us. They help us when we struggle and praise us for doing a good job. They give us fun and exciting pieces to make the class period more enjoyable." This positivity was evident in the directors' love for their program and subject. The students' perception of support in their classroom environment is especially crucial to adolescents. This perception of increased support is a key determinant in students' positive feeling of task value and beliefs that the instructional content is a good use of their time. Additionally, perceptions of the classroom environment are associated with increased motivation and academic engagement (Wang & Eccles, 2013).

Mrs. Mourdock communicated she felt that the band directors were approachable to the students. Specifically, she felt Dr. Miller was "always available for them." She also told me that she thought the kids loved him. When I asked her about this, Mrs. Mourdock responded:

> I think they love him, yes. …He's super nice. I haven't really ever heard him get angry. I know he gets a little stern, especially if they're not listening or following directions, but for the most part, the kids receive him very well.

Both band directors had a positive rapport with the kids. I observed a fair amount of humor used during instruction. These moments of hilarity were often quick and continuous during classroom instruction. Dr. Miller mentioned:

> I try to be focused and get stuff done, but I never wanted to be one of those guys that won't laugh. If something's funny, I'm going to laugh. Sometimes I'm going to crack a joke. Some students have a greater appreciation for my sarcasm than others.

This humor was essential to him to differentiate himself from the strict, stern band directors he encountered early in his teaching career in Florida. Mrs. Wolfe talked about Dr. Miller's use of humor:

> [Dr. Miller] is really good about joking around with the kids, and he can – he's good at relating to them, and like if a student did something they shouldn't in class, he can kind of just say something a little bit jokingly with them to get them to fix it, and just like constantly having that back and forth with students.

Dr. Miller added:

> I try to … laugh and just laugh, but I want to be focused and get the work done. We can laugh, and then we just talk and work. Lots of times, I make the jokes, and you laugh. You make jokes later, but I find that rehearsals are so much more enjoyable when the kids know when to stop. I guess there's too many classes. That's like some huge revelation I've had, but then we can say something funny. Because they say stuff that makes me laugh. It doesn't throw me off, but I try to keep it focused and moving forward

and getting stuff done. I think you mentioned earlier, I have to go, "Okay. No, let's get back at it."

The directors' use of humor was a sentiment echoed by the students during the focus-group interview. One student claimed that the jokes made the students feel more relaxed. At one point, when rehearsing *the Avengers* for an upcoming concert, the final measure of the song ended poorly. Instead of Dr. Miller discussing the mistake, he and the students had an organic reaction. They shared a moment, chuckling at the unfortunate mistake.

Mr. Nix talked to me briefly about how Dr. Miller can have casual, joyful interactions with students and then switch his demeanor to teach quickly and efficiently. Even though the directors and the students tried to have a great time in rehearsal, he commended Dr. Miller for his seriousness and professionalism.

I did not expect Summerset Middle School and its band room to be as calm as it was. I have been in several other high-poverty schools. Often, the hallways can be busier and noisier when compared to Summerset. However, I found the hallway transitions to be orderly, with not much wasted time by the students trying to get to their classes. Dr. Miller attributes this to his principal. He recounted the first fire drill the school had when Mr. Nix came on staff as the new principal, "He let us know very clearly that the way in which the school conducted the fire drill was not good enough and that we needed to improve our procedures (personal communication, March 28th, 2022).

Adding to the predictability of the classroom was how similar Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe were in their routines, pacing, and pedagogy. They both invested an equivalent amount of time in each instructional task. Mrs. Wolfe claimed that structured, predictable routines help her students. When I asked her about the consistency between her and her co-worker, she responded:

> I think it helps for them to have consistency. It also helps on days when like if Lance's out and I'm doing both the band classes or if I'm out just doing both band classes, the students already know what to expect, and it's pretty consistent no matter who's out there in the room. We laid that foundation in 6th grade ... Lance and I are just kind of in agreement as far as our expectations and teaching style. We try to keep that pretty consistent for the students.

At the start of every classroom, the students would enter the room calmly and quickly get their instruments out. When either of the conductors was ready to begin rehearsal, the students were already in their seats, doing their warmups. The director would then have the students perform their first warm-up exercise, often without saying a word. This behavior demonstrated that the students were all accustomed to this routine, establishing that the rehearsal would be a predictable, safe environment. Mrs. Wolfe claimed that this routine changed slightly depending on the class's age and maturity:

> There are certain classes that can handle - coming in the room; certain classes can handle coming in and being social and talking while they get set. In other classes, we might need to reassess and have them come in silently, and they can't talk when they come in. It's adaptable based on the group of students.

Dr, Miller claimed that this routine of entering the room silently and getting set up took a while to establish. However, he believed the "kids do a good job getting in, getting settled, and work real hard to have as much quiet as we can while we're teaching." During our interview, he recounted a time when he saw this done at another school. This school was a high SES school in an affluent part of the school district. He admitted that even though his routine was not perfect, it

was something that they continually worked on with the population at his school. Dr. Miller described his experience seeing the procedure at the neighboring school:

> We work really hard with the younger ones. Not so much with the eighth graders. We give them a little more freedom, but in terms – I mean, we worked really hard. I saw this actually at another school, this is where I saw it done, where they don't talk when they walk in. The band director told me, … "It takes a while to get to them," but there's not a sound in that room. Kids come in and get their stuff, sit down. At a certain point, they start a pre-recorded track that has lip slur exercises with the brass, the brass sit there and buzz. When that ends, they start. I was like, "Holy cow."

He then continued describing his implementation of the procedure:

> We try to do that because I do find that our population can come in loud and wound up. Does that mean that's how it is at another school? Is it a high need? No, it doesn't. That's not what I mean, but it's just our population is loud. When they come in, we let them be. We try to work with other classes, and it takes a long time to do it. If not, offer them to come in, but the kids do a good job in getting in, getting settled, work real hard to have as much quiet as we can while we're teaching because we want everybody to hear what we have to say and not have to repeat it.

Classroom Management

Classroom procedures aided the band room's calm atmosphere. These methods seemed central to the band directors' belief in effective classroom management. The kids, their principal, and my parent participant echoed this sentiment. I made several comments about the routines and procedures in my field notes. When interviewing the directors, they both admitted that the routines were always a work in progress. Still, they started training the students on their

procedures early in the school year. I spoke with Dr. Miller about his classroom management and how he engages with the population of students at his school. He said he tried to remain consistent with his classroom procedures because he found that his "population can come in loud and wound-up." Mrs. Wolfe, who also found that establishing routines is helpful to the students, noted:

> For the most part, it's just studying those routines and the procedures at the beginning of the year and making sure everyone knows the expected behaviors in the band room. Then as needed, if students are not following those rules or procedures, then we take care of it at the forefront, and hopefully, make sure that throughout the year everything stays a good level.

However, she did add the caveat:

> There are certain classes that can handle - coming in the room, certain classes can handle coming in and being social and talking while they get set. In other classes, we might need to reassess and have them come in silently, and they can't talk when they come in. The routine, that's – I don't know. It's adaptable based on the group of students.

When Mrs. Wolfe talked about certain classes that might need some reassessment to establish the routines, she alluded to the differences in student behavior among her band classes. They grouped the bands by ability level in the 7th and the 8th grades. Each grade had an advanced band and a concert band. The students auditioned for their band placement at the end of the previous school year. Predictably, I observed more instances of off-task behaviors in the non-advanced classes. In these classes, the 7th and 8th-grade concert bands had some cases where the band directors had to redirect the behaviors of individuals.

During his interview with me, Dr. Miller shared one of his frequent strategies to address disruptive behaviors. If a child were disruptive, he would pull the student to the side of the room to talk to them alone. This action was a compassionate effort not to embarrass them and to remove the child from any social behaviors contributing to the disruption. Additionally, he found that many of his students at Summerset needed addressing respectfully, and they would be calmer. He found this to be disarming to students who would otherwise possibly be highly agitated.

In general, I noticed very few student-behavior issues that slowed down instruction and impaired the learning of other students. There was little downtime during classroom instruction. When I asked their principal if he received fewer office referrals than other parts of the school building, he responded, “Oh, for sure!” The band directors at Summerset were proficient at handling behaviors in their classroom. They did not necessarily need to escalate instances to the administration with office referrals.

Sometimes, the band directors would also have the students write a reflective paper about their behaviors. In addition to their behavioral interventions, both band directors use proximity to discourage disruptive student behaviors. The directors would frequently walk the room, standing by students. They would do this to either react to or prevent disruptions. Additionally, both band directors used their rapid class pacing to maintain engagement. I made several comments in my observations about how quiet the children were transitioning between activities and how they remained attentive when starting a new activity. Mr. Nix commented to me about this rapid pacing of the band classes:

> There is little time wasted in that band environment. More often than not, they’re probably running late because they’re trying to get as much in as they can before the bell

> rings, … and those kids are packing up and running out to go to the next class because they played right up to the bell.

During my classroom observations, I noted higher instances of on-task behaviors during the advanced classes and higher instances of off-task behaviors during the concert band classes. The off-task behaviors in the lower ability classes were few, but the band directors always addressed them. Seeing higher levels of engagement in advanced-placement classes was unsurprising given the literature about the association between academic achievement and student engagement. Lei, Cui, and Zhou (2018) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of the academic literature concerning this association. They reaffirmed the positive correlation that exists between student engagement and academic achievement. Thus, it was not surprising for the advanced classes to appear more engaged than the lower-level ones.

The band directors' fast instructional pacing, use of proximity, student support, and humorous personalities were prominent emergent trends in the data. For example, one student noted, "they keep us on track by making jokes and stuff and making it just a fun experience, so we don't get bored." Another student shared information regarding the band directors' use of proximity and their willingness to show emotional support to the students:

> Another way that our teachers keep us on task is by just walking around, checking if we're actually playing, asking us if we're doing okay to make sure that we're doing fine because if they like here that we're not like - not here, but if they see like we're not the normal way that they would see us, then they know something is up, and they'll try to check up on us.

Both band directors admitted that student engagement and participation had been more of a challenge since the COVID-19 pandemic. In March of 2020, the entire school district went to

virtual learning. Band directors in the school district had to quickly adjust to teaching a performance class using the Zoom conferencing software for the remainder of the school year. At the start of the 2020-2021 school year, all students in the district learned the entire first semester virtually. In October, the students had the choice to attend in-person learning or remain virtual students at home. The school district then tasked the teachers with teaching in-person and virtual students simultaneously. All students returned for face-to-face learning in the fall of 2021. As a result, many band students were virtual from March 2020 until August 2021.

Dr. Miller felt that the time students spent in virtual learning had several negative implications for his band classroom. These negative implications included student engagement and musical achievement. Since coming back to face-to-face school without virtual learning, he has had to reassess how he engages students and holds them accountable in his class. He described:

> I'm realizing the further we get in school that we're having to take more steps to make them accountable and work hard as a group and those kinds of things. Because the first test I gave them, a bunch of them, I'd called their name, and they'd go, "No." "What do you mean no? Isn't this the advanced band?"

This non-participation was new for him, especially with his advanced band kids. However, both band directors admitted they had to get creative to engage and assess the children after the COVID-19 pandemic. He explained that he increased his parent communication to increase accountability. For example, he would communicate with the parents more if the students did not perform the live playing tests.

Despite the band directors' struggles with returning the band program to a pre-pandemic state, my impression of the organization was that it was one with obvious student expectations.

Moreover, they voiced to me that they worked and practiced these expectations. It was evident in how the students entered the rooms, placed their bookbags, and kept their lockers neat. Mr. Nix recounted to me a story about when he observed clear performance expectations when he accompanied the band at LGPE:

> They do a great job at training kids. When I went to LGPE. I went to two of their three performances the last couple weeks. They stand, they go on the podium and all the kids get their instruments and either put them straight up and down or however they're supposed to hold them, like all in unison. I mean, it's fantastic.

The directors posted classroom expectations around the room as visual displays. Additionally, there was a sign reminding students only to touch their equipment and a poster indicating the mission and vision of Summerset Middle School. The school's mission read, "to reach, teach, and empower all students." The school's vision read, "to be a premier middle school that fosters and empowers life-long global leaders who are engaged as stakeholders in their diverse communities." Both the mission and the school's vision had English and Spanish translations.

There was also a poster in the band room outlining Summerset's positive behavioral interventions and support (PBIS) strategy. PBIS is "…an evidence-based three-tiered framework, developed by researchers at the University of Oregan, to improve and integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes. PBIS creates schools where all students succeed (Center on PBIS, 2022)." Summerset adopted this framework for its school culture and behavior management practices. This framework, which focused on positive rewards and interactions, was proactive rather than reactive regarding student discipline. The framework established school-wide expectations that structured individual classroom procedures and

routines. One of the first things a PBIS school did was communicate three simplified behavioral expectations to all children. This practice helped schools establish common expectations in clear, concise language. Every educator at Summerset used these expectations.

The staff at Summerset Middle School chose three simplified school-wide expectations. They were "Respect, Excellence, and Dedication." Since one of Summerset's school colors was red, they called their PBIS schoolwide-defined behavioral expectations the RED. The Summerset teachers used the PBIS Rewards app to implement their school-wide PBIS framework. The teachers could give school cash and incentive rewards for good behavior through the app. When a teacher observed a student exhibiting good behavior or character, the teacher went into the PBIS Rewards app and awarded them with school cash points. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students could access this app through an android device, an iOS device, or any computer web browser. The students could later redeem their school cash for classroom rewards or treats. On Fridays, the students at Summerset got an extra hour of recess that they earned through the behavior system. They called this reward Fresh-Air-Fridays. Mrs. Wolfe described the Fresh-Air-Fridays and school cash:

> … on Fridays usually, but throughout the year, there are different things they can purchase with their [school] cash. Like they can get a bag of chips or popcorn or various things. Every other Friday, we do Fresh Air Friday to get to the outside, and so they have to buy it with [school] cash. Certain teachers will have school stores where you can buy things like pencils or erasers or things with [school] cash, so that. Having those routines to come in, how to come in, how to get ready, how to pack up, all of that I guess contributes to the organization. The structure being consistent when a student disrupts a

class. They know they get a noise worksheet. They sit down and write on the noise worksheet.

During my interview with Mr. Nix, he brought up the importance of teacher-student relationships and how he viewed Dr. Miller's and Mrs. Wolfe's classrooms positively. His recount of very few behavioral disruptions and office referrals from the band directors was consistent with the calm, welcoming, and respectful atmosphere I observed in the band classes. Mr. Nix added to his experiences with Dr. Miller's classroom management by sharing:

> I mean, [classroom management is] part of instruction, but I would say classroom management and relationships with kids. I mean, he does a good job of building relationships with his students. Mrs. Wolfe as well. I think kids that are serious about band know that he cares about them or they care about him or about them and want them to succeed. I mean that band, of course, like most bands, I'm sure that's his passion. He pushes their ability to have them continue to excel and improve in band.

Stakeholder Communication

Technology emerged as the primary method of communication with the Summerset directors. Whenever I asked the interviewees to describe the communication practices of the band directors, technology became the focus of that portion of the conversation. For example, when I asked the principal, "in what ways have you observed the band director communicating with parents," Mr. Nix responded:

> What ways does he not? He uses *CTLS* Parent. He has, I think, a band Facebook page. He uses Remind. I think the band program has an Instagram page. They are very present on social media. They communicate in multiple ways with their families to try to make sure that they are getting information that they needed to them, and that's in addition to all the

> stuff that we already do in-house as far as our weekly newsletters, parents, and different communication tools. Because they put their information on there too. So, I mean, if there's a band parent that says that they don't get information from the band program, that's usually on them because they saturate parents with information.

Mr. Nix had an efficient way of involving the school staff in communicating with parents. The school district provided all staff and students with a subscription to *Microsoft 365*. He used the live *Word* document feature for teachers to provide input in a weekly letter sent to parents. Dr. Miller briefly described this process to me:

> Our principal just started something this year. Every Thursday, we have to tell him what we're going to be doing in our class next week, and then he sends it out to every parent. … He gives us live access to a *Word* doc, and you just go in your spot, and you type what you're going to do, that way, parents will know what's coming up. "There will be a test on this," that kind of thing. I think that's been really good, too. I mean he's trying to reach parents, that's for sure.

CTLS Parent is a website for parents hosted by the Carter County School District. It is a parent portal of the Carter Teaching and Learning System platform for parents. With *CTLS* Parent parents could send and receive email messages from their students' teachers. They could also see their students' assignment details and grades. The parent interviewee, Mrs. Mourdock, was also the school PTA president. Additionally, she had several students in the Summerset band program. She told me that she preferred communication through *CTLS* because the messages sent alerts on her phone. She said:

> I like *CTLS*. Emails can get lost in the shuffle of everything coming in your inbox, but at least through *CTLS*, and I have the app, I'll always get those messages and know for a fact that I won't miss them or overlook them because they're all coming from *CTLS*.

Mrs. Wolfe described why she preferred to communicate through *CTLS*:

> Most of my communication now is through Carter County's *CTLS* Parent. That's been a nice new tool. It auto-translates, so for all our parents that don't speak English, I can type my message, and it'll translate it to the language of their choice, so that's been nice. Phone calls, occasionally I make some phone calls to parents, but it's mostly through that *CTLS* Parent.

Dr. Miller also echoed this sentiment. He said he used *CTLS* more because he felt the parents responded more often. He primarily used *CTLS* and *Remind101* for communication.

Remind101 is an app used by many school and athletic organizations. Students do not need the *Remind101* app to receive messages from it. They can enroll by using the text feature on their phones. Organization leaders can send mass group messages to every member via text messages. Dr. Miller used a texting service where the band program had to pay per text. When *Remind101* came out, it did the same thing, but for free. He believed that he was an early adopter of the app. He chuckled, telling me an anecdote about when he first started using *Remind101* for most of his communication:

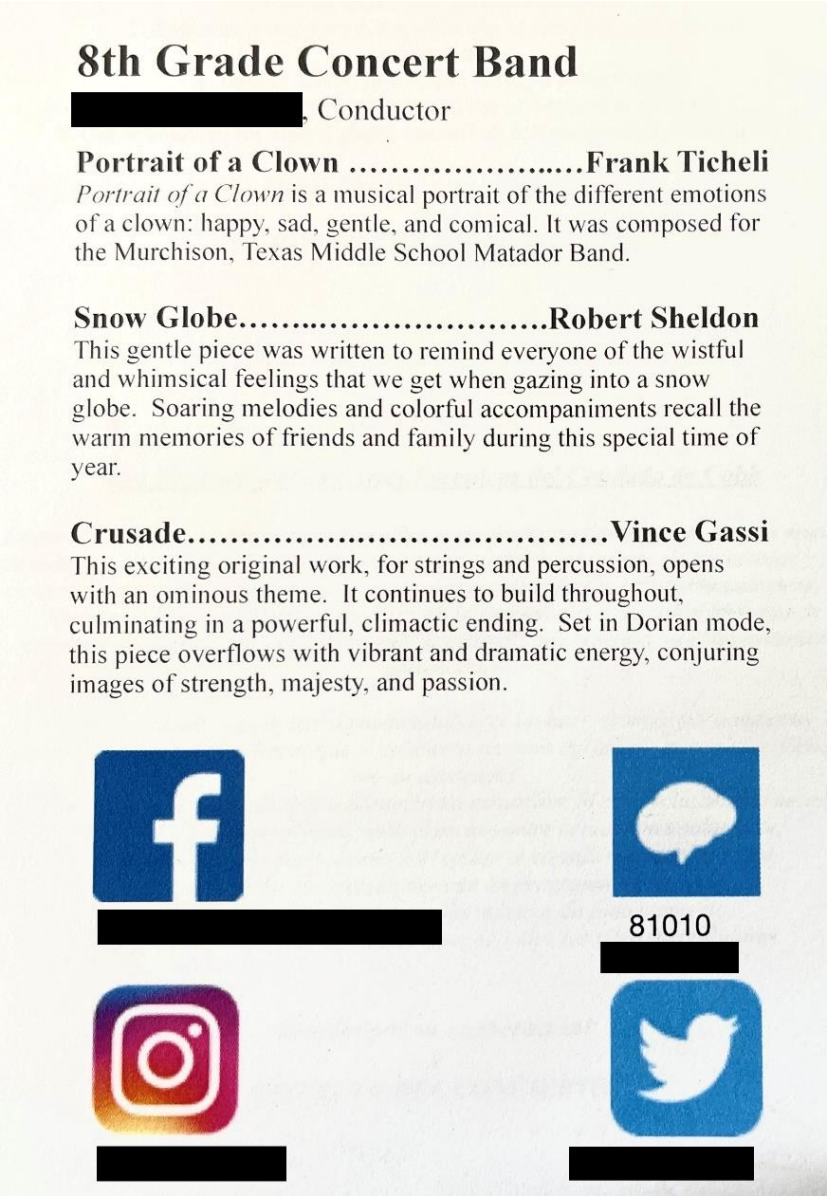
> … [the *Remind101* staff] texted and they said, "You're one of the top texting teachers in the state of Georgia. You send more texts than almost anybody. What are you doing?"

In addition to communicating through *CTLS* Parent and *Remind101*, the band had an active social media presence. The band program had a Facebook page, an Instagram account, and a Twitter account. Mrs. Wolfe told me that Dr. Miller maintained the Summerset band website

and the social media accounts. The social media accounts that Dr. Miller kept up with were Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. While he did not use Facebook as much as he used it in the past, he felt it was helpful to the parents. Dr. Miller said most of them used Facebook instead of the other social media sites. However, he thought Instagram was used more by his students. He

Figure 7

Summerset 8th Grade Band Concert Band Program from December 5th, 2019



8th Grade Concert Band

[redacted], Conductor

Portrait of a Clown .....Frank Ticheli

Portrait of a Clown is a musical portrait of the different emotions of a clown: happy, sad, gentle, and comical. It was composed for the Murchison, Texas Middle School Matador Band.

Snow Globe.....Robert Sheldon

This gentle piece was written to remind everyone of the wistful and whimsical feelings that we get when gazing into a snow globe. Soaring melodies and colorful accompaniments recall the warm memories of friends and family during this special time of year.

Crusade.....Vince Gassi

This exciting original work, for strings and percussion, opens with an ominous theme. It continues to build throughout, culminating in a powerful, climactic ending. Set in Dorian mode, this piece overflows with vibrant and dramatic energy, conjuring images of strength, majesty, and passion.

[redacted]

81010 [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

told the students that he would never follow them or friend them from the Summerset Band Facebook and Instagram accounts. When going through Summerset's concert programs from the previous years, I noticed that occasionally Dr. Miller would publish his various social media accounts (Figure 7). He also had links to these accounts on his Summerset Band website. On these social media accounts, there was evidence of Dr. Miller using the mediums to communicate, recruit, advertise for high school events, fundraise, and highlight the students' achievements. Dr. Miller admittedly did not use the Facebook account as often. Still, you can see nearly identical feeds on Instagram and the band's Twitter account. These accounts were active, especially during the March LGPE adjudication season.

Ethnic and Cultural Inclusiveness

An unexpected trend from the data analysis was the band directors' efforts to be ethnically and culturally inclusive. The two band directors at Summerset were white, while only five percent of the student body is white. Contrastingly, sixty percent of the student body identified as Hispanic. The school's Latinx population is the most predominant group in the school. There were several instances where the directors' exhibited understanding and compassion for their large Latinx student population. Dr. Miller frequently mentioned how they actively tried to relate to their students and made accommodations for parents who were non-English speakers. He said he wished he had learned Spanish when he was a younger teacher in Orlando:

> I'm kicking my fanny, but I didn't learn Spanish back when I had a chance. I took one year of it in high school then I had to — when I was at West Ridge, the ESOL teacher

taught a conversational Spanish class. I had nothing going on in my life at that time, and three other teachers went and said, “Come with us.” I’m like, “No.” I wish I had.

When he made phone calls home, he mentioned that it was not uncommon for the parents to insist on speaking with an older sibling. This request was because older siblings were often more fluent in English than their parents. However, he felt that the parents generally are supportive when he called about discipline concerns. He said:

> I really feel like a lot of our parents want better for their kids, especially families from Central and South America. They want better for their kids, and they will do what they can to help them. When you make a phone call, you’ll know, “Yes, we’ll talk to them. We’ll take care of it.”

Mr. Nix felt a language barrier challenged some of his staff, the students, and the parents. The school had a large cohort of *English to Speakers of Other Languages* (ESOL). This term denotes students who are learning English as their second language. ESOL students frequently do not speak English at home, which can slow the pace of learning in school. Despite having a large ESOL population, Mr. Nix felt Dr. Miller understood their community well. He shared:

> [Dr. Miller is] always looking to do some different things that a number of years ago, he got a group of kids together to do like a little mariachi band thing with our Hispanic kids, which I think was neat because that shows he understands our community and wants to relate to them and find something they’re interested in.

Additionally, he remarked:

> [Dr. Miller is] pretty in tune with his kids and what they need no matter what, whether it's … something’s going on and talking to the counselors about it, to maybe checking with them.

Figure 8

Summerset 6th Grade Band Program from May 10th, 2018

From the Cobb County Performing Arts Department

We are making an effort to teach our students about good audience manners. Audience manners are based upon respect for the performers and for others in the audience and are nothing more than expressions of courtesy. Unfortunately, young people in today's society are seldom exposed to formal concert/performance situations and are often not aware of these standards for appropriate behavior.

By following these guidelines, you can set a proper example for our students and in doing so make the concert/performance more enjoyable for all. Thank you for your assistance.

1. Avoid entering or leaving the room during a performance. If absolutely necessary to do so, please move only between numbers.
2. Applause is welcomed, but whistling or cheering is considered inappropriate.
3. Talking should be avoided during a performance
4. Attention should be directed to the performers at all times.
5. Out of courtesy for others, please turn off all cell phones and mobile devices.

Thank You for Your Cooperation
and
ENJOYING THE PERFORMANCE!

¡Aviso especial!

Del Departamento de Artes Escénicas del Condado de Cobb

Estamos haciendo un esfuerzo para enseñar a nuestros estudiantes sobre buenos modales de audiencia. Las costumbres de la audiencia se basan en el respeto de los artistas y para otros en la audiencia y no son más que expresiones de cortesía. Desafortunadamente, los jóvenes de la sociedad actual rara vez están expuestos a situaciones formales de concierto ya menudo no son conscientes de estos estándares para un comportamiento apropiado.

Siguiendo estas pautas, usted puede establecer un buen ejemplo para nuestros estudiantes y al hacerlo, hacer que el concierto sea más agradable para todos. Gracias por su asistencia.

1. Evite entrar o salir de del teatro durante una actuación. Si es absolutamente necesario hacerlo, por favor, salga durante el receso entre actuaciones solamente.
2. Puede aplaudir, pero el pitar o el gritar se consideran inapropiados.
3. Hablar debe ser evitado durante un programa o concierto.
4. La atención debe dirigirse a los músicos en todo momento.
5. Por cortesía de otros, por favor apague todos los teléfonos celulares.

Gracias por su cooperación!
y
DISFRUTE DEL CONCIERTO!

Mrs. Wolfe told me a new helpful feature of the *CTLS* platform was that it automatically translates texts into different languages. She said, "I can type my message, and it'll translate it to the language of their choice, so that's been nice." In addition to *CTLS*, the band directors often sent letters home. They sent letters home in English and Spanish when they had upcoming events. She also mentioned that they had translators available for parent-teacher conferences. Additionally, when the band hosted its annual instrument try-out night in the fall, they had a translator available from the school district.

Dr. Miller talked to me about his experience addressing discipline with Latinx boys. He found many preferred their teachers to address them quietly and respectfully. In one of his many displays of him making Latinx cultural considerations, he recounted:

> I found the guys – a lot of the guys in Central and South America, those families, some of those guys are the adult male in their house, so if I go man-to-man to them instead of me pointing down to them because they're thinking, "At home I make decisions" – and this is something that a lot of our teachers have talked about over the years, so I try to talk to them man-to-man, "Look, dude. This is what needs to happen. Are you okay? What's going on? Can I help," and usually I get to the bottom of the stuff when they're not with their peers trying to have to be strong and not be put down by the teacher or corrected by the teacher.

I observed an example of this behavioral intervention in a concert band class. Mrs. Wolfe was on the podium leading instruction when Dr. Miller asked for a male band student to come with him to the side of the room. Mrs. Wolfe's teaching was not stopped or interrupted. Dr. Miller then lowered himself and quietly talked to the student. The interaction was very discreet and did not attract the attention of the other students.

Many of the artifacts I collected in my fieldwork consisted of concert programs. They were printed in English and Spanish. *Figure 8* shows the concert etiquette speech printed in English and Spanish in a Summerset band concert program. Additionally, when the students gave these announcements, they had a Spanish translator at the concert for the parents. There was evidence of the students performing ethnically Hispanic music in almost every concert program. Some of the Latinx concert pieces and exercises out of method books performed on Summerset Band Concerts from 2015 to 2022 were:

- *El Toro* – from *Band Expression Book 1,* Robert W. Smith and Michael Story
- *Arre, Mi Burrito* – from *Band Expression Book 1,* Robert W. Smith and Michael Story
- *Los Pollitos* – from *Band Expression Book 1,* Robert W. Smith and Michael Story
- *El Camino Mariachi* – from *Tradition of Excellence Book 1,* Bruce Pearson and Ryan Nowlin
- *Mexican Fiesta,* John Moss
- *Guantanamera,* Victor Lopez
- *Dia de los Muertos,* Michael Story
- *De Colores,* Traditional, arranged by Douglas E. Wagner
- *Las Mañanitas,* Victor Lopez
- *Under the Sea,* Alen Menken, arranged by John Higgins
- *The Big Mambo,* Timothy Loest
- *Remember Me* (*from Coco*), Robert Lopez and Kristen Anderson-Lopez, arranged by Johnnie Vinson
- *Solamente una Vez,* Agustin Lara, arranged by Robert Longfield
- *The Banana Boat Song,* Jamaican Folk Song, arranged by Ryan Nowlin

- *Ritmos de la Tierra,* Vitoriano Valencia
- *Blue Orchid,* William Owens

In the program from May 14th, 2018, the band directors printed the following program notes from *Remember Me* (*from Coco*):

> This work from the Disney/Pixar movie "Coco" speaks to the importance of our families and friends. We consider ourselves fortunate to make music with our students. Parents, thank you for sharing your child with us.

These program notes indicated the directors' compassion and desire to connect with the Latinx community members.

One of the pieces the eighth-grade symphonic band performed was *Ritmos de la Tierra.* The students mentioned they enjoyed this piece in the focus group. Columbian composer Vitoriano Valencia wrote it. Dr. Miller had to order this piece of music straight from the publisher's website, based out of Bogotá, Columbia. With a large population of Latinx children, he was constantly looking for music that was culturally relevant to them. After being frustrated with the limited options of concert band music for young bands from large publishers in the United States, he began looking elsewhere. During our interview, he recounted finding *Ritmos de la Tierra*:

> I've been looking for music from Latin America, Central South America where all these kids' families are from, and some of these kids are from. I just wanted to play something with written by somebody that has a name like theirs and songs that sound like what they want to hear and man, it was killing me. The stuff I was finding out. I worked all the summer of 2019 and the summer of 2020; just all the websites and different band records listed, all that kind of stuff. Finally, this year, I found a set of songs from 2014 that Victor

> Llamos Valencia wrote. He's in Bogotá, Columbia. It's a set of 10 songs, and it cost about 110,000 or was it 200,000.00 pesos? Which sent finance into a tailspin on that credit card, but two or three of the songs were great, too. One of them is a cumbia. I've been wanting to do them. I'm making myself hold back because I want to get some of those foundational rhythms in place. So, I gave it to them last week and had them listen to it.

I did not expect to record as many observations about cultural inclusiveness as I did. In addition to this inclusiveness, the band directors exhibited efforts to build a sense of community with their band program. They made efforts to develop high-character students, establish a safe classroom environment, manage classroom expectations, communicate with their community, and be culturally inclusive. As a result, Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe established the Summerset Band program as a welcoming and inclusive community for all children.

The data collection process revealed *competency*, *autonomy*, and *relatedness* themes. Throughout chapter four, I communicated my findings relevant to Self-determination Theory. First, my narrative analysis of *competency* described the organizational structure and the pedagogy of the Summerset band program. The observations revealed the systems that potentially aid musical competency among the Summerset band students. These systems included methods for overcoming high-poverty challenges, program organization, and band director pedagogy. Next, The section on *autonomy* described the motivational scaffolding of the Summerset band program. I explained the band directors' use of rewards for internalizing student motivations. Additionally, I discussed features of the band classroom that encouraged student agency. Finally, in the last section of chapter four, I described *relatedness* in the Summerset band. I discussed the band program's many features that contribute to its welcoming community.

In chapter five, I categorized the findings according to Silva et al.'s (2014) suggestions of practical SDT applications for influencing behavioral change. Additionally, I linked these suggestions to relevant research and discussed this study's key findings.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The band program at Summerset Middle School was a rare case. Nevertheless, its history of superior ratings while being a high-poverty school made it a fascinating subject for a qualitative inquiry. The interviews, classroom observations, and artifact collection provided rich data that shed light on the lived experiences of the people associated with the high-achieving program. In addition, the band directors' experience and tenure certainly added to the success of the band program. Their pedagogy and classroom environment should be an example for other band educators to follow. Ultimately, Self-determination Theory and scaffolding recommendations by Silva et al. (2014) provided a valuable lens for data analysis. The inner constructs of *competence*, *autonomy,* and *relatedness* allowed me to consolidate the data into these three themes.

Competence

Silva et al. (2014) made four recommendations to scaffold competence from Self-determination Theory. Those four recommendations are clarity of expectations, optimal challenge, feedback, and skills training. These recommendations provide insight into how the band directors at Summerset provided structure to satisfy the psychological needs outlined in SDT. The first recommendation, *clarity of expectations* in addition to *high expectations,* is also relevant to research on effective practices in a band classroom (Diesler, 2011; Miksza et al., 2010; Paulekar, 2014; Shanley, 2020). Miksza et al. (2010) asked Colorado band directors to rank personal character traits of highly effective band directors. They ranked "maintain high musical standards" as the highest trait.

High, clear personal and musical expectations permeated the band program at Summerset Middle School. The students exhibited high personal expectations in how they entered the room,

organized their belongings, behaved in class, and positively supported their peers. The band directors had classroom expectations posted on visual displays throughout the facilities. Additionally, the school's PBIS framework aids in simplifying behavioral expectations clearly and efficiently. High musical expectations are apparent in the program's history of superior ratings and the difficulty of the literature the students perform. Mr. Nix frequently talked about the band directors' expectations. Dr. Miller was eager to discuss his procedural expectations, while Mrs. Wolfe clearly stated they have similar teaching styles and expectations. Finally, my interviewee parent, Mrs. Mourdock, commented the band directors "do a great job at training kids."

The band directors provided evidence they offered optimal challenges to their students. Their instructional practices align with Georgia's Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) evaluation system regarding an academically challenging environment. TKES is a system that the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) uses to evaluate teachers, provide feedback, and provide a framework for professional development (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). School administrators use the *Teacher Assessment on Performance Standards* (TAPS) from the TKES system as the rubric to evaluate teacher effectiveness. Standard eight from the TAPS rubric is *Academically Challenging Environment.* This standard has three subdomains: academic rigor, student motivation and engagement, and high expectations. GaDOE has a list of sample indicators that teachers provide an academically challenging environment on their website. The indicators are:

- Maximizes instructional time.
- Conveys the message that mistakes should be embraced as a valuable part of learning.

- Encourages productivity by providing students with appropriately challenging and relevant material and assignments.
- Provides transitions that minimize loss of instructional time.
- Communicates high, but reasonable, expectations for student learning.
- Provides academic rigor, encourages critical and creative thinking, and pushes students to achieve goals
- Encourages students to explore new ideas and take academic risks (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.).

The academically challenging environment indicators were evident during my time at Summerset. “Maximizes instructional time” is an indicator that is especially relevant to effective teaching in a band classroom. Given the research literature on instructional time in the band classroom (Goolsby, 1996, 1997; Pontious, 1982), band directors who minimize verbal instruction are more experienced and effective educators. During the Summerset band rehearsals, the verbal instructions were quick and concise. This brevity was especially true with the warm-ups. Dr. Miller’s frequent short reminders like “balance” and “start together” took precedence over metacognitive questioning, which occurred later in the rehearsal. Additionally, when the band directors transitioned activities, they did this quickly. My field notes recorded that the directors maintained student engagement during activity transitions.

Both directors talked extensively about the importance of warm-ups. They both indicated that the warm-ups were the most crucial rehearsal component. This attitude is consistent with previous research (Butler et al., 2007; Goolsby, 1997; Juchniewicz et al., 2014). Effective band directors value spending time on music fundamentals. Additionally, they value developing

ensemble tone production. When Mrs. Wolfe told me her priority was tone quality. She explained:

> We try to focus when we're doing the long tones on bettering the tone quality that they're producing and the brass support, and just focus. We tell them a lot like, "Most important thing at all times is playing with a good sound." We kind of drill that into them, like always above everything else, just playing with a good sound.

Metacognitive questioning was a common instructional technique observed in the band rehearsals. In addition, it was a frequent feedback method provided by the band directors. An extensive body of literature connects metacognitive questioning prompts to effective teaching practices (Dignath & Büttner, 2008; Dignath, Büttner, & Langfeldt, 2008; Hattie, Biggs, & Purdie, 1996). I observed both directors using many prompts to encourage critical thought with their students. Mrs. Wolfe described a practice that was a helpful instructional technique. She explained, "Sometimes we'll intentionally have them play it wrong so they can hear what that sounds like, and they kind of hone it in and fix it." The constant assessment of feedback and practice is common in a band classroom, especially at Summerset. Perhaps this is why their principal, Mr. Nix, considers music teachers masters of formative instruction.

Autonomy

The band directors encouraged autonomy at Summerset Middle School in several ways. The four ways to encourage autonomy through structure are choice, relevance, respect, and the avoidance of control. One way to build autonomously motivated learners is to provide a structure for *agency*. *Agency* is an individual's "power to originate actions for given purposes." (Bandura, 2001, p. 6). When students have a choice in their learning, they have agency. Research supports

that student agency positively affects classroom performance (Lindgren & McDaniel, 2012; Pym & Kapp, 2013; Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

Perhaps the most obvious example of providing a structure to encourage agency is when the directors involved the students in the repertoire selection. This choice allowed the students to feel a sense of control in their music education. Bonneville-Roussy et al. (2020) claim this student-directed learning can satisfy the psychological need for autonomy. This satisfaction is consistent with Self-determination theory. Additionally, when students have agency in a music classroom, their classroom decision-making can influence musical independence (Weidner, 2015).

There was an effort by the band directors to make the content and activities relevant to the students. Relevance is one of the autonomy support mechanisms described by Silva et al. (2014). For example, when Mrs. Wolfe frequently displayed YouTube videos for the students, she attempted to be relevant to them. This relevance would encourage the students to internalize their motivations for effort. Additionally, when Dr. Miller frequently described each performance's importance, he attempted to relate to the students' sense of purpose.

Another example of Dr. Miller scaffolding autonomy to the children was his show of respect for children. Most noticeably, he showed a great deal of concern when he handled discipline issues with the children. His experience in the classroom taught him how to address boys to encourage behavioral change respectfully. He addressed them privately and in a tone that was not condescending or judgmental. Instead, he exhibited compassion and understanding with this act. After he reasoned with a boy, the child would then make the autonomous decision to adjust their behaviors. This show of respect provides students with the support to later make autonomous yet prosocial changes.

Relatedness

Band community was one of my original emergent themes before adapting it to *relatedness* due to my reiterative data review. I observed the band directors' efforts to build a sense of community to be at the forefront of their decisions. Parent interviews are an excellent way to understand this sense of community in a qualitative inquiry of lived experiences. The parent interview with Mrs. Mourdock was information-rich and informative. However, I would have liked to meet with more parents.

I intended the interview protocol to be a focus-group interview; however, I could only get one parent to commit to the interview. This difficulty in scheduling an interview may indicate the lack of parental support for music programs consistent with the literature (Bailey, 2018; Deisler, 2011; Perrine, 2016; Spier, 2012). However, the band directors repeatedly acknowledged that they had great relationships with their parents; they had difficulty getting them to donate their time.

While the band directors at Summerset acknowledged a lack of parental engagement with their program, they described their community members with compassion and empathy. Educators must understand several factors that prevent parents in low-income communities from engaging and being visible in schools. Parents in low-income communities often face issues with childcare, time, transportation, and job schedules that make attending school events challenging compared to families with more financial resources (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009; Green et al., 2007, Griffiths-Prince, 2009). Additionally, if community members are single parents, this status reduces parents' likelihood of involvement in their child's school (Arnold et al., 2008).

Due to a lack of formal education, there may also be great cultural differences among some community members' expectations about a school's role and how to support children at

school (Griffith-Prince, 2009). However, parents who seem less involved with their children at school are often very engaged with their students at home (Herrold & O'Donnell, 2008; Ryan et al., 2010; Sy et al., 2007). They commonly have high behavioral expectations for their children and expect them to graduate. This notion is consistent with Dr. Miller's description of the parents after calling home. He voiced parents would frequently support him when addressing discipline and academic concerns with them.

Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe made a conscious effort to include and support the parents when they could. This effort supports Epstein's (2018) recommendation that some parents may need assistance supporting their children at school. In response to this awareness, the band directors at Summerset scheduled events during accommodating times. Additionally, they communicated in multiple languages and among numerous mediums. Finally, they worked diligently to relate to their families by establishing their program as an essential fixture in their community and school.

After being around the band directors throughout my fieldwork, I realized that Dr. Miller was an institution in the building and community. After seventeen years at the school, he was crucial to the school's day-to-day operations. His list of responsibilities went far beyond just being the band director at the school. One of the first things Mrs. Wolfe said to me was, "Lance does so much for this school." His extra responsibilities included managing the auditorium, connections department head, and school webmaster. Mrs. Wolfe also remarked about the high energy he had during school days.

Whenever I spent time with him, he would constantly run between different school-related tasks when not in rehearsals. For example, he would discuss classroom pedagogy with me during his planning while simultaneously updating the school website. One class period, while

Mrs. Wolfe was teaching in the band room, he spent lowering the house lights in the auditorium. He was adjusting the angles and changing out lens filters. He then gave me a quick tutorial on his auditorium's light panel since my school has the same model.

I was not surprised when band parent Mrs. Mourdock shared how one of Dr. Miller's responsibilities was being a DJ for the school dances. I knew of a litany of his non-band responsibilities by that time. She told me:

> Dr. Miller not only teaches band, but he's also our DJ for our dances and things of that nature. So, he connects with the kids on those kinds of levels also, still musically related, but not teaching the music but playing music for them.

Mrs. Mourdock and I chuckled when talking about this, but we both agreed he does much for the school.

Dr. Miller's experience and long seventeen-year tenure at the school was not typical for a high-poverty school (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Rosenholtz, 1985; Scafidi et al., 2007), especially considering his school was one in the South with a high minority population (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). As a thirty-three-year veteran, he was a master teacher. Therefore, it was not surprising to see him effortlessly lead children in band rehearsals, given the research literature's association between teacher experience and student achievement (Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Podolsky et al., 2019). He never appeared overwhelmed or stressed while leading children through band rehearsals or completing many of his other job responsibilities.

This experience contributed to the calm demeanor of the classroom that his students described. During my semi-structured interview with the student focus group, I felt pressed to ask the students a follow-up question. I asked if the students felt band rehearsals were low stress.

The students answered with a resounding “yes.” I felt pressed to ask this question because the calmness of the class and the low-stress environment appeared to be a reoccurring theme. A low-stress environment in a high-poverty school is crucial because of the relevant literature about children in poverty who experience the lasting adverse effects of high-stress households (Evans & English, 2002).

Although he never said it bluntly, I felt Dr. Miller loved Summerset and his job. As someone who is so close to retirement, Dr. Miller never came across as jaded, tired, or complacent. He was the opposite. He was genuinely excited about the work he was doing. As a life-long learner, our conversations often reverted to his ideas for improving his band program and self-growth. As one of his middle school band colleagues in the school district, he would sometimes bounce ideas off me and ask for my opinions. I was taken aback by this, especially considering I had about half the experience Dr. Miller had at teaching middle school band. I observed him be a band director with a wealth of knowledge, endless energy, and great humility.

Conclusion

An analysis examining how some band directors succeed in challenging educational environments can help educators, regardless of their school’s socioeconomic setting. Since there is little research investigating the phenomenon of high-achieving band programs in high-poverty schools, this is a timely topic. Additionally, high-performing band programs in high-poverty schools can be an area of interest for teacher preparation programs. Many young in-service teachers come from backgrounds unlike schools where they start their careers. As children, they frequently had access to private lessons, and their schools had successful performing ensembles. As a result, many may not have experience with a school like Summerset Middle School until their initial job placement. Our profession needs to observe and celebrate better the achievements

of directors who work tirelessly in challenging situations. Experience with a program like theirs through field observations or student teaching placements would be invaluable to a new in-service teacher. Dr. Miller and Mrs. Wolfe exemplify the types of directors who have much to offer our field.

Initially, I did not intend to use Self-determination Theory as a framework to organize the data. Instead, it emerged organically from the data. By the time I established the three themes, they fit within the three constructs of the theory. The band directors' structures for competency, autonomy, and relatedness were prominent features in their program. Using SDT for data analysis provides enough evidence that the educators scaffold student internalizations of motivation. Ultimately, this scaffolding is a crucial feature of their high-performing program.

Additionally, Self-determination Theory is a timely topic in music education research. Only recently have music educators found interest in this theory. There are many applications where researchers can use SDT as a framework for their analysis. For example, a quantitative study could emerge from the implications of this one. A researcher could identify high-performing high-poverty band programs and survey the students with a Likert-type questionnaire derived from SDT.

There are five key observations upon observing the band director program and analyzing the data through the lens of SDT. These key observations exist after viewing the data through the lens of Self-determination theory and the three themes. These observations are: (a) a positive classroom environment, (b) an effort to establish student autonomy, (c) a long band director tenure, (d) local school and district support, and (e) an effort to understand and accommodate the local community.

Consistent with SDT, “an effort to establish student autonomy” is a prominent theme. The band directors actively attempted to include the students in their decision-making about repertoire selection. Additionally, the band directors’ compassion and respect for their students grounds this effort. The classroom environment was calm, orderly, and respectful of the students. The band directors consistently spoke to the students with empathy while maintaining a strong teaching presence.

Band director tenure is a unique feature of high-poverty schools. My initial participant selection process highlighted the difficulty in identifying high-achieving band directors who spent at least five years working at their high-poverty schools. Teacher turnover is a concern for these schools. Implications from this research are that there should be better efforts to retain band directors teaching in high-poverty situations. Local schools and their school districts could implement support systems grounded in SDT to help young band directors stay motivated in positions that may be difficult. For example, one effort could be a mentorship program. A mentorship program could guide band directors early in their careers and help them relate to the larger music education community.

Perhaps a unique feature of this high-poverty school band program was the amount of financial support it received. They were fortunate to be in the Carter County School District, which allocates approximately $18,000.00 U.S. dollars annually to its middle school bands. This financial support contradicts the research about funding schools in high-poverty communities. Their funds, in addition to their extensive inventory, may add to their success. Their funding situation was undoubtedly a privilege. Implications from this observation include funding and support for school band programs. Future research could analyze funding data from band programs of socio-economically different communities.

The band directors' efforts to understand and accommodate their community were a prominent emergent trend. Perhaps most surprising was their efforts to relate to their large Latinx population. The band directors printed communications in Spanish, frequently had translators, prioritized performing Latinx music, and made cultural considerations when communicating with the children. They were quick to talk about these accommodations. Additionally, they actively accommodated the parents, considering the parents' financial situations. They worked on fundraising and providing school-owned instruments and supplies. These accommodations demonstrated a great understanding and compassion for the band directors' community. Their principal highlighted this compassion when he said, "he understands our community and wants to relate to them."

Yin (2018) advised researchers to be careful about making generalizations from case studies, but their qualitative findings can have implications for future research. This investigation could inform future research about teacher preparation programs for preservice educators who might start their careers at high-poverty schools. Best practices for curriculum design, classroom management, and pedagogy could emerge by investigating high-achieving band programs at high-poverty schools. Additionally, SDT is a powerful lens to evaluate how music teachers might scaffold behavioral change to encourage positive, internalized student motivations. Future researchers interested in the high-poverty high-performing music program phenomenon may be interested in expanding the study to multiple cases or conducting a replicate study with different regional scope. I found the southeastern United States the best setting for my research because of my positionality and the historical context in which high-poverty schools exist in the south. However, an interesting study might investigate high-achieving-high-poverty band programs in different United States regions like the Midwest or Texas.

Frequently, the image of high-achieving band programs is one of suburban, predominantly white students even though achieving band programs in high-poverty schools exist. Shedding light on such excellent programs adds to the image of high-achieving programs in the band activity. Identifying and implementing instructional and organizational practices could be a positive step toward closing the achievement gap for bands in high-poverty schools. Additionally, a band director's effort to build autonomous musicians with internalized motivations could have positive implications for closing achievement gaps.

Self-determination theory is a valuable tool for understanding student motivations and how to implement structured support to influence behavioral change. I included this effort to build autonomous musicians in this study's key observations with band director tenure, creating a positive classroom environment, local school and district support, and an effort to understand and accommodate the local community. Data collected through observations of a band program's instructional and organizational procedures analyzed through the lens of SDT provided insight into a high-performing, high-poverty band program.

Many of the research's findings appear to be general best practice solutions for band education. Many successful band educators may incorporate these suggestions regardless of their community's SES level. This study's key observations outline some potential differences, however. This program was very privileged with its instructional funds from the school district. Many bands in high-poverty areas do not have this access. However, this research highlights what is possible when quality, seasoned band directors establish a long tenure at their schools and have the financial support of their district.

The band program at Summerset is unique, and its band directors are fantastic. It should be a model program for policymaking and teacher professional development. Unique features of

these participant band directors are their positive classroom environments, their efforts to encourage student autonomy, and their desire to understand and accommodate their school's community. Their willingness to accommodate their students and community emanates from their cultural reflexiveness. Educators should strive to examine their cultural positionality against their community. Even if the educator is of the same ethnic background as their students, there still may be cultural differences between generations.

Finally, in education, we often discuss meeting children where they are. We talk about this process concerning academic rigor. However, meeting children where they are is not exclusively a feature of academic rigor. Culturally reflexive educators are relatable and make children feel included in the classroom environment. They meet children where they are from a cultural standpoint. This practice is also a characteristic of an empathetic educator who is student-centered. *Relatedness* is the psychological need to belong to a group (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Reflexiveness and inclusiveness can create a powerful sense of relatedness in a classroom for all learners.

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Appendix A

Band Director Interview Protocol

Thank you very much for agreeing to contribute to this study. I appreciate you investing your valuable time in me and this study.

Did you receive the consent and audio consent forms I sent you? Did you have chance to read them? If not, please take a moment to read them now. Do you have any questions for me regarding the consent forms? By your continued participation, I will consider you to be consenting to the study and the recording of the conversation we are about to have. Are you ready to continue?

(Wait for an answer.) lf no: If you do not agree to the consent forms, our conversation is concluded. Thank you for your time.

(lf yes, continue.)

The purpose of this interview is to explore your instructional and organizational procedures that you use in your classroom. You were chosen for this interview because you teach in a high-poverty school and your proven track record for leading bands to superior adjudication ratings.

(BEGIN RECORDING)

1. Can you please state your name?
2. What is your educational background and work experience?
    a. How long have you been in your current position?
3. Do you feel that teaching at a high-poverty school poses any unique challenges?
    a. In what ways do you address the challenges of teaching at a high-poverty school?
4. Are you able to structure the classes you teach during the day?
    a. If so, why did you structure the classes the way you did?
5. How do you describe your classroom management style?
    a. Are there any specific classroom management procedures or routines in your band room?
6. What instruments do you start your beginners on?
    a. What is your rationale for this?
7. In what ways do you communicate with parents?
    a. How often do you feel you communicate with parents?
8. Do you use the web or social media to communicate with your band program's stakeholders?
    a. If so, which platforms do you use?
9. In what ways do you hold children accountable with grades?
10. Do you have playing tests?
    a. If so, can you please describe the types of playing tests and how often you do them?

11. How would you describe your use of instructional time during a typical rehearsal with a group you are taking to festival adjudication?
12. What aspects of a band rehearsal do you believe to be the most important?
13. What method books do you use in your curriculum?
    a. Are there any other curriculum materials that you use?
14. What is your process for repertoire selection?
15. In what ways do you add rigor to the curriculum?
16. How would you describe your interactions with students during the band rehearsals?
17. How would you describe your interactions with students outside of band rehearsals?
18. In what ways do you motivate your students?
19. Do you believe that it is important to foster a sense of community in your band program?
    a. If so, in what ways do you encourage this?
20. Are there any instructional strategies that you believe help create an environment that allows high-level music-making?
21. Are there any organizational strategies that you believe help create an environment that allows high-level music-making?
22. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?
23. Do you have any questions for me?
24. If needed, would it be permissible for me to contact you for follow-up questions or clarifications?

Thank you very much for conducting this interview. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about anything, and thank you for your willingness to share your perspectives with me.

Appendix B

Parent Interview Protocol

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this focus-group interview. You were selected to participate in the focus group interviews because your child's band directors felt you would have much to contribute to our conversation.

I would like to confirm that you received and completed the Consent Form and Audio Release Form.

Everything you say here will remain confidential. This means I will not release your name(s) with any identifying information unless you give me permission. I will ask you a few questions about your child's band class and band director for this group interview. Please keep in mind there are no wrong answers.

Before we begin, I have a few ground rules about our group interview:

1. Please actively participate in our discussion
2. Try not talk over anyone or cut anyone off
3. Treat everyone with respect
4. Please try to keep conversations to the present topic

Please be mindful that we have a limited amount of time. At any point, I may interrupt to keep our group discussion on track. If at any time you do not wish to continue with the interview,

you may tell me and be excused from the group. At this time, do you have any questions about this group discussion?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

Introductory Questions:

1. *Could you please tell me what grade your child is in and what instrument they play?*

Transition Questions:

2. *Why did your family choose to get involved in the band program?*
3. *Did your family or child ever consider quitting the band? If so, what convinced you or your child to continue?*
4. *I would like to talk to you about what it is like to be a band parent. First, please take a moment to reflect on what it is like being a band parent at your school and we will take turns sharing our thoughts with the group.*

Key Question-Research Question 2: How do the emergent themes relate to Self-determination Theory?

5. *Next, I would like you to write down three things you believe your band director does to make your child's band better. I will give you about two minutes to come up with these, and then we will share them with the group.*
6. *Think back to a time when you felt that your child was motivated to practice for band. If this ever occurred, what do you believe inspired them to practice?*

7. *When your child's band director is teaching, what are some things they teach that are not music-related?*
8. *In what ways does your child's band director motivate students to try their very best?*

Key Question-Research Question 1a: What are the instructional practices of the participant band directors?

9. *Do you have any impressions of what band class is like during rehearsals?*
10. *What are your impressions of how your child's band director interacts with the students?*
11. *What are some things your child's band director does to make sure every child understands how to play musical passages?*

Key Question-Research Question 1b: What are the organizational practices of the participant band directors?

12. *What are some things the band director does to manage the band program that are not related to teaching the class?*
13. *In what ways does your band director communicate with parents?*
14. *Do you know of any procedures for the class that are not related to music-making? If so, what are they?*

Closing Questions:

15. *Of all the things we talked about today, what do you feel is the most important?*
16. *Before we end this interview, is there anything else you would like to share about your child's band class and band director?*

Closing

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. I enjoyed hearing what you had to say about your band program. I appreciate your help as I learn more about effective practices in high-performing bands.

Appendix C

Principal Interview Protocol

Thank you very much for agreeing to contribute to this study. I appreciate you giving your valuable time to me and this study.

Thank you for signing and returning the consent letter and the audio/video release form. Do you have any questions for me regarding those forms?

(*After discussing any questions about the consent letter)* Do you agree to participate in this study?

(Wait for an answer.) If no: If you do not agree to participate, our conversation is concluded. Thank you for your time.

(If yes, continue.)

Thank you for participating in this study as a principal. I selected your school for this study based on its having a high-achieving band program and your high rate of students on free and reduced lunch. This interview aims to gain insights into your school's band director's instructional and organizational practices in their band room. Your feedback will be used to publish my dissertation, its defense, and possible conference presentations. If you choose, your name, the name of your school, its band director, and the school district will be kept confidential. I am grateful that you are consenting to this interview with your continued participation, and I will begin the recording now.

(BEGIN RECORDING)

1. Please state your name?
2. What is your educational background and work experience?
    a. How long have you been in your current position?
    b. What is your experience with the band program? (ie. concerts, performances, observing rehearsals, etc.)
3. From your perspective, are there any unique challenges associated with teaching band in a high-poverty school?
    a. In what ways have you observed the band director address these challenges?
4. Is the band director involved in making suggestions or decisions regarding the structure of the band program? ie. classes, scheduling, budget, etc?
5. This study examines high-achieving band programs among schools representing low socio-economic communities. One element of the study is administrative involvement/support for students in the band program and for the band directors. Can you share examples of how you provide such support?
6. In what ways have you observed the band director communicate with parents?
7. Does your school and band director use social media to communicate with your community's stakeholders?
8. What are some responsibilities or duties that your band director completes that go beyond classroom instruction?
9. Which non-instructional procedures of the band director do you believe contribute to the success of the band program?

10. Do you see a sense of community within your band director's program?
    a. If so, in what ways?
11. How would you describe the band director's interactions with students outside of rehearsals? ie. hallway transitions, band events, non-rehearsal class time
12. Have you noticed any specific classroom routines that the band director uses?
    a. What specific classroom routines does the band director follow to conclude class?
    b. What specific classroom routines during the instructional segment?
    c. What specific classroom routines does the band director follow to start class?
13. In what ways have you observed the band director adding rigor to their curriculum?
14. In what ways does your school and band director hold children accountable?
15. In what ways does the band director address the many needs of your school's students during classroom time?
16. How would you describe the band director's interactions with students during classroom time?
17. How would you describe the band director's classroom management style?
18. What characteristics of the band director's use of instructional time have you observed? ie. pacing, transitions, student engagement, student rapport, etc.
19. What instructional techniques does the band director use that contribute to the success of the band program?
20. In what ways does the band director motivate students?
21. Do you have anything else that you would like to share?
22. Do you have any questions for me?
23. May I contact you for follow-up questions or clarifications if needed?

Thank you very much for conducting this interview. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about anything, and thank you for your willingness to share your perspectives with me.

Appendix D

Focus Group Interview Protocol

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this focus-group interview. You were selected to participate in the focus group interviews because your band directors felt you would have much to contribute to our conversation. They also felt like you would be very respectful of the opinions of others in our group. Additionally, your parents consented to you being interviewed.

I would like to confirm that you have received and completed the Parental Permission Form, Assent Form, and Audio Release Form.

**Certify that each student's name corresponds with each collected form before continuing. **

Everything you say here will remain confidential. This means I will not release your name(s) with any identifying information, such as your grade level or school name. I will ask you a few questions about your band class and your band director for this group interview. This is not for a grade, and there are no wrong answers.

Before we begin, I have a few ground rules about our group interview:

1. Make sure you are actively participating in our discussion
2. Do not talk over anyone or cut anyone off
3. Treat everyone with respect; do not criticize
4. Try to stay focussed on the question or present topic

Please be mindful that we have a limited amount of time. At any point, I may interrupt to keep our group discussion on track. If at any time you do not wish to continue with the interview, you may tell me and be excused from the group. At this time, do you have any questions about this group discussion?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions:

Introductory Questions:

1. *Could you please tell me what grade you are in and what instrument you play in band?*

Transition Questions:

2. *Why did you sign up for band this year?*
3. *I would like to talk to you about what it is like to be in your band program. First, please take a moment to reflect on what it is like being a band student at your school and we will take turns sharing our thoughts with the group.*

Key Question-Research Question 2: How do the emergent themes relate to Self-determination Theory?

4. *Next, I would like you to write down three things you believe your band director does to make your band better. I will give you about two minutes to come up with these, and then we will share them with the group.*
5. *Think back to a time when you were motivated to practice for a playing test or for a concert. What inspired you to practice outside of school?*
6. *When your band director is teaching, what things might they teach the band students*

that are not music-related?

7. *In what ways does your band director motivate students to try their very best?*

Key Question-Research Question 1a: What are the instructional practices of the participant band directors?

8. *For this next section, these next few questions, I would like to know about the teaching practices of your band director. Can you please describe what a typical band rehearsal is like with your teacher?*
9. *What are some things your band director does to make sure everyone in the band is on task and participating positively?*
10. *What are some things your band director does to make sure every child understands how to play musical passages?*

Key Question-Research Question 1b: What are the organizational practices of the participant band directors?

11. *What do you see your band director do to run and manage the band program outside of teaching your class?*
12. *In what ways does your band director communicate with your parents?*
13. *Does your band director have procedures in his classroom that do not relate to music? If so, what are some of them?*

Closing Questions:

14. *Of all the things we talked about today, what do you feel is the most important?*
15. *Before we end this interview, is there anything else you would like to share about*

your band class and your band director?

Closing

Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. I enjoyed hearing what you had to say about your band program. I appreciate your help as I learn more about effective practices in high-performing bands.

Appendix E

Field Observation Template

Primary Investigator: Robert Grogan
Auburn Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nancy Barry
School: _____
Participant Teacher: _____

Class Subject:_____
Student Age Range: _____

Time: _____
Class Duration: _____

Lesson Objective: _____

Domain	Notes
Content Knowledge and Delivery • Command of subject matter • Pacing of instruction • General teaching presence	
Organization • Evidence of preparation • The organizational space of the room • Teacher-student proximity • Audio or visual Aids	
Student Engagement • Behavior Management • Engagement strategies • Student Participation	
Student Rapport • Student response to interactions • Humor • Eye Contact • Environment	
Teaching Methods • Teaching materials • Pedagogical resources • Structure of the lesson	
Classroom Procedures • Routines • Student-teacher interaction structure • Learning expectations	

Reflections

Appendix F

Field Research Artifact Checklist

High Achieving Middle School Bands in High Poverty Schools in the Southeastern United States (Focus Groups and Classroom Observations)

Primary Investigator: Robert Grogan

Auburn Faculty Advisor: Dr. Nancy Barry

Research Questions:

1. What are the instructional and organizational practices of the participant band directors?
2. How do the emergent themes relate to Self-determination Theory?

Note: Research question no. 1 is answered through the data collection. Research question no. 2 is answered through the interpretation of the collected data. Below, the artifacts are notated according to how they apply to research question no.1 with an "I" for instructional procedures or an "O" for organizational procedures. Some artifacts can be interpreted as both instructional and organizational procedures (IO).

Artifacts to be collected from participant band directors

- ❑ Email Communications (O)
- ❑ Band Program Handbook (IO)
- ❑ Class Syllabus (IO)
- ❑ Written Assessments (I)
- ❑ Curriculum Map (I)
- ❑ Written Procedures (IO)
- ❑ Budget and Spending Ledgers (O)
- ❑ Social Media Posts (O)
- ❑ Letters to Parents (O)
- ❑ Concert Programs (IO)
- ❑ Enrollment Data (O)
- ❑ Administrator Evaluations (IO)
- ❑ Concert Records (IO)
- ❑ Concert Festival Evaluations (I)
- ❑ Pedagogical Resources (I)
- ❑ Program Calendar
- ❑ Curriculum Materials (I)
- ❑ Recruitment Materials

Appendix G

Dr. Miller's Interview Transcript

In-Depth Interview

[Lance Miller] Zoom Interview

October 4, 2021

Interviewer: Thank you very much for agreeing to contribute to this study. I appreciate you investing your valuable and be in the study. Thank you for signing and returning the consent letter and the audio and video release form. Do you have any questions for me regarding those forms?

Respondent: No, sir.

Interviewer: With your continued participation, I will consider you to be assenting to the study. Are you ready to continue?

Respondent: Yes, sir.

Interviewer: The purpose of this interview is to explore the instructional and the organizational procedures that you use in your classroom. You were chosen for this interview because you teach in a high-poverty school and have a proven track record for leading bands to superior ratings and adjudication. All right, please state your name.

Respondent: [Lance Miller].

Interviewer: Mr. [Miller], what is your educational background and work experience?

Respondent: I've got a bachelor's degree from UCF in Music Education, a master's degree in Wind/Band Conducting from University of South Florida, and a doctorate of Education in Teacher Leader in Learning: Instructional Technology from Kennesaw

State University. This is my 33rd year of teaching band, mostly middle school. I have four years of high school teaching.

Interviewer: How long have you been in your current position?

Respondent: This is my 17th year.

Interviewer: At [Summerset]?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Wow.

Respondent: Yes, the whole time I've been in [Carter], the whole time I've been in Georgia. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Where were you prior to Georgia?

Respondent: I worked for 15 years in Orange County Schools at Orlando. Well, first year teaching, I was at Volusia County Schools, New Smyrna Beach Middle School for one year just covering for somebody on leave. Then I moved to Orlando and taught two years at Dr. Phillips High School, two years at Westridge Middle School, and nine years at Hunter's Creek Middle School, and two years at Freedom High School of Orlando. I was the first director of Hunter's Creek and Freedom, and we've just gotten to move up here because we're originally from South Carolina and we didn't like being 10 hours from grandma and grandpa after the kids were born.

Interviewer: Right. I know out of those schools, I know of Dr. Phillips High School. They played at Midwest, didn't they?

Respondent: I think so. The last few years, yes, they – that school started in '89 and I was the second associate director. I was there for a couple of years, and then Orange County did a reduction - I loved it there, I really did, and it was all good but Orange County did a reduction in force in '92. I was the low man on the totem pole so I was quickly sent my merry way but then Westridge Middle School opened up. I was an associate director there.

Interviewer: If I remember right, that's one of the few schools ever where both the orchestra and the band performed at Midwest on the same year.

Respondent: Wow. I wouldn't be bit surprised. Right as I was leaving there, they had set up to become the visual and performing arts magnet school. The whole thing is really well-done. Joey Fatone was a freshman and sophomore while I was there. If you know Louis Fonsi, you'd know that name, the Despacito guy, he's a big Latin American star, they were both in the group together in the chorus. A lot of that kind of stuff happened around there.

Interviewer: [Summerset] being identified as a high poverty school, being 75% or more free or reduced lunch, I think you did declare that by a good bit. Have you ever been in another high poverty situation other than [Summerset]?

Respondent: Westridge was close. When Hunter's Creek Middle School opened, it actually pulled a bunch of kids out of Westridge, and then Westridge became a high poverty school after that, but no, I don't think so. I think that this is the first one.

Interviewer: Do you feel that teaching at a high poverty school possesses any unique challenges?

Respondent: Yes. It's interesting compared to Dr. Phillips where Arnold Palmer lived in the school district, Shaquille O'Neal lived in the school district but at the same time, the two low-income communities in West Orlando both have a school there so that school was a wide range but there was still lots of money there. Hunter's Creek was more of an upper middle class school. I mean you go from lots of parent involvement in that – I don't want to say richer. I don't want to say that. The schools where the parents have more money, you tend to have more parent involvement. Sometimes that's good. Sometimes it's not good, but then you go to the high need schools and you rarely get parent involvement which is good and bad sometimes.

I really feel like a lot of our parents want better for their kids especially families from Central and South America. They want better for their kids and they will do what they can to help them. When you make a phone call, you'll know, "Yes, we'll talk to them. We'll take care of it," but there's not a lot of - I guess the culture in Central and South America, I don't know. I don't have any clue. I'm guessing is that there's not a lot of involvement in the schools because a lot of them don't show up to help with anything.

Fundraisers are especially hard. Our principal we have now have now has been there for – this is fifth year I think and his first year, he came at open house. We always get at a pretty good crowd at open house. He got up and said, "I'm not got going do a school wide fundraiser. I'm not going to ask you to sell things, but if every family will give me $10.00, we'll have $10,000.00 and then we can do what we need to do. He got $1,000.00. An average fundraiser for the band program – the best we've ever done in 17 years was $4,000.00. Average is $2,000.00 to $3,000.00 somewhere in the middle. That's hard because I hear nearby schools making $15,000.00 a year. They're selling cheesecakes, cookie dough, and pastries. We've sold those since 2008 probably. Sold them every year and people loved them. The people that buy them love and want them but can't get the kids bought into it. Just to give you kind of what it looks like school wide.

What the principal does now is every other Friday, we have fresh air Friday. Through the PDIS program, the kids can earn [school] cash and they can use the [school] cash to go outside for 20, 30 minutes after how long we're out there. On Friday late in the day after lunch is over, they can go outside and play games, run around with their friends, listen to music, but there is a concession stand there and you would be blow away how many $20.00 bills kids are pulling out their pockets and spending every dime of it on snacks. Every drink and snack is $1.00 and they will want this and this and this and this and this and this, and they'll buy it from their friends and scoop it all up and walk off with it. That's how the principal does a fundraiser. He'll make $1,000.00, $1,500.00 on a Friday every two weeks, and so that's how he has his money to give kids incentives for kids to work for because then you see you kids and send us to work for enhanced learning, those kind of things. That's the school wide fundraiser. It used to be every week but they decided to cut it every two weeks.

Interviewer: Circling back to parent involvement, you mentioned that there are pros and cons to a lack of parent involvement. Could you elaborate on what those pros and cons might be?

Respondent: Well, having parent involvement where they come and they can help you organize things and get your chaperones together and take your uniforms. That kind of stuff is nice to have where you can a phone call, people show up to take care of it and do with it and do it well. That's not to say low-income people can't do things well. I didn't meant it to sound that way, but just to have them there and get it done. A lot of times, especially if you've got a high school program where they're used to

doing that, it kind of starts feeding itself with both the younger brothers and sister back and forth, so that's helpful.

I had a situation at Dr. Phillips one time. I was a second-year teacher and we got called into a parent conference which is one parent because – that was a boy's name. I can't think of it now, it was only 32 years ago. Timmy had to leave marching band rehearsal early because he had an audition for a commercial and he had to go, and you looked upset. Well, being the young teacher, the veteran head director looked at me as he walked in the door. He said, "I will do all the talking. Nod your head." I said, "Okay." I sat there and my thought was, "Well, I was upset. We were having rehearsal," [Laughter] but Tim, the director, was like, "Yes," and he went through it. He did all fine.

I've had people tell me that there are some upper income schools in [Carter] that you may get phone call one day going, "Why is my child second chair?" They're studying privately with da-da-da-da person and that they need to be first chair. I know one of the directors in town said that he got an email on this first year on the job at this particular school. It was a two-page email telling everything he had done wrong and he'd expected a prompt reply. Well, he has the personality where he said, "I'll only know on Monday, except we're not going to play that game," whereas I get very few emails from parents about chair placement. I mean with CTLS parent now, I get a few more where parents will go through that program and ask questions but I don't get whole lot of parent calls, emails. If we need chaperones, I can usually get one or two people who will probably show up. If we're going to band festival, I can usually find one or two people.

Now all that being said, we're taking a Disney trip in January, $725.00 a person, and we need at least 40 people to fill up one bus and it usually takes us about a month to get those 40 people. I'm told we were at 35 Friday, which is the day of deadline payment, and I've already had four parents say, "I'd like to go as a chaperone." I feel like people find money for they want to do but as far as I know, nobody has ever said this to me but sometimes, it feels like, "Well, I don't know. We send them to school for you to teach them, so you teach them and send them home and we'll feed them and do our part here." Nobody said that but that's just how kind of how it feels sometimes so I've always jokingly said, "We don't have anybody blasting the doors down yelling at us," but it'd be nice if some people would offer to help.

I'll get at occasional – I got an email from a mom the other day. "What do you all need? Do you all need paper? Tissues? Is there anything

? I just don't how you are doing what you're doing right now." Every once in while you get one of those. I would have parents at the high school in Orlando before I came here who would walk in and go, "I thought you all might need batteries for your wireless headsets here. Here's a case of paper." I mean he just walked in without being asked. Just, "Here. Here's this." I think that's the biggest challenge is if I call them in school and say, "Hey, your child is misbehaving." They go, "I will talk to him. Thank you for letting me know." I've never had anybody go, "Well, it's your fault." I guess those are all the pros and cons from my perspective.

Interviewer: Do you feel that teaching at a high-poverty school poses any unique opportunities?

Respondent: Personally, as a teacher, it means you have to dig down. It seems sometimes that it takes our students longer to grasp the concept so you really to dig into your teaching to figure out better ways to say it, different ways to say it, more ways to say it and to work with them to help and get there to their point. When I first came to [Summerset], I was shocked at what I stepped into. Even though Lovinggood had not opened yet and taken the majority for our school population but I was just kind of amazed at the atmosphere of the school and just the way some things were done. I had a lady that I've worked with at Hunter's Creek. She had come to Hunter's Creek from a high-poverty school and she said, "I promise you, you'll never find a group of kids more thankful for what you do for them that what you're going to find there," and I think there's truth in that. I actually ran into him. My sons plays tuba at UGA now. He's a clarinet player marching tuba in the marching band. It just so happens, one of my former [Summerset] tuba player is a third-year band member there. Tim ever gave me the biggest hug in the world. "Man, what's going on?" He was part of a really good group of kids. They were super thankful and always involved. I think there's truth into what that teacher told me.

Interviewer: Are you able to structure your classes that you teach during the day?

Respondent: Yes. You probably remember a few years ago that we had a block schedule. We only saw the bands every other for an hour and a half. Even then, we could put kids in the class that we knew was the right one for them so we have had support all these years. We have a top band, the second band, the advanced band. Then in each grade level. The sixth graders, we don't do much because if we did like some of the other schools that do all their spring recruitment so you can get the instruments figured out in May. We would put homogenous classes together but I

had found that during the sixth grade, I think the spring hasn't worked for us. It seems like kind of the fifth graders and their parents haven't thought ahead to that yet of middle school, so we can make and prepare for that, whereas as well – the average, not this year because there's just weird stuff with this year, but on an average year, we'll get 100, 120 kids in band in sixth grade. We just fit them best we can on instruments and they all have classes, but we just fit them best we can on instruments and they were all the classes but we do separate into brass and woodwind classes, so between the associate and I. Yes, we've had supportive administrations as far as structure and what we need, and it helps that we'd offer to put the schedule together for connections too. That helps.

Interviewer: Right. How would you describe your classroom management style? Are there any specific procedures or routines that you have in the band?

Respondent: We work really hard with the younger ones. Not so much with the eighth graders. We give them a little more freedom but in terms – I mean we worked really hard. I saw this actually at Dodgen, this is where I saw it done, where they don't talk when they walk in. John told me - he goes – this was the end of the year. He goes, "It takes a while to get to them," but there's not a sound in that room. Kids come in and get their stuff, sit down. At a certain point, they start a pre-recorded track that has lip slur exercises with the brass, the brass sit there and buzz. When that ends, they start. I was like, "Holy cow."

We try to do that because I do find that our population can come in loud and wound up. Does that mean that's how it is at another school? Is it a high need? No, it doesn't. That's not what I mean but it's just our population is loud, when they come in, we let them be. We try to work with other classes and it takes a long time to do it. If not, offer them to come in but the kids do a good job in getting in, getting settled, work real hard to have as much quiet as we can while we're teaching because we want everybody to hear what we have to say and not have to repeat it.

Truly, we don't have a whole lot of issues. I feel like this year, we do because I think more things are happening this year I think because a lot of kids are out of school for a year and a half and they're not used to the structure. We've said the sixth graders are actually still kind of a fourth-grade mindset and so we're really having - even the eighth graders. The eighth graders, their problem is more being like they're playing but they just sitting there, like, "Wake up. Come on. It's 9:00, wake up." We don't have too many problems and issues with having the right

referrals. We'll make a phone call, like I said, if we need to, and maybe the kid needs to go sit to the side and write a paper to help me remember what they need to do, those kind of things. That's the biggest structure of it all. We do the standard setup and we try to give them time to pack up and when they're done, clean up and put their stands against their chairs and make it all look neat as best we can.

When I was at Hunter's Creek, I learned this from Winter Park High School and I loved it. [Summerset] had a wall with no lockers on it in the band room, I would do this: every period you would come in and there were no chairs and stands. You would go get your chair and your stand and set it up, and when the class is over, you put it back. It took a little extra time off the front and back end but the room was always neat and clean, but I don't have the space to do that.

Interviewer: Right, right. If there is a behavioral disruption in the classroom, how would you describe your demeanor and how would you address that?

Respondent: Early on I would yell at people, 37 years ago, and it took a long time for me to grow out of that. I do have a temper. I have to work through that, but getting older and wiser helps too so I try to – so I was really like, "You, go sit over there," and later on the biggest thing I tried to do – and with a three-minute class change, it's hard but I want to talk to the kid because the more I can sit the and say, "All right. Come on, dude," especially I found the guys – a lot of the guys in Central and South America, those families, some of those guys are the adult male in their house so if I go man-to-man to them instead of me pointing down to them because they're thinking, "At home I make decisions" – and this is something that a lot of our teachers have talked about over the years so I try to talk to them man-to-man, "Look, dude. This is what needs to happen. Are you okay? What's going on? Can I help," and usually I get to the bottom of the stuff when they're not with their peers trying to have to be strong and not be put down by the teacher or corrected by the teacher and that kind of stuff. I found - the biggest thing I do, if I can get them out to the sides – sometimes we'll send them – if we can, we'll send them to the other room with the other teachers instead of sitting there and the big thing is I just get a conversation with them and I can usually solve it, and then that way they kept their respect, their dignity, and we can get along better.

Interviewer: Yes, it's important for them.

Respondent: It is, it is.

Interviewer: All right, so how would you describe your process for recruiting beginning band students?

Respondent: The first week of school - sixth grade does not have connections. Basically, we take sixth grade and we split them into four groups. Two groups go to band, two groups go to PE. The two groups in PE - each group is there for two days, Monday and Tuesday, so they stay in their group for two days. PE, I'm not sure what they do. I think art and business to art, engineering talk about what their class is, PE tells what they're going to do, and this year they actually – and this is the math. We have math connections classes, too. The math connections teachers came up with it. The kids stayed in PE and heard about art and engineering and all that. The other half of that group went to the theater and learned digital citizenship and like SEL stuff - like an SEL thing. That was really good for them. They did that and then the kids in music, one of the group goes to the band room and learns about the band and the other group goes to the course room and learned about orchestra and chorus, and then we flip those groups on Tuesday and then Wednesday and Thursday we flip it all again, and then Friday they have a teen talk with their administrator about the year, and that's when all their – we have a flyer we give out in music classes that explains – I feel like it's important for parents to know what they're signing up for - and the kids too - what it's going to cost, all those kind of things especially in the high-needs school. That's due by Friday of that week and then on Monday we start beginners.

Then once we start the beginners, the following Saturday, we do an instrument test drive. We hire a bunch of people in to help them pick their instrument. I tell them they want to find the instrument they like and the one that likes them back, and I explain about embouchure and what that means, and I've been doing that since I was at Hunter's Creek so that would be like 1996 I think when I started doing it that way with the instrument test drive.

Last year we did the Chuck Jackson thing. We did have some kids have to play a little bit to figure some stuff out, but I have just found that's on a Saturday morning and if we have 120 beginners, we may have 20 not show up for whatever reason, and we deal with those the next week. My associate helps them to figure out what they're going to play. The parents are involved in the decision, and this kind of started because I used to do it in Orange County for years.

There was a 12-week wheel through all that connections classes, and during that we them for two weeks in band and we would have kids try as many instruments as we could. Every day they come sit on the floor that we had sanitized and run around the room, and it had been that way – I started working there in '90. It had been that way at least 10 years or more, but that's how they did it. Well, parents will get mad at me because little Johnny wanted to play saxophone since the day he was born - You mean you wanted little Johnny to play the saxophone. They'd get mad and yell at me because they didn't get the instrument they wanted, and so I started doing it this way and then the parents where there and they could see, "Well, I know you wanted to play the trumpet but that sounds really bad, but that sounded really good over there," type thing and then so what we do is they do test drive for them where the private teachers put superior, excellent, good or poor, meaning you have a superior chance of succeeding on this instrument. Maybe I missed it or was that the adjudication sheets? [Laughter] I remember but – so then we tell them to pick three instruments that they're willing to play in the superior and good column and then we pick from there, and 99% of the time, they all get their first choice. This year wasn't quite that good but the two years prior, the kids, all of them got their first choices except two kids. I'm like, "You all picked really well." Like I said, last year we couldn't do the test drive thing but we went and did it this year and it worked. We put all kinds of protocols in place because I wanted people to feel safe and comfortable while they're over there.

Interviewer: Right. So you have the kids enrolled in the class before you fit the instrument?

Respondent: Yes. I think some schools, anybody who wants to come try anything – I remember one year in the spring did I help Tapp when Erin was there, and I think it was, "You could come try band and orchestra instrument and see which one you liked." I've seen people do that, and our principals wanted us to do it. I call it the Lovinggood way. Now, I can't do the way Joe and Shelly do where they spend two weeks there every night after school and along Saturday seeing eight kids a night. I can't. I can't give up my life like that with my family, but they get it all done in the spring and it would be awesome. I love clarinets in one class, but we tried that two or three times, and when we're hiring all those teachers it cost us about $400.00 or $500.00 a year to get everybody in there and so by the time we do that and then a bunch of kids don't show – like we hardly had anybody show up and that just may be that disconnect between giving the information to the fifth grade parents and

the importance of it. So we tried two or three times. Our principals, they really don't like us not having class the first week but they're understanding. I said, "Look, we've tried. If we're not going to do that, it's going to take us about three years to not do that because I think it's going to take a lot get enough kids." We still want to have kids come. If we get a quarter of the sixth grade signed up, well, that's not enough. We need more so we're going to have to do the -

Interviewer: They need to hire more connections teachers.

Respondent: Yes, exactly, and then we're going to get to the fall and have to do the week rotation anyway. We did have a time one time that we didn't get enough kids to do four band classes in sixth grade, and we were threatened about it all weekend. Laura Estes was there and she was really not happy. She was going to be teaching general music class in sixth grade, and then Sunday afternoon the answer hit me. I called her and I said, "You're going to be teaching general music through the performance of band instruments. We're going to take whatever we have left, the school instruments, and you're going to take them and go, 'Which one do you want to play because this is what you're going to be doing until Christmas?'" By Christmas, that class of 35, only two of them didn't continue. We took them and said, "You are all brass players, come with me." Every day they would come in to my room and all the woodwinds would go to her room, and we just thought band like normal and anyone, "Well, I don't want to do it anymore." "Okay, great. Thanks." But we had enough to keep classes going.

Interviewer: It sounds like a trick I would do.

Respondent: Yes. I mean we were so frustrated all weekend. It was Sunday after church I was like, "Wait a minute. I got it," and we were afraid that we were going to have to do it this year. It was a little low at first but I think we hit 90 this year, which is low. We don't like that number. We want more but it's the weirdness of this year.

Interviewer: Yes. So what instruments do you start beginners on?

Respondent: Everything.

Interviewer: French horns, oboes?

Respondent: Oboes, bassoons, bass saxes, French horns. It's funny people are like, "You start bari saxes?" I'm like, "Well, yes, we've had some killer bari sax players because we started in the sixth grade." I mean you should see them try to lug that case out the bus and like, "You don't have to take it." "No, I'm taking it home." "Okay." It doesn't last very long. Most drivers are like, "No," but we've also gotten to the point – I have been hoarding instruments since I've been there because we've had to buy - let me think about it now. Lovinggood opened in '06 and '05, that school year we had 120 seventh graders. The next year we had 34 eight graders. I mean it just wiped us out and we found that a lot of students are there for about six or seven years couldn't afford an instrument or parents wouldn't get them one so we were – thank goodness [Carter] gives us enough money to do stuff so we bought a lot of instruments. Well, now, more kids are starting to buy them although I'm not crazy about brands, but they're buying them so we were able to stockpile – I got trombones so a kid can have a trombone at school and a trombone at home. We have 25 tubas but each one of them – we've got four full sized. One of them is a four valve. We've got two full-sized rotors that only eight graders can use, and then all the rest of them are three-quarter sized tubas. The plan is, every tuba player takes a tuba home at the beginning of the year and brings it back for the spring concert. We've been doing that for a number of years. Our repair budget on tubas went down and the tubists got better. The reason we're not doing it now, we didn't do it last year, and with the COVID variant still going on we don't want tuba sharing going on so they're all using what they're using at school. Some kids will take them home and practice on them but now we had a little numbers of – we only had one horn player last year. In sixth grade I've got five this year, but I have enough French horns that they all have one at home. The next that I'm going after is baritone and see if I can get 10 more baritones. [Laughter]

Interviewer: So, what's your rationale for starting all the instruments?

Respondent: I think it came out of stupidity originally. I just figured that's what I had to do and so it worked, and I've heard some people don't do that. I've tried to know horns and convinced them to play French horn and that didn't work, and not every horn player is successful. I had one done two years of horn. He's smart. He can tell you what are the names of the lines and spaces, he can tell you about every musical concept and rhythms, but his horn playing was awful. I told him last year, "Hey, man, you're playing trumpet next year and I'll put you in the top band." He's playing trumpet better than some of the kids who have been playing for two years.

He sits super straight, plays his part, always ready. I said, "You can go back to horn sometimes," because you just need to get the partial idea figured out. I just like knowing that I'm going to have the instruments. I'm not always as successful convincing a kid to switch. I can usually get a kid to go to contra clarinet, but trying to get a kid to go from trumpet to French horn – I'm not quite the salesman, I guess. Laura Estes could sell up a freezer to an Eskimo. I mean she could convince a kid to do anything and I'm like, "How do you do this?" That's the big reason why. I just want to make sure we have the instrumentation we need. Like I said, I've done it since probably – well, I was at Westridge my fourth and fifth year teaching and I think that's what – Debbie was the head director and I think that's what they had done for years. I just kind of did it and kept doing it. I didn't know any different.

Interviewer: Okay. So talking about parent communication, how often and what ways do you communicate with your parents?

Respondent: Well, I'll answer the second question first. We have a Remind app to send text messages. I can't remember how long I've been on Twitter. I got on Twitter a long time ago before it was kind of a thing and then it wasn't a thing anymore. I laughed because I think we had five followers on the band account and two of them I didn't know who they were one of them was a buddy of mine from high school. This is not my personal account, man, and I didn't have a personal account. That didn't go really well and kept trying to convince parents to do it, and I had parents at open house, and I will say this at open house, we'll usually have a full band room at open house, I know I said there was no parent involvement, but they do come at open house. They said to me, "Well, how about doing texting," and it was forever before I had a phone that did anything like that. I just didn't spend the money on it. I found some website where you pay per text and I bought so many texts that I could send out on this website and it would send it to the parents' phones. Then I discovered Remind and at one point – two or three years after Remind was kind of being – I was starting to hear more about it, they texted and they said, "You're one of the top texting teachers in the state of Georgia. You send more text than almost anybody. What are you doing?" [Laughter] We talked about it and all that, but parents seemed to like that better and so we have a different class setup and we use – we have a Facebook page. I don't use it as much as I did. I know parents are still on it. We have an Instagram page that helps me get the big kids. I told them, "I'll never be going to follow you. I'm not going up your job. I don't care. That's

your private life. I'm not going to get into that," but if I put stuff out on Instagram I'll get more kids more likely to respond. I got some kids who wants to like it resend it out on their feed and that kind of stuff.

CTLS parent now, we use that a lot more because I know a lot of parents were checking it so we will send some stuff out on that. I guess right now the two big things are Remind, CTLS parent, and Instagram for the kids. How often I promise the parents on texting? I said, "My kids at school got to the point" – their thing was called Parent Alert which makes you think something is wrong, and it would come out and ding my phone in the middle of the day and go, "Hey, don't forget it's Moe's night tonight. Come by at Moe's and buy something at the school." They would bombard my phone – not as bad as it used to be but they would bombard my phone so I promised the parents like, "There are going to be times you don't hear from me for a while and then suddenly you will." Parents seemed to appreciate it and they like the texting stuff. At Remind you can setup as a two-way texting thing but I haven't done that. I made it just a one-way thing because it's more of an announcement tool, as a communication tool. I turn on the communication side of it when we go to a Disney trip so people can text me that way if they needed to. CTLS parent, like I said, we send that stuff out because we need to on that. I think parents are liking that. Our principal just started something this year. Every Thursday we have to tell him what we're going to be doing in our class next week and then he sends it out to every parent. You fill out a Microsoft form – no, I'm sorry. You go right to his – he gives us live access to Word doc and you just go in your spot and you type what you're going to do, that way parents will know what's coming up. "They'll be a test on this," that kind of thing. I think that's been real good, too. I mean he's trying to reach parents, that's for sure, and we have a website. I don't use it as much anymore maybe because of CTLS classroom. I try to put some stuff there because I know the district wants people to get used to that, and they actually took blogs away at our school this year. They told teachers no more blogs and I said, "Well, we're going to keep our music websites." I'm the school webmaster too so I can get stuff out on the school website pretty quick. If I have a major announcement to go out, it takes me a few minutes because this is between the school website, the band website, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, CTLS parent or mine. [Laughter] It takes a minute to get to a lot of us in a blast.

Interviewer: In what ways do you hold children accountable with grades?

Respondent: At our school, we have to do 60% summative, 40% formative. That's how we rate. We have to break down the grade book and every class is at least a school-wide thing. So 40% of the grade is formative. I tell the kids I wish they would just practice because they want to get good and then I wouldn't have to give a test but we find that we have to do a little more this year to get someone to play and even my top bands are pretty evasive this year. I'm realizing the further we get in school that we're having to take more steps to make them accountable and work hard as a group and those kinds of things. Because the first test I gave them, a bunch of them, I'd called their name and they'd go, "No." "What do you mean no? Isn't this the advanced band?" that kind of stuff. So I told them the other day, I said, "If you shake your head no at me when I finish second period, I'm picking up the phone and calling your mom." So their eyes get real big. They try. So at least they try. So we try to do weekly by weekly test on something. Right now, it's scales and 40% of the grade is — and those are formative. The other formative is every week we give them a grade for ensemble skills, which is showing up and doing your thing, playing, having your music, be involved, that kind of stuff and not my favorite thing to do because I think a kid can screw up a few tests but if they participate, if they're playing and doing their part, and showing up with their stuff, they get 20 points a day, I'm not going to give them zero points if they showed up. So it skews it hard to being like a higher — they might get a B but what gets them is when we do the spring concerts or LGPE or like when we go to Osborn on the 24th. Those are required. So that's where the summative comes in and all of a sudden, they could slap the stew out of them if they don't show up for that. Now we give them an opportunity to make it up. I'm saying stuff like, "All right now. If you come to the concert, there's like 60 people playing and you miss a note, there's a chance I won't hear that. If you don't play a section, I might not hear it but if you're playing by yourself on your CTLS recording, I'm going to hear every note." They're like, "Oh." [Laughter] Because I don't want to hear a recording about that. Last year, we did some, what is it, flipgrids and I'm super excited. We did flipgrids, we had a bunch of iPods they could play on and they would use an app that would email us their recordings. That was a nightmare. My email box stayed full but we've done different stuff like that. So we're really happy about CTLS having a video feature and now that we can grade inside of it and it sends it to Synergy. So if we want to do any playing test like that the problem with that is I'm really bad about going to listen in a playing test in a timely manner. That's just a personal thing. [Madison] laughs at me. If I even mention that, she starts laughing. I'm like, "You don't need

to laugh in front of the kids. Don't emphasize my failures." I think that answers your question.

Interviewer: Yes, and you keep addressing the next question [Laughter] in the previous one. It's types of playing tests. You went through all types of playing tests. I had a question about what social media platforms you use but you addressed that. So you're letting me skip some questions. All right. How would you describe your use of instructional time during a typical rehearsal?

Respondent: If I can say one thing that I'd like, don't repeat this to a soul, but the one [Laughter] thing I liked about the every-other-day band was having that hour and half-ish. Man, we could do fundamental warmup stuff for days. We still do fundamentals. Jill Bernacki was at [Summerset] before me. She was in her four years. I'm officially the longest tenured music teacher staff ever but she was here for four years and she has a fundamentals page she made. They used to be called [Summerset] warmups and she just left them and I kept using it for years and I said, "Can you send me that file? I need to print some more because I've lost some copies." It was just us making copies of copies of copies. She goes, "I've already done it. I'll just send you that." Okay. She now calls it "Daily fundamentals" and I've got the one from like 2018. I bet she's changed it since then. It's a lot of the similar stuff that you might find in the Foundations book, which we give the kids Foundations book but we also use 101 Rhythmic Rest Patterns this year. So we start out with either Remington's — they do Remington a lot but I try to alternate between that and Flow Studies, lip-slurs, scales. Like I said, we're really trying to push the kids this year on the scales. When we talked about it, we're trying to figure out what our prize is going to be of doing a scale club. Kind of like that thing I think Greg does and Tara does and Jack used to do when he got high school. I'm just trying to get them excited about playing scales and doing that kind of stuff and chromatics and like I said, we were noticing some rhythm counting issues so we're doing the 101 Rhythmic Rest Patterns. We do one or two of those a day and the seven and six graders will do stuff out of the back there. We use Tradition of Excellence. We do stuff out of the back of the book with them but it's the older kids I try to use the other stuff and then if it's new concepts I need to get them to understand to play what song is coming up. I'll introduce that. I'll weave all that into all that beginning stuff, make sure if it's a new piece this song isn't a key we don't play much, make sure you warm up in that key a little bit. I'll try to do that days in advance to get that under their fingers a little better. Then rehearsing the

music we're working on. I should do better at the closing. I'm not really good with that. I tend to dirty the bill and go, "Wait, wrong time. Rats. Okay. Da, da, da. 'Bye." I know I should probably go, "So what did we do?" I know I should do that but I don't always remember to do that.

Interviewer: So does that change at all depending on where you are in the concert cycle, how much you do warmups versus literature?

Respondent: Yes, certainly. I still try to do as much of the basic warmup as we can. When I don't do either lip slurs, or Flow Studies, the brass players are less accurate. So I try to make sure at least do something with that. Again, this year, the kids are just in a different space than what we were trying to do two years ago, three years ago but all I'm doing is stuff out of the Foundations book are what the brass are playing, lip-slurs, and the woodwinds are running from runs and scales studies, I try to do that, and everything else with stuff with percussion because I was having a hard time fitting in what those other books would use.

I got really big a couple years ago in doing scales, arpeggios, and thirds. That's what the advanced band does, they play scales, arpeggios, and thirds. Now because this year's group is behind because of all the shutdown and everything, I had them do it and I was like, "Never mind. Let's just work on getting scales under our fingers." I had to decide to back off. We were going to do an October concert. We just decided, I said, "We don't need that pressure." It's funny because my boss said the other day, he goes, "Listen, man. This year's going to be what it is, a lot like last year." He goes, "Don't kill you and the kids trying to do more than you can. Just do it and let it be fun." That's what we tried to do last year. We did a virtual winter concert, which was hours and hours of work on my part. My son helped me to do it. What's it called? I've got it on my Mac. Shoot. It's not iMovie. I'm trying to look at it. Final Cut Pro. Because that was the one that allowed me to put multiple pictures of kids playing in the screen and it was fine. It wasn't super great but it was fine and we did a YouTube concert one night with all the music groups but in the spring, we did spring concerts. We did them outside the bus port.

We had one night we did eighth grade inside because it was raining and I think people liked it but an outdoor concert is too much. Because they brought their dogs and their cats. The kids are climbing trees. All their brothers and sisters are climbing trees on the other side of the bus port and we had Kona Ice outside in front of the school. I didn't announce this in case kids were not going to show up or something but the ones that showed up, we bought them all a Kona Ice. They really

like that. We wanted to do with the six graders this year, one of those things, I think Greg does it where they have a carnival. I know a lot of people do that, the band carnival where you have that Saturday thing. We were going to do it on a Saturday then we changed it to a Monday night and then it just fell through because we couldn't get people to come help us do it. Well, we were going to do that. I wanted to put hotdogs outside and have inflatables on that Saturday and have Kona Ice truck out but that goes back to fundraising. [Laughter] There is a point I can only do so much.

Interviewer: So what part of the band rehearsal do you believe is the most important?

Respondent: Probably the fundamentals. If you can get more stuff done in the fundamentals, then they should be able to play the songs. I've been preaching this for years, I said it just last week. If I was a tradesman, I see a lot of my kids, they worked through the summer with their dad doing sheet rocking, ninth graders. I'm like, "Actually, I'm going to put sheet rock up" and they go, "Great. The sheet rock's over there and go do that room. Great." I come back at about two minutes then I go, "Get a ruler. Do you have a ruler?" "No, I don't have a tape measure or anything." "Let's just use a tape measure. I think cut this board. Can you give me something to cut?" I said about the third or fourth time I come back asking for tools, they're going to send me out and hire somebody else to do the job. I said, "Scales are really the tools you need to play your music. If you can play the scales, you can play the notes." So just making analogies like that. I think that's where it's at. Especially if you could surprise them, teaching them further without them knowing it. I've been looking for music from Latin America, Central South America where all these kids' families are from and some of these kids are from. I just wanted to play something with like written by somebody that has a name like theirs and songs that sound like what they want to hear and man, it was killing me. The stuff I was finding out. I worked all the summer of 2019 and the summer of 2020, just all the websites and different band records listed, all that kind of stuff. Finally this year, I found a set of songs from 2014 that Victor Llamos Valencia wrote. He's in Bogotá, Columbia. It's a set of 10 songs and it cost about $110.00 or was it $200,000.00 pesos?, which sent finance into a tailspin on that credit card but two or three of the songs were great, too. One of them is a cumbia. I've been wanting to do them. I'm making myself hold back because I want to get some of those foundational rhythms in place. So I gave it to them last week and had them listen to it. I've got a couple of kids that come asking thoughtful questions. "I listened to it on YouTube and I like it

but I'm trying to set a metronome and it's fast." Because it's a half note at 90. I said, "Well, that's a half note you need to make." "Oh. So I should set it at like 180?" I'm like, "Yes." He goes, "Oh." I said, "Set it slow. Try to set it slow. Don't do it fast yet." I'm hoping that turns out well. Because I'm a very much an old-man music guy. Clifton Williams, and all that, and I love Pierre La Plante. I love all his stuff. I like a lot his stuff. When I did the honor band in Orlando a couple years back and I did Little French Suite. They were like, "I'm glad you introduced those old songs to the young directors." I said, "Wait a minute. How did I become an old director? What just happened here?" [Laughter] Anyway, but I realized as much as I like all that music, too, I need to try to do something that they recognize the style. We've done some things over time. A lot of it was more pop stuff maybe. I don't like doing Jingle Bells, Latin. I don't like any of those types of songs. To me, they would be insulting.

Interviewer: In what ways do you add rigor to your curriculum?

Respondent: I try to make it age-appropriate. Like I said, we try to up the game on seventh grade on rhythms. By the time we get to eight, I try to expand the scale ranges as we go through over time. We tell them the goal is. We don't always get it, just get the whole finger and try it on their own and I teach chromatic skill using fingering chart. That way, they can just start on the fingering chart and figure it out. I don't know if that's good, bad, or indifferent but it's working. I felt like we got it under their fingers faster and harder rhythms. More expanded scales. Doing two-octave scales where they can. I need somebody to come teach me how to make my trumpet players play higher but even all the lip-slurs and flow studies, some of the still struggle – "An F is not high. Please? Play it up." I guess those are the big things I try to do is just play hard. Hopefully, learn the skill set and the fundamental stuff so we can play harder music and expand our ranges and that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: My last set of questions, and we've got a few more, it just has to do with classroom environments, do the motivation, and the interactions. So next is how would you describe your interactions with students during band rehearsals?

Respondent: I try to be focused and get stuff done but I never wanted those guys that won't laugh. If something's funny, I'm going to laugh. Sometimes I'm going to crack a joke. Some students have a greater appreciation for my sarcasm than others but the very first year I taught, the guy that had been the band director used to be a

part of middle school middle school forever and was a great director. Had retired like four years earlier and then another person had taken his place but I've known the school there so I knew Dale Rush. I knew who he was. Back then, the district honor band, directors took turns conducting songs. They didn't bring people in back then.

So one day I'm sitting in, this band was great and I love the size of it. So sitting where you're conducting, you look over there, there was two doors and two doors over here with windows beside it and during planning one day, I looked over there and I see Scott going (makes a gesture imitating somebody looking through a window) through the window. Looked at me, knocks on the door. Well, sure enough, it was him. I said, "What are you doing here?" Well down in New [unintelligible] Beach, they call you the band man." "I heard there's a new band man in here. I just wanted to come see what's going on." So we talked for a little bit and he said, "Let me tell you what. I've got a little test that's going to work if you'll do it." He said, "The first day of school, put your metal trashcan in the middle of the band room floor and then leave." He said, "When the band comes in and they sit down." He said, "Walk in the door and look at the trashcan. You get this mad look on your face and run across from it. Kick that trashcan as far as you can kick it and say, 'Who moved my trashcan?'" He goes, "You'll never have a problem again." [Laughter] I was like, "Okay, thanks." Not going to do that. [Laughter] Not going to do that but thank you. Like I said, I went through, early on in my career, my classroom management skills were not the finest in the world and I would get mad and holler at people and all that kind of stuff. I'm pretty low-key.

I try to, like I said, laugh and just laugh but I want to be focused and get the work done. We can laugh and then we just talk and work. Lots of times, I make the jokes, you laugh. You make jokes later but I find that rehearsals are so much more enjoyable when the kids know when to stop. I guess there's too many classes. That's like some huge revelation I've had but then we can say something funny. Because they say stuff that makes me laugh. It doesn't throw me off but I try to keep it focused and moving forward and getting stuff done. I think you mentioned earlier, I have to go, "Okay. No, let's get back at it." Stole this from Laura, "You need to listen to the oldest person in the room. Listen to me." I'll say, "They pay me lots of money to wait and stick around so you need to listen." Well, not really but they do. So just stuff like that and they're little school kids, which like I said, They have their moment when they're losing it but I probably have my moments, too. There are probably days when I'm probably not going all the way, too.

Interviewer: Right. Does it ever change when you're off the podium? What about your interactions with students outside of rehearsals?

Respondent: We'll laugh and talk about stuff and how's your family. As long as I've been there, I'm on like child three and four for some of these families. In fact, I've been trying in the last two years to get the cousins to all take — I'm like, "Go to your older brothers and sisters get — I'll take a picture." Because I need a picture of families. Families do band together, that kind of stuff. I can't get them all to get together and take a picture. Just that kind of stuff. I think it's fine. I'll sit and talk to them. I've got certain kids that come in every morning. This one girl comes in every day and tells me what her dog has done that day. Nice person. I don't care what the dog has done but I'll listen anyway because she's a nice person. [Laughter]

Interviewer: In what ways do you motivate your students?

Respondent: Motivation piece to me is the hardest thing still but that's cool because sometimes I can't figure out — right now I'm struggling what's motivating them but I try to give them attainable goals that they can accomplish and I try to play music that they like. Like, "Can we go to LGPE?" I've done this for years. I go pick a bunch of songs I'm willing to play. There's some stuff I don't want to hear. I don't want to play it. I don't like it. I don't think it's worth spending the time on. So I try to pick a bunch of music that I'm willing to let them play. Maybe the top bands will do this more. Maybe the top seven, top eight but we'll say, "Okay. We've got to play a march and we've got to play two pieces that are different. So take out a piece of paper. On one side, write "march" and on the other side, write "others" and every time we play these and sightread them, I want you to write down what you like about it and what you don't like and we'll go through and do that." Sometimes in December. Then when we get back, we're starting to narrow it done. I go, "Okay. I need you to pick." Usually, I can guide it where I think it needs to go because I can see if we site read it and it sounded bad, if we couldn't get through it, that's probably not what we want but I think letting them choose it — and I also try to listen, if they've got a bunch of music in their folder, what they're playing, what they're practicing before school and so the notes and the pieces will gravitate towards that. Like I said, attainable goals, picking music they like, helping them learn music they don't think they'll like but they would learn to like.

I always tell them about when the first time I played the Hindemith Symphony, I'm like, "God, I hate this song." Then by the time we finish our concert series, I

was like, “Well, I don’t want to hide it anymore. I love this song.” [Laughter] So I said, “You’re going to find stuff you like eventually.” We try to do motivational stuff. Especially younger ones, we try to do fun stuff. I have begged to have a day to go watch Tara or Greg teach. Because I don’t think Tara is a master for the games and fun stuff. My brain doesn’t always go there but like the scale club, we’re trying to do is play scales. I’ll walk around like that and I’ve made some index cards with note names with fingering charts for the brass person in the back and I’ll walk through the sixth-grade hall and go, “When is it?” They tell me they gave him a Starburst. I go, “When is it?” “You missed it, sorry.” I’ll go to the next kid. I think that’s just little silly things trying to help them to pick it up. I’ll sit by the backdoor sometimes and have that Starburst box as they’re leaving. Anybody that’s got their instrument I give them a Starburst and if I do that every day for a week, it’s funny there were kids coming through the door just because I’m giving out Starburst as you’re going home? [Laughter]

I always enjoyed it as a kid getting band medals when I got superiors. We buy the plaques every year. Spent a fortune on those plaques. So we used to buy medals for them and they seemed to like it but then one year, we didn’t make enough fundraising I couldn’t do it and they didn’t seem to mind. I don’t know that that kind of stuff works because now we don’t. Of course, in orchestra, they tell their kids, “If you want one, here’s a form, fill it out, and give me the $5.00 or whatever and I’ll order one for you.” We still buy the plaque. Again, I saw that Tapp room once on how they had all their plaques up and we had not ordered it for a while. Now we’ve got a whole wall of them. That year, we took four bands to a festival and starts taking up wall space fast. Yes, I guess that’s all.

Interviewer: So how do you address cultural differences amongst your students?

Respondent: Clarify that for me.

Interviewer: You’ve already mentioned you have English language learners. How do you accommodate their learning?

Respondent: I’m kicking my fanny, but I didn’t learn Spanish back when I had a chance. I took one year of it in high school then I had to — when I was at West Ridge, the ESOL teacher taught a conversational Spanish class. I had nothing going on in my life at that time and three other teachers went and say, “Come with us.” I’m like, “No.” I wish I had. So I know a little bit of Spanish stuff and I don’t have to do anything. So

we try as much as we can. We send stuff home and letters and all that kind of stuff for you to translate it. I use the IWC a lot, [Carter]'s International Welcome Center, and they'll translate stuff. It's just I have to plan ahead. I have to give them a week or so to turn it around. I like the CTLS translate. I get weird translation emails but I get the general idea from parents. So I like that as far as communicating with parents. That is always a challenge if I call a house to talk to a parent about a child and nobody speaks Spanish, I'm going to speak English. I have to call the front office immediately and say, "There's a phone call coming from a parent who want to know what happened to their child. I'll be there in a minute" type thing but as far as classroom, like I said, we translate what we can and I always try to put if there's a kid that just absolutely knows very little English, I always make sure they have a kid beside them whose job is to translate and I tell the other kids they're allowed to talk. If they talk about the wrong thing, I'm not going to know it but they're allowed to talk. So when I'm talking, you listen but make sure that that person can talk and they know what to do.

Interviewer: Do you believe that it is important to foster community in your band program, a sense of community in your band program?

Respondent: Yes, I think it's really good, I think. I think in the teamwork thing makes them want to work together. I'm not the greatest at that. Sometimes I wish I could go spend time with some of the high school guys. Especially I like what Patrick's doing over Hillgrove. I try to cultivate that as much as I can but that's one of those things I'm still trying to get my head wrapped around my school. Because it's funny to me the number kids that are maybe in the same class for three years not even know that other person's name. I try to do some stuff like that. I'm not always super successful. I wish we could do more fun stuff. I wish more kids could go to Disney just because I think that they'd build a lot of relationships there like that that can't be in other ways but that's a lot of money. It's funny. The school went to Disney when I first got there and the next year, when Lovinggood opened and the principal was like, "No." Just not even try. So we waited a couple of years. We tried to go to Dollywood, we tried to go to Busch Gardens. We stopped through Orlando at downtown Disney just to let them get a Disney vibe from it and nobody was interested. So those number of years, we didn't do anything like that. Then we started it again. Out of 300 kids in a band and of chorus, an orchestra go with us, too, we can only get 50 to go. It doesn't quite do what we want but we still do it because those kids want to go and I think it's a good experience for — this does not

answer your question. It has nothing to do with your question but I think it's a good experience because it gives them a chance to learn to travel and think for themselves but my kids went to North [Carter] Christian, my daughter's still there and starting at fifth grade, they do a retreat every year. Fifth grade does it for a day. Sixth grade goes and maybe stays overnight. Seventh grade will stay overnight maybe and then eighth grade will stay over two nights and then high school will go — they have a thing called spring term. They go everywhere. You can take the trip you want to take. My daughter's saving up her money for next year. Apparently, art's department is going up to Italy and Austria next year. That's their plan. They've been to Hawaii but just that little stuff you're going to take an overnight trip. Here's your bedsheets, here's your — that kind of stuff. I think just doing that one thing, it's been really good for some of our kids who've never been away from home without mom or dad. They build memories of friends but I think it teaches them life skills they probably wouldn't otherwise, yes.

Interviewer: So my last two questions are related. The other participants I had to do a little bit of clarification for them. So please let me know if I need to elaborate.

Respondent: If I had any question, I can tell.

Interviewer: [Laughter] Are there any organizational strategies that you believe help create an environment that leads to high level music-making?

Respondent: Organizational strategies in terms of my preparation or mine and the kids' preparation or not?

Interviewer: Things that you do with your band program, how you've run your band program. Are there any things in particular that ultimately allow your kids to perform at a high level?

Respondent: [Pause] I guess in terms of things that play at a high level. I'm trying to think. Because we don't have a lot of money from fundraisers, we can't bring a lot of clinicians to help us with stuff when we get ready for band festival. We might bring in guest conductors once or twice and we can do that. I don't like bragging on myself so I'm not trying to do that but it's pretty amazing that we get superiors when there's only two of the student that work. God bless those children. Somehow, I haven't ruined them yet. I guess — I don't know. [Pause] I'm trying to

think of a different angle to answer your question. Organization-wise, we've got both band directors in every period this year. Sometimes the second eighth-grade band doesn't have the second director if it's not big enough. That person has to teach general music. There was a time when Laura teaches the students. We both taught general music. Because I tell my wife, I said, "If I make her teach three classes of general music, she's going to leave. So I'm going to teach one. This isn't fair." Having both in this scenario helps us to be able to do sectionals and that kind of stuff helps a lot because we can take a section a day, whatever, and fix problems if we need to. We don't do a whole lot of after-school rehearsals. Now that little sixth grade band we take to LGPE, they do 10 rehearsals after school and they sign up and they pay $10.00 to help for LGPE and pay for their lunch. That night, we get them Chick-fil-A and bring it back to school catered in like that but those are the kids that sign up who want to be there. So they'll come to those 10 rehearsals. It's pretty amazing but once I get in 8th-grade man, that 8th-grade apathy sets in and they get to come back after school, I could give you a million reasons why they can. So we'll do some stuff after school. I used to do a lot. The reason I quit doing them was, like I said, a lot of kids wouldn't show up at a rehearsal. One time, I was home sick. I had a cold or something. I had to come and do facility supervision at night, nobody would take my place, so I had to go sit there at 10:00 at night. I called to tell the band to be at rehearsal this afternoon. Forty kids in the band, but 10 show up and I'm like, "You know what? I'm tired of showing up and not be able to get everybody here." Now my attitude's changed now. Of course, I talk to the 10 that were there but I might have to keep changing more now that I'm like, "If you're here, I'm going to teach you and the ones that are here, we're going to get your parts straightened out." So we'll do some after-school rehearsals, not a lot, with the older kids. We try to do as much as we can in class, help them before school. One of the things we did, we didn't do it last year but previous years, was we would do a — I would take the three LGPE songs and divide them each one in the thirds. That was nine playing tests and you have like 10 weeks to do them. My thought was if I hear you play every note, I just know you can play the notes and rhythms. I can fix the rest of it in class. I think that worked. The challenge was me having time to sit and listen to, what was it, 500-something playing tests. That was hard and that's where the joke became that "Dr. [Miller]! Report cards are due and you haven't graded my test yet." "Yes, I know." I was having time to sit down and do it. It was hard at night to sit and do that. So will I go back to that? Maybe. I don't know. We'll see. We tried the SmartMusic thing. I don't like the SmartMusic. My dissertation was all on SmartMusic. I liked the old

one but I don't like the one online. I think it's too hard to use. So I guess I'm not sure I answered your question. That's just what I think you're after.

Interviewer: Sure. No, you gave me some things. After-school rehearsals, bring in clinicians, frequent line test breakups.

Respondent: Yes, okay.

Interviewer: So the next one's a very similar question. Maybe a little bit easier. Are there any instructional strategies that you feel that creates the environment at least a high-level music making?

Respondent: One of the things I said was a teacher strategy and it gets us to the high-level, I guess, it is repetition. Just doing a lot of stuff. Fixing it and just doing it and do it. A lot of our kids will not go home and practice. So we have to do that for them. So if we can fix as much as we can on the front end and then just get the repetition going, then I think we're okay. It'd be easy to say all that repetition you're just spoon-feeding to them. I always try to not do that to kids and just spoon-feed it to them. I know that the site reading is a level lower than the stage music but we've always gotten superiors in sightreading. So that makes me feel good. At least I know there's at least a good fundamental level of I can read notes and rhythms and play them. Sometimes they actually play in musical moments. I heard it. It's like, "Hey. [Laughter] How did you do that?" It even got to the point we'll take a song at the end like in LGPE if the final few chords are like real high-heavy because we have too many flutes and not enough tubists, I'll revoice all those chords to the band and so we'll be inside the reading room and I'll look at the flutes and go, if I have time, I'll go, "Add flutes, in the last note." I'll revoice the chord [Laughter] for no reason. I just want to. In the first year, we took the sixth-grade band. The nice thing about Georgia and you can decide in the last minute if you want to do it for a reading or not. I said, "Let's do it for a reading. They're fine." Because they're an elementary band but I'm like, "We don't have to tell them it was for a reading. Let's just see what happens." Then the day before, I'm like, "I think we should sight read." We tend to go over and had to do it with them a little bit and we kicked it around and doggone, if they didn't get a superior in a sight reading, they get straight superiors. [Laughter] I was like, "What in the world?" We just laughed. We couldn't believe it. It helped a little bit, too, that Chuck Jackson was the sight-reading judge of the year and he said, "I've confirmed it with the head

judge and for an elementary band, this has a key change and it goes off in a place beginners don't need to be so we're just going to do the first half of the song." "Okay." That was really fun. We were just so proud of them. I got that idea from Jill. She did it at Mabry a couple years. Now Chuck told me directors used to do that in [Carter] years ago but instead of spending time in class, just teaching them to play, they're teaching those three songs and so it kind of became like the thing not to do. It's all after school. Like I said, it's elementary music. You don't have to play grade one. It's an elementary band. That's been real fine. I'm looking forward to doing that again this year. I hope we make our way and make it to LGPE. I hope no shutdowns happen.

Interviewer: Right. Do you have anything else you would like to share?

Respondent: I don't think so. I probably said more than you wanted.

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Obviously, I didn't have anything to say. I do like to tell stories. So if I could get you to start telling stories and then I'll start talking too much.

Interviewer: Do you have any questions for me?

Respondent: No, sir. I appreciate you. Appreciate you asking. All those days I don't feel like I'm doing very well, this was a pat on the back. I liked it. I appreciate it.

Interviewer: If needed, would it be permissible for me to contact you with follow-up questions or clarifications?

Respondent: Of course.

Interviewer: So thank you very much for completing this interview. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about anything. Thank you for your willingness to share your perspectives with me.

Respondent: Thank you. I appreciate it.

- End of Recording -

Appendix H

Mrs. Wolfe's Interview Transcript

In-Depth Interview

[Madison Wolfe] - Interview

March 30, 2022

Interviewer: Can you please state your name?

Respondent: [Madison Wolfe].

Interviewer: What is your educational background and work experience?

Respondent: I have Bachelor's in Music Education and in Performance from Florida State University. I have a Master's in Music Education from the University of Florida. I've been teaching band for 11 years, all at the middle school and beginner level, and I've been here at [Summerset] Middle School for four years now.

Interviewer: Good. You answered my next question, how long you've been here. All right. Do you feel that teaching at a high-poverty school poses any unique challenges?

Respondent: I only ever taught at high-poverty schools, so I'm not really sure how different it is than other schools. I know one of the challenges is just financial means of the families, and so here at [Summerset], we provide a lot of school-owned instruments that students are welcome to use free of charge. Occasionally, we'll have students that can't afford other materials and we'll help them out with that. Some other challenges I've noticed is just with the ability to go home and practice. Some of our students, they don't have a home environment where they have a quiet place to practice their instruments. Last year, I had a student living in a car. She would just sit in the trunk of her car and practice occasionally, but we try to combat that by opening the band room every day so students can come in, use the band room for morning practice whenever they choose to do so. Otherwise, sometimes the challenge is like connecting with parents. They tend to have hectic work schedules, and so getting that parental support sometimes could be a challenge, but I found for

the most part the parents are very invested in how they child does in school, wanting to help them be better.

Interviewer: All right. Are there any other ways that you guys address the challenges other than what you mentioned?

Respondent: As far as low income, not really. I haven't really noticed any other issues. Maybe sometimes students will have trouble purchasing reeds or other supplies, so occasionally we'll have a student that we'll help with that.

Interviewer: Are you and your coworker able to structure the classes that you teach during the day?

Respondent: How do you mean structure?

Interviewer: Like do you have ability group bands, homogenous groupings?

Respondent: Yes, the way our school does scheduling, it's based on grade levels, so we'll see like all of 8th grade come in the morning. In the middle of the day, we see 7th grade and at the end of the day 6th grade. We kind of do ability grouping with the 7th and 8th graders to an extent. Sometimes the higher-achieving students will be placed in one band class and lower-achieving in the other. The 6th graders are just - they're all mixed together when they come to school. We put them in band class before we know what instrument they're going to play, so the best we can do with that is dividing them based on if they play with one instrument or brass or percussion.

Interviewer: How would you describe your classroom management styles?

Respondent: For the most part, it's just studying those routines and the procedures at the beginning of the year, and making sure everyone knows the expected behaviors in the band room. Then as needed, if students are not following those rules or procedures, then we take care of it at the forefront, and hopefully make sure that throughout the year everything stays a good level.

Interviewer: Are there specific classroom management procedures or routines in your band room?

Respondent: It kind of depends on the class. There are certain classes that can handle - coming in the room, certain classes can handle coming in and being social and talking while they get set. In other classes, we might need to reassess and have them come in silently and they can't talk when they come in. The routine, that's – I don't know. It's adaptable based on the group of students.

Interviewer: What instruments do you start beginners on?

Respondent: We start everything, so flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, bass clarinet, alto, tenor and bari saxophone, trombone, euphonium, tuba, percussion. We start all the instruments.

Interviewer: What was your rationale for starting everything?

Respondent: We figured that if they can do it and if they love it, why not? Some of the kids, they really flock to the bari saxophone and they love it. If they have the physical capabilities of holding it, then we go for it.

Interviewer: In what ways do you communicates with parents?

Respondent: Most of my communication now is through [Carter] County's CTLS Parent. That's been a nice new tool. It auto-translates, so for all our parents that don't speak English, I can type my message and it'll translate it to the language of their choice, so that's been nice. Phone calls, occasionally I make some phone calls to parents, but it's mostly through that CTLS Parent.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: When we have events coming up, we always send home a note in English and Spanish that hopefully the students give to their families. We also put it on our band website. Brian does a great job of maintaining the [Summerset] Band website.

Interviewer: What would you say is your percentage of Spanish-only speaking families?

Respondent: I'm not really sure. It's les than 50%. It's a minority of the parents, I probably think.

Interviewer: Right, but it's enough for you to have to send letters home in both languages?

Respondent: Yes. In our conferences, we always have translators. When we do our instrument tryouts, we always have a district translator here.

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. How often do you feel you communicate with parents?

Respondent: At least two to three times a quarter.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: This year, our principal is doing this new thing where he sends out a newsletter every week that kind of tells what parents what's coming up for the next week. Those communications go out weekly where we're telling them, "Hey, here's what we're working on the band. Here are some events coming up," stuff like that.

Interviewer: Do you use web or social media to communicate about your – with your band program stakeholders?

Respondent: Yes. Brian does all of that. He's awesome at it. He does – we have an Instagram page. He uses the Remind app. We have a Facebook and a Twitter. He does the band website.

Interviewer: Okay. What would you say is probably the most popular one with the kids?

Respondent: I feel like we reach most of them through Remind.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I guess Instagram. Some of them check Instagram, but lately, this year it hasn't seemed like as many of them are on there.

Interviewer: The kids told me they thought Instagram was their favorite.

Respondent: Okay. We tend to post anytime we have an event. We'll put pictures up and there's always a lot of likes on it, so I guess they're checking it. [Laughter]

Interviewer: You guys do Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and the website.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Is it just copy and paste whatever?

Respondent: Pretty much whatever we post on Instagram also gets put on Twitter. I think Facebook not as much now.

Interviewer: Yes, probably. [Laughter] Going back to classroom and instruction, in what way do you hold the band kids accountable with their grades?

Respondent: That's a tricky one. [Laughter] I think I hold them more accountable than they hold themselves. We give endless opportunities for students to make up missing assignments. If they're missing a playing test or if they'll score poorly on a playing test, they can try to do it again and bring their grade up. Most of them don't take advantage of that. I found that at this school, the students here don't seem to really care about grades, so it's not a motivator for them if they're failing in the end. So, we have other ways to motivate them.

Interviewer: Really? Okay.

Respondent: We also like to tell them "We're not going to join you in your panic, so if you're choosing to wait until the last minute to play all these missing playing tests, we'll do what we can for you, but we're not going to panic with you to make sure you get it done."

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: It's mostly on them. I'll give them gentle reminders during class like, "Hey, make sure you're – if you're missing those assignments, turn them in." I'll even pull aside certain kids individually and say, "You're still missing three of your assignments. Let's get it done." Ultimately, it's on them.

Interviewer: So then, what are some ways? You said you do other ways that are not great. What are some ways you hold them accountable for performance?

Respondent: Well, performance, we try to promote the whole team aspect of band. "Your team's counting on you, and every single one of you is important to the success of the performance." Mostly through peer pressure. For some of them it's for the grades because we do – it is a summative grade, so it's 60% of their grade to come to the concert. For some of them that's their motivator to show up, but we try as much as possible to promote the team aspect of it. Usually, a couple of weeks before the concert, I'll compliment them a lot about how excited I am for their families to hear them play, and they've been working so hard, they're going to do great, and hopefully that reaches some of them as well.

Interviewer: Right. On the night of the concerts, what are those audiences like? Are they…?

Respondent: It varies. Like 6th grade audience is pretty excited and full. By the time we get to 8th grade, it's very sparse. Hardly any – a lot of the kids just get dropped off and the parents come pick them up afterwards. It's just kind of sad.

Interviewer: What about audience etiquette with the families?

Respondent: At the beginning of each concert, we have students who do this little spiel. They get up in front of the stage and they kind of go over what's expected as far as audience etiquette – silencing your cellphones, please don't talk while we're playing. If you need to use your phone, please exit the theater, try not to come in and out during the music, wait until between songs. We'll have students that do those announcements in both English and then another student does it in Spanish. It seems like that's been helping.

Interviewer: Do you feel like that's a necessity?

Respondent: I do just – I don't know. I think we – this is for many of our families. It's their first time, like not only our students are new to performing concerts, but the families are new to experiencing and listening to concerts, and so teaching them that as well is quite necessary.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: There's a lot of families with young kids that come, so there's always going to be that kind of like chatter and noise and little kids squalling, but I think that's – I don't know. I think that's part of the excitement in the audience as well, and it's always fun to see little kids dancing when they hear a song they like and dance along. It's always fun.

Interviewer: Do you guys have any playing test?

Respondent: We do almost one every week. As we get closer to concerts, we kind of lay back on that. Every week, they get two grades to get their ensemble skills, so their participation grade, so just showing and trying to get that grade every week, and then they get a playing test grade every week. Sometimes those are done in-person, like playing for another class. Lately, we've been using the MusicFirst program that [Carter] County came up for everyone. We've been using that more lately. Some of the kids prefer just play it live in class.

Interviewer: Right. How would you describe your use of instructional time during a typical rehearsal with a group that you're taking to a festival adjudication?

Respondent: I find that having a routine really helps them. We usually start with long tones, then we'll do either some rhythm studies or scales. Sometimes both. Sometimes we just do one of those. We've been working on some close studies to have them expand their range.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: Then we'll rehearse music. Typically, I like to devote 15 minutes on one section of the song and then we'll move to another section. In other days, it's like, "No, we really need to buckle down on this one piece." That varies, but yes, usually then we'll do the big music rehearsal takes up the big chunk of it.

Interviewer: [Side Conversation] I've noticed in your classroom the routine is definitely there and it looks very similar to your coworkers. Could you speak on that about the importance of that? Are you trying to make it predictable for the kids? Do you have some convictions of why it needs to be like that?

Respondent: I don't know. I think it helps for them to have consistency. It also helps on days when like if Brian's out and I'm doing both the band classes or if I'm out just doing both band classes, the students already know what to expect, and it's pretty consistent no matter who's out there in the room. We laid that foundation in 6th grade, so we worked a lot on "Here's the allotted time to be in your seat ready to play," and they practice doing that. Brian and I are just kind of in agreement as far as our expectations and teaching stye. We try to keep that pretty consistent for the students.

Interviewer: What aspects of a band rehearsal do you believe to be the most important?

Respondent: As far as classroom procedures or playing abilities?

Interviewer: Like warm-ups versus repertoire versus technique or…

Respondent: I found what with our students, they tend to only be focused for so long on each of those activities, like warm-ups, and it kind of depends on the day. You can kind of read them when they're coming in the room, but there are some days where they have that detail focus where we can kind of be a little pickier with it. There are other days where it's like, "No, not today."

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: We try to focus when we're doing the long tones on bettering the tone quality that they're producing and the brass support, and just focus. We tell them a lot like, "Most important thing at all times is playing with a good sound." We kind of drill that into them, like always above everything else, just playing with a good sound. We work a lot on that and it's just like listening lately, especially with fourth period, and then a lot of listen and matching. Sometimes we'll intentionally have them play it wrong so they can hear what that sounds like and they kind of hone it in and fix it. I don't know. For me, listening, getting them to listen and like, "Where's the melody? Can you hear it? Are matching the style? Are you matching articulation?

Interviewer: Some listening exercises?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: I see. What method books do you use in your curriculum?

Respondent: With the 6th graders, we're using "Tradition of Excellence." The kids really like the songs in there and the background music, they kind of – it's not too cheesy. They kind of like it. I like that they use the authentic instruments and cultures as their accompaniment music. We use that mostly with them. We pull out these band expressions books. Those are out of print now, but we lend the class that. They love playing songs out of those, so we'll occasionally pass those out too.

Interviewer: I like those books too.

Respondent: Just so we're kind of not like stuck in this – seeing this every day. With the 8th graders, we use the "Foundations for Superior Performance." There's the "Rhythmic Brass Patterns, 101 Rhythmic Brass Patterns." We're using that with them. Seventh grade, it a lot of just materials that we either borrowed or created and we hand out, so not as much book work for them.

Interviewer: In 7th grade?

Respondent: Right. They kind of have outgrown the method book, but they're not – I don't know. That rhythmic brass pattern book is a little challenging.

Interviewer: Right. What's your process then for repertoire selection?

Respondent: We try to appeal to the student taste a little bit. We pull in a lot of music from other cultures and hopefully relate to someone in the room a little bit. Student choice as well. We tell them like, "Hey, go check out this website. If you hear a song that you like, let us know. We'll look into getting it for you." We kind of know the style we're going for and we'll hand out two or three pieces in that style and then we'll let the students say like, "Hey, what do you guys think about this one? Do you like that?" A lot of it is like we'll give them options that we know are at their level, but then we kind of let them have the final say what they want to play.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. Well, that's neat. In what ways do you add rigor to the curriculum?

Respondent: We like to tell the students that – we'll do this like starting the day after they play a concert, "Our goal is that your next performance is better than your last," and so

we'll try to push them a little bit, but with certain groups, you can't push them too far. They just give up. Just finding that piece that maybe just pushes them a little bit more to learn one or two new concepts that we can kind of throw at them and not something that's so insultingly easy that they get bored.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: If you push them too much, then they just shut down on you.

Interviewer: How would you describe your interactions with students during a band rehearsal?

Respondent: I feel like I'm a little more formal with them as far as like – I don't know. Brian is really good about joking around with the kids and he can – he's good at relating to them and like if a student did something they shouldn't in class, he can kind of just say something a little bit jokingly with them to get them to fix it, and just like constantly having that back and forth with students. Personally, if I try to do that too much, I lose control of the class, so for me it's just kind of follow – I'll do a lot of interactions at the beginning and end of class. I might say a couple things here and there in the middle of rehearsal, but I don't do too much just because I don't want to have them lose their focus.

Interviewer: Right. How would you describe your interactions with students outside of band class?

Respondent: I try to build those relationships, just taking an interest in their life. "Hey, how's it going?" and "How's the baby sister doing?"

Interviewer: Right. You're talking about like during class transitions in the hallway?

Respondent: Yes, during class transitions. If I see them like in the library, "Hey, how did that softball game go?" Stuff like that. Inviting them to come in and get help in the morning, so sometimes in the morning, I'll sit down with the kid and play their part with them or help them out.

Interviewer: In what ways do you motivate your students?

Respondent: Let's see. Motivation. Mostly, I try to get them to find that intrinsic motivation. Really congratulating them when they succeed at something so that they feel good

about it and they want to keep working to succeed, so giving compliments. The 6th graders and sometimes even 7th and 8th graders, they love stickers, so giving them that little carrot like, "Hey, I got a sticker today." I probably don't do that as much as I should.

Interviewer: Right. Do you believe it is important to foster a sense of community in your band program?

Respondent: I do and we do that a lot and that kind of goes back to that motivation aspect too. We're really big on supporting your teammate when they do something well. Sometimes the students will just do it spontaneously when they hear something. The 6th graders are always really good at this. When they hear someone did something really well and they do that band applause for them. We have them do the band applause with their feet.

Interviewer: Yes, stomp their feet?

Respondent: Yes, and so they do that for each other. We even have a few students, we deemed them the motivators.

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: There's a couple of students that will go up to a kid and be like, "Hey, man, that was really good. You did really good on that." If they don't do it on their own and we notice something really well, we're like, "Didn't the flute sound amazing when they played that? Let's give them band applause because that was awesome," or, "Yes, they nailed it. Do you hear it? The trombone has nailed that note. Band applause." Just getting them to kind of cheer for each other. I started doing this lately and I got it from Jackie Harberger at UGA, but she always has her students kind of turn to each other and say – she would tell them like, "Thank your neighbor for making beautiful music with you today." We kind of do that. Occasionally, I'll be like, "Hey, turn to your neighbor and say, 'Nice work today or thanks for playing awesome music with me today.'" Stuff like that. So, building that community. We also tell them a lot, "It's not just our school community, but the band community." For example, when we went to LGDE like, "Hey, those other kids, they work just as hard as you did to prepare for today, so when you see the in the hall, tell them good luck or congratulate them on their performance because we're all a team." You'll

never know who's going to be on your team, especially since our kids move a lot. It's like you might be sitting in that room one day with those kids, so just building that sense of community as far as band.

Interviewer: Would you say that your school being highly transient is a challenge for you guys?

Respondent: It can be. Sometimes it's sad when you only have those two bass clarinet players or that one oboe player and then they move away, or your rockstar trumpet player moves away. I find it more challenging though when new students move in.

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: Especially depending where they move in form, it totally changes the dynamic of the room, and so trying to get them onboard with how we do things here that might be differently than where they came from. That's another thing when we have a new student, trying to get other students in the room to make them feel welcome. "Hey, can you help them and show them how we do this." Pushing that off on another kid.

Interviewer: Right. Okay. Talking about your instructional strategies that you use, your classroom instruction and your pedagogy, are there any specific strategies that you believe helps create the environment that allows high-level music-making?

Respondent: Some of what I do, I think, came from private instruction strategies. I did a lot of teaching private lessons before becoming full-time band director, and so I think some of the stuff that I do during class is more like what you would find in a private lesson as far as breaking down the music into the tiny little details and how you might attack the beginning of certain notes. Some of that I kind of get from my private music teaching background, and I think that helps them a lot to think more musically. In the 6th grade classes, I do a lot of breaking up into duets or learning a solo or learning this trio, and then they have time where they up and work on that on their own. Then we all sit and they come in front of the room and they perform it for the class. We did that a lot. They like it. When I ask for a student - the class to volunteer to play, almost every single one of them wants to play, and so then we end up taking half the class to go down the row so everyone can play, but they like it and that's a chance for them to cheer on each other. If someone makes a mistake or play something horribly, we always try to find that thing that they did really well and kind

of focus on, “Okay. This went really well. You did that great. So now next time you’re going to add this thing.”

Interviewer: Talking about the on the flipside of that, the general management of the band program, the organizational stuff that you do, are there any things that you put in place organizationally that you think contribute to the environment that allows it for higher-level music-making?

Respondent: We try to get the students organized and they each receive a binder, a three-ring binder at the beginning of the year and everything goes in the binder. Their book, we hole punch it and it goes in the binder. They had sheet protectors and every handout we give them goes in the binder. Then kind of jokingly, but they – if they leave something out, we have to put it away for them. They get charged for that and so it’s like, “Hey, thank you for those five [school] cash you gave me for having to figure stuff away.”

Interviewer: What’s a [school] cash?

Respondent: When do they something really well at school, they’re awarded [school] cash.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Then throughout – on Fridays usually, but throughout the year, there are different things they can purchase with their [school] cash. Like they can get a bag of chips or popcorn or various things. Every other Friday, we do Fresh Air Friday to get to the outside, and so they have to buy it with [school] cash. Certain teachers will have school stores where you can buy things like pencils or erasers or things with [school] cash, so that. Having those routines to come in, how to come in, how to get ready, how to pack up, all of that I guess contributes to the organization. The structure being consistent when a student disrupts a class, they know they get a noise worksheet. They sit down and write on the noise worksheet.

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: A noise worksheet?

Respondent: Yes, so they have to write about how they're disrupting the rehearsal.

Interviewer: Can I keep this?

Respondent: Yes, you can keep that.

Interviewer: [Laughter] All right. Do you have anything else that you'd like to share? [Pause]

Respondent: I don't know. Like I said earlier, I only ever taught low-income schools. Honestly, I don't know what I would do differently at other schools.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: To me, it just seems like I'm just teaching, so I don't really know. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Do you have any questions for me?

Respondent: No, I don't think so.

Interviewer: If needed, would it be permissible for me to contact you for follow-up questions or clarifications?

Respondent: Yes, that's fine. I actually just thought of something.

Interviewer: What's that?

Respondent: Well, there's anything else I want to add. I think what helps is with our students, we also try to just get them to appreciate what they have and we work really hard to make sure that they have quality instruments and quality furniture and quality music stands, and just try to get them to understand like how fortunate they are to have these things. When I taught in Texas, we didn't have nearly as nice instruments for kids to use.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: I think that helps a lot, just letting them know like, "Hey."

Interviewer: Yes, for sure.

Respondent: "You're so fortunate you have all these stuff for you and not everyone gets that." Building that appreciation for music. I also talk a lot about music is a lifelong thing and how – since I play in a community band, you don't have to be a music professional just to love music.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: Anytime I meet somebody when I'm out that does another professionally, I'm like, "Oh, I still play my trumpet and I love it." I always share that with my students. I play them a lot of video recordings. We will watch a lot of videos of professionals playing just so they can kind of see what the future can hold for them if they choose a standard instrument.

Interviewer: Yes, for sure.

Respondent: Yes, that's it. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Well, thank you very much for conducting this interview. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about anything and thank you for your willingness to share your perspectives with me.

Respondent: You're welcome.

- End of Recording -

Appendix I

Mr. Nix's Interview Transcript

In-Depth Interview

[Chris Nix] Interview

April 1, 2022

Interviewer: Okay. All right. Thank you very much for agreeing to contribute to the study. I appreciate you giving your valuable time to me in this study. Thank you for signing and returning the consent letter and the audio video release form. Do you have any questions for me regarding the forms?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: All right. Do you agree to participate in the study?

Respondent: I do.

Interviewer: Thank you for participating in the study. As a principal, I selected your school for this study based on its having a high achieving band program and that your - and your high rate of students on prayer reduced lunch. This interview aims to gain insights into your school's band directors, instructional and organizational practices in that realm. Your feedback will be used to publish my dissertation, its defense, and possible conference presentations. If you choose your name, the school, name of the school, its band directors, and the school district will be kept confidential. I'm grateful that you are consenting to this interview with your continued participation, and I'll begin the recording.

Respondent: All right.

Interviewer: Okay. Please state your name.

Respondent: [Chris Nix], principal at [Summerset] Middle School.

Interviewer: What is your educational background and work experience?

Respondent: So, I graduated with my undergraduate education and masters from the University of Tennessee. I have a specialist degree from Kennesaw State University. I have worked in [Carter] County since 1998. So, this I believe is my 24th, 25th year in [Carter] County, all in middle school. I've been at a variety of schools as a teacher and as an administrator, mostly in title one schools though.

Interviewer: Really? Okay. Well, what schools have you been in?

Respondent: [this response is omitted to protect the identities of the participants, the school, and the school district]

Interviewer: Okay. So, how long have you been in your current position?

Respondent: This is my sixth year.

Interviewer: So, what is your experience with the band program?

Respondent: So, the band program specifically here at [Summerset]?

Interviewer: Yes, sir.

Respondent: I work very close with them. I've always desired, no matter where I've been as an administrator, but specially as a principal here at [Summerset] to have a healthy music program. I think that those life skills and just non-academic skills that they get in those three programs are very essential to the middle school students' development. A lot of our better kids or higher academically achieving kids are in band course or orchestra. So, I really support them, promote them and try to put them in the best position to succeed, giving them the things that they need but really work in collaboration with them as far as recruiting and promotion, just continue the pipeline of students to have a good, a great program.

Interviewer: Yes. I think I heard that your kids are in band at Hillgrove. Right?

Respondent: Yes. All three of my daughters went through the band program at Lovinggood. My oldest daughter went on to go to Hillgrove and was in the band program and marching band all four years that she was there.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: My middle daughter decided not to take up band in high school and then my third daughter is at Lovinggood still now. So, it's yet to be seen if she'll go on to Hillgrove.

Interviewer: Okay. Yes, that's a great band program. Both of those programs are really good.

Respondent: Yes, they do a great job.

Interviewer: So, you said you like how they taught life skills. Would you mind elaborating on that or maybe specific life skills that you see being taught?

Respondent: I mean in that environment, the collaboration and teamwork has to happen, to me, not only among your section, but the whole band. I mean everybody's got to do their part for the band to sound good, and it just takes a few folks that don't practice stuff or do their part to make things not sound great and kids have a way of putting peer pressure on folks to make sure that they're holding their weight. I just think that in that environment, Brian then kind of teach that, that we're in this together. When you're in a math class and you're working on problems or you're in the ELA class and you're writing an essay, when you're doing a group project and group projects in academic classes tend to get a little bit complicated sometimes because there's always somebody who's not pulling their weight or whatnot. But in those classes, like I said, I mean they work together and they really nurture that family environment. One of the things that I think is essential and that I put - try to really push the parents every time I get in front of them, especially our rising sixth grade parents that we had last night at our open house. Because most of these kids have never picked up an instrument in their life. They don't know how to read music, anything like that, and for them to go in there and within several months and by a holiday concert able to read music and play music together sounds great. I think there's an intrinsic motivation that that gives kids. It's like, "Wow, if I can do this – I didn't know – I didn't know how to play the French horn six months ago. If I can do this, then I can do math. Middle school is not going to be that hard. I can tackle things. So, I think it gives them a sense of accomplishment very quickly and really is

rewarding with - they see that the hard work they're putting in, that they're getting out something.

Interviewer: Yes. From your perspective, are there any unique challenges associated with teaching at a high poverty school?

Respondent: Yes, there's a lot of challenges. Number one, we have to rely, and they do a great job, the band program on continually adding to their inventory of instruments because all of our kids can't go out and rent instruments. So, they do a great job of just slowly continuing to buy new as stuff gets older. So, that's a challenge, it's just the money aspect and the money aspect permeates beyond that because I've been at high team schools like Dickerson, like Lost Mountain, and not only the kids in the band program but those kids are getting extra money or getting - their parents are paying extra money for them to have private lessons because they don't just want to be in the band, they want them to be the first seat in their section in the band. So, a lot of that and then a lot of - the transient factor plays a part because – and I know that Dr. [Miller] and Mrs. [Wolfe] talked about that this year, that that's really hurt their numbers because if that start with us and then they leave and we don't always get kids who come in, who came from a school that maybe had them a well-established or promoted band as much as we did, so their numbers just continue to dwindle with that transiency and that hurts their overall ability to have a functioning band program, to a certain extent, it just hurts their numbers.

Interviewer: So, is the band director involved in making suggestions or decisions regarding the structure of the program? I.e., like schedule of classes, the budget, et cetera.

Respondent: Yes. Dr. [Miller] has his budget that he gets from the county. He's over that. I mean, he manages that very well. I mean, he does a great job of using what he has to meet his needs. He does ask for assistance on occasion. Again, and I support the band program so we have - I've given him money when it's been available. I've also worked with him to find different sources of money to help supplement what he already gets. Tell me the question again.

Interviewer: Is he involved in making decisions regarding the structure of the band program? Another one would be classes and scheduling too.

Respondent: He works within the confines of our schedule as we have it now. But pretty much, I leave it totally or we as administration totally up to him how he does that. He and [Madison]. I think pretty commonplace in most middle school bands where they separate the woodwinds, I guess and the brass or the two sections possibly, and in sixth grade and then when they move to seventh grade, they do the high and the low band and they make all those decisions. I mean they tell us where those kids need to be scheduled and we schedule it and we work with the other programs to make sure there's a balance within those grade level connections classes. So, one hour is not heavier than the other, but I mean he makes - he makes a lot of those decisions. I mean, I pretty much leave it up to his and [Madison]'s expertise.

Interviewer: Okay. Yes, that's how I do it at Barber, same way he does it there.

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: This study examines and if you hear the band kids in the background and hopefully it's not too distracting.

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: The study examines high achieving band programs among schools representing low socioeconomic communities. One element of this study is administrative involvement and support for students in the band program and the band directors. Can you share examples of how you provide such support?

Respondent: Like I said, I mean I try to put them in a place to succeed. So, financially if there are things that they need, I do my best to get them those things. Dr. [Miller] have some very innovative ideas in ways of promoting the band program and just doing things in the community. I'm always supportive and I go to him with ideas like our spirit nights having a small group of band folks up there to play for families as they come to Chick-fil-A. They've done traveling things at the holidays or going to nursing homes and playing for kids. So, financially, also with the ideas, I support them with different recruiting methods, sending stuff out for them, encouraging them to again, go to different schools, different ways to promote their program and then also with continual professional development music conference, usually held in Athens. What's that music conference? G…

Interviewer: GMEA.

Respondent: GMEA. Yes. So, usually they like to go each year and rotating the music program, who goes. One of the two, Dr. [Miller] or Mrs. [Wolfe] go each year. So, we support that and use professional development money to pay for most, if not, all their trips. Sometimes they do use some of their money to pay for that, pay for some of their stays when - and different things when it comes to odds and ends and those kinds of things that where they're taking kids to state stuff in Athens or whether it's around the district. So, really try to support them and all of their endeavors and anything that they need.

Interviewer: The band kids play at Chick-fil-A for spirit nights?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: That's a good idea.

Respondent: We usually do that every - we do during the holidays and they'll play some holiday tunes. I know even also during the holidays, they'll play like in the Atrium, a couple of mornings over the holiday break for the kids coming in and usually not only is the band program go, but the orchestra program goes and then we'll have some of the coral students go as well and they'll go at different time slots. But this past year he had a group of just – it was something different that he did this year. I think it was just clarinet players. It was just like a quartet of clarinet players and then him and Mrs. [Wolfe].

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: They did a great job.

Interviewer: Yes. So, in what ways have you observed the band director communicating with parents?

Respondent: What ways does he not? He uses CTLS parents. He has, I think, a band Facebook page. He uses Remind. I think the band program has an Instagram page. They are very present on social media. They communicate in multiple ways with their families to try to make sure that they are getting information that they needed to them and

that's in addition to all the stuff that we already do in-house as far as our weekly newsletters, parents and a different communication tools. Because they put their information on there too. So, I mean, if there's a band parent that says that they don't get information from the band program, that's usually on them because they saturate parents with information.

Interviewer: So, you've already answered the next question. It's about social media. So, I'll go on. What are some responsibilities or duties that your band director completes that go beyond classroom instruction?

Respondent: So, number one, Dr. [Miller] is our webmaster. When we went to the new district's web - universal web design, he is one of a couple of people that we sent to the training. He's become very adept at it. He keeps it up for me, even putting reminders and things on there without being asked. He knows just to update that main scrolling page with different information. So, he's the webmaster. He's also on our leadership team. He's one of the connections representatives on the leadership team. He's also the connections lead. So, we have grade level leads as far as operational and procedural type aspects of the school in school day, and so he's the lead for the connections department.

Interviewer: Which non-instructional procedures of the band director do you believe contribute to the success of the band program? So, let me elaborate on this.

Respondent: Yes. [Laughter]

Interviewer: For example, things that he does in his band room that don't have to do with instruction like the way the room is organized, the lockers, the way he communicates, whatever you think is probably the most effective that doesn't have to do with teaching music, but ultimately helps the success of the program.

Respondent: I mean, it's part of instruction, but I would say classroom management and relationships with kids. I mean, he does a good job of building relationships with his students. Mrs. [Wolfe] as well. I think kids that are serious about band know that he cares about them or they care about him or about them and want them to succeed. I mean that band, of course, like most bands, I'm sure that's his passion. He pushes their ability to have them continue to excel and improve in band. He encourages them to go on to high school and continuing to play. I mean, he's serious about all

aspects of banding and he wants an attractive room. I mean right now, we're doing initiative where we're trying to change out all the lockers in his room or in the band room for the kids to put their instruments because he very much feels the same way I do, we have the same philosophy that the area code in which you reside should not determine the quality of instruction that you get or the type of facility that you go to each day. I very much tried to beautify the school and do a lot of different things to upgrade it on our own with some district assistance. And he has the same philosophy. So, he wants the kids to know that he wants - that he wants them to have a nice space and that it's a place that's comfortable for them. It's a place where they can come talk to him. I mean, he's been here for a long time, but when we get kids that come back and just want to see teachers, they just pop in the front office. You get a lot of that sometimes in the springtime. There are a couple of teachers in the academic wing that are really popular with kids that have been here for a while. They want to come see. But one of the folks, they always want to see, is they always want to see Dr, [Miller].

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: He is a testament to hit the relationships he builds with kids. So, I don't know if that answered the question or not, but…

Interviewer: I think it's wonderful and I think it's wonderful that you say that area code of where you live should not determine what the facilities look like. A good example is Osborne, right, now that you guys feed. It's a beautiful school now. It's wonderful.

Respondent: Yes, they've done great things.

Interviewer: Yes. Let's see. Where am I? Do you see a sense of community within the band program, and if so, in what ways?

Respondent: I do. Again, I think it's just there is a natural thing that happens in band that I've - I mean it just - it is what a band is. I mean, I saw it when I was in school in high school in band. I mean, the band folks, I mean they get close really quick and it has to do with just learning that music together and being together every day. I've seen it with my own kids. I mean, band kids love to affectionately call themselves band nerds. I mean, they hang out together. I mean, they just love – passion about they just love band. So, I mean, he's part of building - I mean, a large part of building that

community. Again, those relationships that he has with students definitely help with that and he talks with kids about that. I mean, that is part of his message every day, we are all together, that we are a team in this.

Interviewer: I can't remember if you told me what instrument you played in the band.

Respondent: I want to say trumpets. I don't know. He played a bunch. I don't know.

Interviewer: I thought you played an instrument.

Respondent: Oh no, no, no. I didn't. I've never been in the band. That's why, I mean, I have the utmost respect for these kids. I tell these sixth graders all the time that like - you know the fee. I mean, I don't know how to read music. I mean, the fact that you are in the sixth grade are doing that and playing together, I mean again, that should give you a sense of accomplishment to see that you can do this and that if you can do this, you can do math, you can do writing, you can do science. You're only going to get out of it what you put into it, and I think band teaches that more succinctly to kids than anything else.

Interviewer: How would you describe the band directors' interactions with the students outside of rehearsals, like hallway transitions, events, non-rehearsal class time?

Respondent: Fantastic, again because he's built those relationships. Dr. [Miller] is in the hallways between classes. He's a regular at lunch to go get his sweet tea. So, he's down in the cafeteria area when he's on planning and the kids are going to lunch and he has great relationship kids. I mean, he's always talking with them. They're always proactively saying hi to him which is, to me, always a great sign when you don't speak to kids in the hallway, they're speaking to you first.

Interviewer: Right. Right. Yes, I would agree with that. It's a good sign. So, have you noticed any specific classroom routines that the band director uses, starting with what specific routines have you noticed him followed to conclude the class?

Respondent: To conclude the class?

Interviewer: Well, let's say for example, what routines like concluding the class during instruction or at the start of class? Have you noticed any specific routines?

Respondent: I mean the kids know the routines and procedures. I mean those kids, they go straight in, they go to their locker, they get their stuff, they get ready to go. I mean, he doesn't have to say anything. I mean, they just do it and it takes some teaching, of course, at the beginning of the year, but he sets those foundations and he is one that stays the course. He's very resilient. He's not going to start to burn out in January, February, March, just getting worn down throughout the year. He has a very high resolve and he's going to continue those and hold those kids and their expectations and because the kids know that and because he lays the foundations and builds the relationships at the beginning of the year, the things that would possibly come up that would kind of beat you down in January, February and March aren't there because of what he has done. So, those kids know the routines and procedures and expectations, and they come in and they get going and they start playing in the band. They warm up and then I always think the band course and orchestra teachers are the masters of formative instruction before that was even really a thing in schools. I mean, all they do is continually have kids play. They listen, evaluate, they stop, they provide feedback, they give some individual feedback and sections or it's the whole group. I mean, it's just a continual cycle of feedback to those students throughout class and I don't know that he specifically does a specific closing activity but it's just more procedural. Again, when in the class it happens, kids know what to do. They pack up their stuff, they put their stuff up, they straighten up the seats, the stands, and then they're heading to the next class.

Interviewer: Okay. In what ways have you observed the band director adding riggor to the curriculum?

Respondent: I think he challenges his students, his high students. I mean the high bands, definitely with challenging music. He's always looking to do some different things that a number of years ago, he got a group of kids together to do like a little mariachi band thing with our Hispanic kids, which I think was neat because that shows he understands our community and wants to relate to them and find something they're interested in. He had a number of boys who came with their trumpets and practice after school. I know a passion of his is jazz band. So, he's looking to do that more. He's done that with different levels of success based on the year. So, he's always pushing though and then the outside experience of school as far as kids auditioning for the different, I guess district and state honor bands. So, I think varying degrees

of rigor within the class and outside and even extracurricular stuff outside of the school day.

Interviewer: Okay. In what ways does your school and the band director hold children accountable? This could be academic and behavior or…?

Respondent: Yes. So, we're a PBIS school, and so we -

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Do what?

Interviewer: I'm sorry. My principal just brought that up to me yesterday, that she wants us go to PBIS. So, I might [Laughter] be chatting with some people more about it.

Respondent: Okay. Yes. So, we're a PBIS school. So, he follows that. There's positive incentives to give out. I don't know. I'd have to look. I don't know how much he gives out [school] cash. But he's very much a proponent of the PBIS program and the things that we do. Like I said, he stays the course. So, he holds kids accountable and again, it goes back to those relationships and the expectations they have and staying the course because of those things. He rarely has a lot of behaviors, serious behavior concerns in his classroom that can't be dealt with just the individual conversation to a student or make parent phone call home. But he's supportive of the process that we have in place, again then in his classroom. I mean he stays the course and holds kids and expectations day in and day out.

Interviewer: So, would you say you probably get less office referrals from the band room than you do other parts of the building?

Respondent: Oh, for sure.

Interviewer: Do you have any theories why that might be?

Respondent: I mean, in my opinion, that's a place you're choosing to go, and that's the big factor of it. I mean we push and really drive home with parents all the time, especially again those rising sixth grade students as they're coming into middle school. That is the one class that you have choice over you take or not, is band course or orchestra.

Everything else is pretty much set for you and I would think if you're choosing to go to that environment and you enjoy that, that you would not be acting up, and then a culture that goes on in that class. You have kids that are very serious about band and they're playing and they want to sound good. So, they again, tend to put that positive peer pressure on the other kids because they don't want somebody in there messing around and making the band sound bad or making their section sound bad.

Interviewer: Okay. So, how are we doing on time? I've only got a few questions left.

Respondent: Oh, you're fine.

Interviewer: Okay. So, in what ways does the band director address the many needs of your school students during classroom time? These needs can go into needs of kids from the communities that they have or just general needs in general.

Respondent: I mean, I think he's pretty in tune with kids. Again, it goes back to those relationships, like most things do. He's pretty in tune with them. I mean, he knows the kids that don't have supportive home environments for practice time. I mean, they open up the band room in the morning for kids to come practice. They got a lot of kids who are coming in the morning to practice. They know kids that need financial assistance as far as buying books. He's come to me before knowing that folks are in different situations and either asking how I can assist him or letting me know that they need assistance through different arms, avenues that we have in the building to assist them. So, yes, he's pretty in tune with his kids and what they need no matter what, whether it's even just it seems like something's going on and talking to the counselors about it, to maybe them checking with them. So, like I said, I think he does a lot of that.

Interviewer: Oh, yes. You're doing so well answering these questions. You'll answer something and then it covers the next two or three questions that I have.

Respondent: Okay. [Laughter]

Interviewer: So, please be patient if some of them seems redundant.

Respondent: Yes, no worries.

Interviewer: So, the next question, is when he's on the podium in front of students, how would you describe his interactions with the students during classroom time?

Respondent: I think Dr. [Miller] has a good ability to be able to – and he does a good job of teaching the kids this while he's doing this, of being casual with them at the start of class, as you're getting your stuff out, as you're coming to me with your money for your shirt or for LGPE, we're dealing with those procedural things as far as putting money in the white envelopes and sending you to the black box and get permission forms and a lot of that paperwork stuff that goes on and those casual interactions happens and he does a good job teaching kids that's the time to have those, but when I go onto the podium, it's time to play. It's game time, and that we need to practice and I think there are - the seriousness of that and the professionalism that he brings to that, the kids really react to that well and they get that that when - it's - when he's - when all that stuff at the beginning of class is done with the warm ups and all that, again that paperwork or whatever, when he gets on the podium, it's time to start practicing and his demeanor switches a little bit and their demeanor switches a little bit. Is that with every single child? No. But again, those kids that value their time and have a passion about band, they're serious about it. I mean, I can even see that and they do a great job at training kids. When I went to LGPE. I went to two of their three performances the last couple weeks. They stand, they go on the podium and all the kids get their instruments and either put them straight up and down or however they're supposed to hold them, like all in unison. I mean, it's fantastic. So, I think I said, I think he has a great ability to model that to kids, therefore teaching them when those lines are, time and place type things.

Interviewer: I always tell my kids that their parents often will be more impressed with that than how they sound.

Respondent: [Laughter] Exactly.

Interviewer: So, how would you describe their classroom management style?

Respondent: Again, it's very structured. I mean there's set routines and procedures. It's structured. The kids know what they're supposed to do and they know how they're supposed to act. They know the high expectations that Dr. [Miller] and Mrs. [Wolfe] have. I mean that's pretty much it. So, they have very few problems down there. So

again, just structured routine. Reasonable. They know kids have bad days and their kids are going through things. But like I said, he has a very few issues down there.

Interviewer: So, is there anything else about instruction that you can talk on, elaborate more like the pacing, the transitions, student engagement?

Respondent: Transitions as far as like within class?

Interviewer: Yes, from activity to activity.

Respondent: Yes, I mean I've not been their observer for a couple of years. I mean they're always going between pieces. They tend to do a good job, I think of when they see different aspects of a song whether - I can't. Again, I wasn't in the band, so I can't really talk music terminology too much. But if they see kids having a hard time with a certain transition within a song or notes or whatever, I mean, you can get down to some specifics, they will address those and continue to work on those. There is little time wasted in that band environment. More often than not, they're probably running late because they're trying to get as much in as they can before the bell rings and so those kids - the bell rings and those kids are packing up and running out to go to the next class because they played right up to the bell. So, the rigor I think has been a challenge as far as pushing kids, in the context of this question. Because the pandemic, just because we had kids who were at home all last year, and you have very little control over how they sounded to a certain extent and like what you could do with them because they just weren't here.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: So, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. So, I've already asked you about organizational practices that you believe most lead to the success of the program. So, specifically out of everything that you mentioned, the instructional practices that you think lead to the success of the program, the high LGPE ratings and the successes that they have.

Respondent: So, what instructional practices are you saying?

Interviewer: Yes, sir.

Respondent: Again, not being a music person, I think that would be hard for me to really say specifically, but I mean I think that they meet kids where they're at and they know the kids' ability. I mean it is, and I always tell them all the time. I mean, it is a marvel to me how a music teacher gets kids that are just pieces of clay, a block of clay, and you mold them into this student who - I think - was it called overture or something like what you do with your mouth or something, right?

Interviewer: The embouchure.

Respondent: Embouchure, that's what it's called. I mean, and the fact that based on the instrument you're playing, that you've got to do different things and the way you blow and all that kind of stuff, I mean the knowledge that they have with all the instruments and that the two of them are teaching 80 kids in sixth grade or more how to do all that is just phenomenal to me. So, I mean their instructional practices or sounds our band would be garbage and not be getting the ratings that they're getting when they go to LGPE. So, I don't know. Like I said, again I can talk about specifics, but whatever they're doing is working and they've been doing it for a long time and it's been working for a long time.

Interviewer: Okay. Just wrapping it up here. In what ways does the band director motivate students?

Respondent: Again, he does use some of those extrinsic rewards like PBIS and different things like that. I think they do motivational things down there as far as giving some students some tangible things. I mean, they'll get band wristbands and stuff like that. I also think they do a great job of intrinsically motivating kids and just again, going back to some things I said earlier, but just building that sense of accomplishment in them and getting the kids to see the intrinsic reward that their practice is paying off. That they're advancing within their playing and they're advancing probably at a rate that's very much aligned to the effort and the time that they're putting into it. So, like I said, I think he does a good job of motivating kids without a lot of intrinsic stuff which in middle school is challenging, especially in the area that we're living in and I think in a middle school such as ours where based on the population we serve, I think can be challenging and that's something I've found that has been very challenging overall the last couple of years with the pandemic is the motivation of

the students to work hard and part of that is, I think adults' fault in some of - just passing them on and some of the things that happened in the last couple of years.

Interviewer: It's been tough. So, do you have anything else that you would like to share?

Respondent: No, like I said, I mean, I think I've hit it all. I mean, they do a fantastic job. I think you know their challenge is what this study is about. It's the basic transiency of our community, it's the socioeconomic status of a lot of our community. It's the language barrier, sometimes with a high ESOL population. If we had a community that we were better engaged with and had higher levels of collaboration, I mean, they would even be more successful and that's something that we're always working towards to achieve. But they do a fantastic job and I think represents [Summerset] well wherever they're out playing or whatever they do.

Interviewer: Oh, yes. Yes, I agree. Do you have any questions for me?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Okay. May I contact you for follow-up questions or clarifications if needed?

Respondent: Certainly.

Interviewer: All right. I'm going to stop this recording. Thank you very much for conducting this interview. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions about anything and thank you for your willingness to share with me.

- End of Recording -

Appendix J

Mrs. Mourdock's Interview Transcript

In-Depth Interview

[Jane Mourdock]

March 30, 2022

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. You were selected to participate because your child's band directors felt you would have much to contribute to our conversation. I would like to confirm that you received and completed the consent form and audio release form?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes? Everything you say here will remain confidential. This means that I will not release your name with any identifying information. I will ask you a few questions about your child's band class and band director for this interview. Please keep in mind, there are no wrong answers. Please be mindful of the limited time that we have. At any time, I may interrupt to keep our discussion on track. If at any time you do not wish to continue the interview, just let me know and you can be excused. At this time, do you have any questions?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: All right. Could you please tell me what grade your child is in and what instrument they play?

Respondent: My son is in sixth grade and he plays the trumpet.

Interviewer: Okay, and you have somebody that was in this, a child that was in the [Summerset] band a couple of years ago?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: What did they play?

Respondent: They were percussions.

Interviewer: Okay, fine. All right. Why did your family choose to get involved in the band program?

Respondent: It was really because when they just – well, for me, I wanted them to play an instrument and I know that 6th grade was the only chance that really was to really get into the band, and I just wanted them to have that opportunity to learn something new.

Interviewer: Okay, so at your school, they only start band in the 6th grade?

Respondent: Here in [Carter] County, they only start in 6th grade.

Interviewer: Okay. Did your child ever consider quitting the band; any of your children? If so, what convinced them or you to have them continue?

Respondent: No, they didn't. They love band.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: [Laughter]

Interviewer: All right. Then I would like to talk to you about what it is like to be a band parent. First, please take a moment to reflect on what it is like being a band parent at your school and share your thoughts

Respondent: Definitely, I think I've seen the way the kids have grown, especially in sixth grade, starting out in August where I know from my son, he couldn't even barely play a note, and now it's March, he can play any and every song, and I think that's also due to how much he practices as well. He puts in a lot of time practicing. For us, parent, it's a little - it's not so much, a burden on our shoulders because they do it in school, and they did practice after school on Wednesdays, but I think that they needed that extra practice to become better. That's all I would say, but I love the band.

Interviewer: Can you say it's not much of a burden on you? What do you -?

Respondent: Because, well, okay, because this is just outside of school. My son plays baseball also, which is like a huge burden on traveling, on going everywhere, practices games, tournaments, so that's like a large burden, and it takes a huge chunk of time out of my day. Whereas the band, I personally as a parent, don't have to do anything but come to the concerts in the afternoons or maybe try to get him to his rehearsals if they're before school or pick them up after school, which is a lot easier for me.

Interviewer: If you're anything like me, I live in the car shuffling my children around. [Laughter]

Respondent: Yes, I do. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Yes. What is it like for you going to the concert? What was that first 6th grade concert like?

Respondent: The first concert, I was a little - I was a bit nervous for them because I really didn't know how well they would play or how they would fail, but they actually - they didn't sound so bad. There were a few squeaks, a lot of kids off key and everything, but after this last concert, we just had, they definitely came together a lot more. Like I said, I think it's just due to all the extra practices that they've been having.

Interviewer: Okay. Next, I would like to talk to you about what you believe your band director does to make your child's band better? What specifically do they do that makes the band better; that you believe – impressions.

Respondent: Just that, you know, Dr. [Miller] has this enthusiasm for band that - I don't know that I would have that same enthusiasm, but I think it's his love for band that also – and the kids see that, and then in turn, you know, makes them love their instrument, want to play, want to practice and just, like, my son never puts his trumpet down at home. I'm always hearing it upstairs or downstairs. He sleeps with it, so he's really in tune with his instrument and I think that Dr. [Miller]' enthusiasm about band helps with that.

Interviewer: He doesn't put his - so he comes home and plays his trumpet?

Respondent: Yes, every day.

Interviewer: Good for him.

Respondent: Every day.

Interviewer: Good. Maybe he needs to come to my school, then. [Laughter] Good for him. So, think back to a time when you felt your child was motivated to practice for band what do you think inspired them to practice?

Respondent: I think because he wanted to play the trumpet for so long, and when he finally was able to play it, I think just having the opportunity and knowing how to read the music now, he really he's just taking it more serious. I couldn't tell you what really drives him, I just know that he loves his instrument. That's like if, he if he had a pet dog, that trumpet is like a pet. It's kind of by his side all the time. I just think that personally for him, he just loves the trumpet, he loves the sound, so that's just how I'll answer, I don't know,

Interviewer: Wonderful. When your child's band director is teaching, what are some things that they teach that are not music related?

Respondent: I'm unsure. When I asked what did he do in band? He plays the songs, that's all he talks about is playing the music, but I have no clue.

Interviewer: No clue? Do you think, do you think some of those conversations are ever about being a kid, about maybe non-music related things in class or?

Respondent: I think it more so may teach them like concert etiquette, or some type of etiquette where we have a respect for like the other band. If you're sitting in the audience watching, to have like a certain respect for them, no talking, no going in and out, I know that they do learn that, but to me, they're still kind of music related in a sense.

Interviewer: I heard they have kids give the audience a spiel about concert etiquette.

Respondent: Yes, they do. In English and in Spanish, they have multiple students just reiterated, turn off your phone, no talking, if the baby is crying, please step out, please wait, until the song is over before you clap or wait – you know. Things of that nature.

Interviewer: Do you think that's helpful for the parents in the community to hear?

Respondent: I do, but I don't necessarily think that everyone pay - takes heat to it. They still do what they want to do.

Interviewer: Right. Right. I definitely understand that. [Laughter] In what ways does your child's band directors motivate the students to try their best?

Respondent: He put - I know he encourages them to take their instruments home to practice. He also encourages them to memorize the songs. If you can memorize it, it maybe a little bit easier to play and follow along when you get together as a group, so I know that he always says to try to memorize as many notes as you can. That's pretty much all I know. They just practice. Because he gives them an opportunity to even come in in the mornings before school starts. So just if you want to just play because you may not be able to play at home or some instruments are too big to even take home most of the time. So he gives them that extra opportunity in the mornings. I know to come in just as extra time.

Interviewer: Do you think there's - your son has classmates who are unable to play at home?

Respondent: What I don't, I'm not too sure I would say that they should be able to play at home, but like I said, some of the instruments may be too big, like you can't bring home like the whole bass drum or something like that where you just have to use the small pad. So, in that case, I don't think that they could because I'm sure it's too expensive to even afford those certain types of instruments and things. [Laughter] That was my band kid that just came in the door.

Interviewer: Okay. He probably saw me there the other day. Yes. Do you have any impressions of what band class is like during rehearsals?

Respondent: I think it takes a lot of time to probably get everyone together quiet, paying, paying attention, and I know that sometimes, they make clap through the song first just to get a feel for the tempo and things of that nature. Because when we had our parent concert for LGPE just so we could hear their song, he kind of - he showed us what they do in class to get ready. You know - okay, they all blow into the instruments extra hard and get all that sound out and things of that nature just to get ready, but that's just my only glimpse into what they do in class.

Interviewer: Right. What are your impressions of how your child's band director interacts with the students?

Respondent: I think the kids love him?

Interviewer: Really?

Respondent: I think they love him, yes. He's really - he's super nice. I haven't really ever heard him get angry. I know he gets a little stern, especially if they're not listening or following directions, but for the most part, the kids receive him very well.

Interviewer: Yes. Would you say that - what would you say for Mrs. [Wolfe]?

Respondent: I think Mrs. [Wolfe] is really nice. She hasn't been at the school as long as Dr. [Miller] because my daughter was there when Mrs. Estes was there. So, when the –

Interviewer: Right. She was a good friend of mine too.

Respondent: [Laughter] She's really sweet too. Mrs. [Wolfe] is really nice. She's very quiet so I really don't hear much from her.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Or about her, I just know she's there and she did help direct one or two songs at that at the concert, but I really don't know much about her.

Interviewer: Okay. What are some things your child's band director does to make sure every child understands how to play the music?

Respondent: Well, I'm sure that the kids are always able to come to him and ask about certain, notes they may have difficulties with and how to play them. So I'm sure he just give them the opportunity, so he's always available for them.

Interviewer: Okay. Going on to some of the non classroom stuff. The next questions is really - a couple are really about how he runs the organization with, not just the classroom responsibilities he has, but the other responsibilities. So, from that, what are some

things that the band director does to manage the band program that are not related to teaching the class?

Respondent: He runs the reminder app so that parents know what's going on for events, things of that nature that are happening, things that I do. We need to order band shirts and everything. He organizes all of that.

Interviewer: In what ways does your band director communicate with parents? I know you just said one. Yes.

Respondent: Yes. Remind also through CTLS, we get messages that that system. Sometimes he may send just a document home for us to sign or to read with, important dates to remember, things of that nature. He's really good at communicating. He'll find a way. I think I even received the email from him for you outside of CTLS. It was just a separate email. So, he'll find a way do to communicate.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you have a favorite way that he communicates?

Respondent: I like CTLS. Emails can get lost in the shuffle of everything coming in your inbox, but at least through CTLS, and I have the app, I'll always get those messages and know for a fact that I won't miss them or overlook them because they're all coming from CTLS.

Interviewer: Really? That's interesting. So, the app, CTLS emails come both to your inbox, but also exclusively to your app? Right? And you prefer that?

Respondent: I do because I get the alerts – you know, when I get it, if you send me an email, I don't - it doesn't necessarily pop up at the top of my screen on my phone, but if he sends a message to CTLS it'll come in as like almost like a breaking news message, on my front screen. So, I will always see it.

Interviewer: So, you get a notification for it on your phone? Okay.

Respondent: Yes. I get the notifications on my phone for it.

Interviewer: Interesting. Well, that's good feedback for me because I don't use CTLS as much as I should.

Respondent: Okay. [Laughter] Well, since we all have to have it, I think that's a great way to communicate, a lot easier for me.

Interviewer: What about on social media? Do you follow them on social media?

Respondent: I think I'm on their band for Facebook, but I think that's it. I really don't use Twitter or Instagram

Interviewer: Oh, no?

Respondent: If they even have one, I wouldn't even know.

Interviewer: I heard from the kids, they like the Instagram page.

Respondent: Okay. I maybe just a little bit too old. I just – I feel like Facebook and Instagram, they're all the same. I don't want to have all of them. I don't need all of them.

Interviewer: Do you know of any procedures they have for the class that is not related to music making?

Respondent: I don't know.

Interviewer: Any procedures about - do you want some examples?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: One procedure is that they have somebody talk to the audience about rehearsal etiquette or another side would be how would they come in the room? How do they organize their music? How do they - any things that about how they keep the lockers?

Respondent: Okay, I don't know how they keep their lockers. I really, I've rarely gone into the band room. I think I've been in the band room a total of maybe two times in the past five years.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: [Laughter] So, I know I wouldn't know that. I would assume that they would have some type of procedure when coming in to the band room where they may have to first get their instruments, get out their band binders, and maybe even have assigned seats.

Interviewer: Right. So, they have binders?

Respondent: They do have banned binders.

Interviewer: Okay. What about when you were chaperoning? Did you notice anything that where you thought, well that's a routine, that's something that's established or that's something they train the kids on.

Respondent: Yes. They definitely trained the kids how to keep their composure amongst all the other schools. When, because there's so many kids around and I noticed that like some of the other kids from other schools, they may say something to our students, because you are – band uniforms aren't maybe as traditional. They're just a red polo and black pants, versus some wear three piece suits, or those dresses or gowns or whatever you call them. A lot of some of the other kids from other schools, they kind of talk down on them about their attire and things of that nature and they learn to keep their composure. They're like, they don't say anything because they know that the judges are always watching them. I think that's maybe what he may even tell them that the judges are always watching, so just be courteous and careful on what you may say or do because it reflects on our school, and we want to leave a good impression for [Summerset].

Interviewer: That's good. That's great to hear. I am wrapping this up. I told you this one will be shorter. I know I sent out 45 to an hour, but that's if we had six people here.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: So, of all the things we talked about today, what do you feel is the most important? What's a big takeaway?

Respondent: A big takeaway, I think, would be more so on mister - not mister, sorry - Dr. [Miller] and how the class perceives him and how he motivates them to want to play. That was that's one of my big takeaways, because I think, without him, maybe the kids

would not have as much motivation. Because I'm just going to say this, being an orchestra and a band parent, my orchestra kid never brings home her instrument, versus my band kid who brings it home every single day, you know? Which is totally different, you know? So, I think Dr. [Miller] definitely is a huge part of that.

Interviewer: Is your son back there nodding along? [Laughter]

Respondent: Yes. He's back here leaning on his trumpet case. [Laughter]

Interviewer: Good. I like to see kids bring instruments home. [Laughter] Before we end this interview, is there anything else you would like to share about your child's band class and the band directors?

Respondent: Not anything that I haven't already said. I think they are really good teachers. They're very friendly. I'm also the PTA President at [Summerset], so I was definitely thankful for his relationship, because Dr. [Miller] not only teaches band, but he's also our DJ for our dances and things of that nature. So, he connects with the kids on those kind of levels also, still musically related, but not teaching the music but playing music for them.

Interviewer: He's the DJ?

Respondent: Yes. He was our DJ for our school dance. [Laughter] DJ Dr. [Miller].

Interviewer: What else does he do for the school that's not band related?

Respondent: That's the only thing he's done for our PTA. On top of that, I really couldn't tell you. I just know that he has – he DJ'd for us.

Interviewer: Yes. Well, thank you so much for sharing your experiences with me. I've enjoyed hearing what you had to say about your band program. I appreciate your help as I learned more about effective practices and high performing bands. So, I'm going to end the recording. Let's see how do I end this. All right. Yes, that was wonderful. Thank you for doing that with me.

- End of Recording -