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Investigating Mindfulness and Practice Strategies in the K-12 Music Curriculum

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Honors Project

Submitted to the Honors College at Bowling Green State University as partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to uncover how music educators teach students to practice effectively and to discover effective mindfulness tools and strategies that could be used to enhance music practice. My aim was to uncover methods of mindful practice and integrate them into a model for effective music practice that teachers can incorporate into their instruction. The research questions that guided this project include: 1) How are music educators teaching students to practice effectively? 2) How does mindfulness affect music practice? 3) What are effective strategies for teaching mindful instrumental music practice in the K-12 classroom? Is there a music practice model that can include mindfulness? Instrumental K-12 band teachers who were known to the researcher and/or project advisors were invited to participate in this study. Because only one teacher agreed to participate, an individual case study was conducted with this one participant. The first significant finding from this study comes from the participant: Mindfulness will not work for everyone. For mindfulness to have a positive effect in your life and the lives of your students, then you must believe that mindfulness can make a difference. Using mindfulness strategies such as breathing techniques, specific and non-judgmental language, music educators can effectively assist students in identifying negative thought patterns, tension, and performance anxiety. Additional findings are discussed.

Keywords: mindfulness, K-12 music education, mindful music practice, instrumental band

Introduction

Throughout my life, I have encountered many victories and challenges while playing the clarinet. Developing my musicianship has led me to discover more about myself and how I perceive the world. Different people struggle with different things while mastering music and many times the things we struggle with are often linked to personal characteristics that make up our personality. The inspiration for this project came from my struggle with negative self-perception, judgmental thoughts, and insecurity. While taking clarinet lessons at BGSU with Professor Kevin Schempf, I noticed that what we discussed in lessons were very similar to what I discussed in my counseling sessions. One word that kept recurring in both activities was the word “mindfulness.” Mindfulness can be defined as “the practice of being aware of your body, mind, and feelings in the present moment” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). Learning to play an instrument can be a formidable task. Equally challenging can be the art of teaching music. There are many factors that go into the skill of learning an instrument including motivation, kinesthetic movement, mindset, awareness, and time. The mastery of this skill requires more than simply repeating the activity or doing research on music practice and performance. Music performance is a science and an art that requires deep reflection and practice over time. In most K-12 public school instrumental music education curriculums, students often do not get to experiment with different methods of thinking about one’s own music learning.

Mindfulness does play a role in the act of music practice, and we can teach K-12 instrumental students to be mindful. There are effective methods of music practice that support the development of mindfulness which in turn can foster self-regulation, self-reflection, and emotional awareness, all skills that can enhance a musician’s awareness of their own musical development. Teachers can learn how to incorporate methods of effective mindful practice into

their curriculum and develop mindful practice models for their students. A practice model is a framework involving aspects of an individual's life, habits, and methods of practice with the purpose of better understanding what environmental and personal characteristics affect a student's musical development.

The purpose of this project was to uncover how music educators teach students to practice effectively and to discover effective mindfulness tools and strategies that could be used to enhance music practice. Learning music requires mindfulness and there is a deeper level of cognitive awareness that must be attained for the developing musician to learn new technique as well as technique that challenges them. Discovering effective mindfulness tools and strategies was a gateway into exploring how to structure activities that promote mindfulness within instrumental music education curriculums at all levels. Informing my research was the connections I made between findings in music education research and the fields of psychology. My aim was to uncover methods of mindful practice and integrate them into a model for effective music practice that teachers can incorporate into their instruction. The research questions that guided this project include:

1. How are music educators teaching students to practice effectively?
2. How does mindfulness affect music practice?
3. What are effective strategies for teaching mindful instrumental music practice in the K-12 classroom? Is there a music practice model that can include mindfulness?

The following review of the literature examines effective practice methods, the neurochemistry of learning, mindfulness in music practice, and the role of teachers.

Literature Review

Effective Practice Methods

To improve their skills, students must be able to practice effectively on their own when away from their teacher. Byo (2004) conducted research regarding student practice outside of a teacher's instruction and the deeper understanding of efficient practice beyond just "talking smartly" about practice. He stated that students need to be effective and creative problem solvers when left on their own to practice, and to support them in developing these skills teachers should not always provide the answers for students but be guides for the students as they navigate a musical problem.

There are specific and effective methods that professional musicians use to learn and perform music. Duke, Simmons, & Cash (2009) conducted a study with 17 undergraduate and graduate piano students to determine what the most effective musicians did to learn a section of music. They gave each musician freedom in how they prepared the musical example and observed what each person did to learn it. Then, the research team had the musicians perform the example after a day of rest. They graded each performance and paired the results with the practice strategies. One major difference between beginners and professionals involved experienced decision making when isolating problem spots. Hallam et al. (2012) studied practice techniques and strategies used by young musicians and professional musicians. The researchers distributed a questionnaire that garnered 3,325 responses from musicians who ranged from beginners to professionals. The questions were related to organization, frequency, and analytic strategies, such as level of concentration, used during practice. The results indicated that beginner musicians tend to play through an entire piece while professionals are better at isolating issue spots. The beginner musicians would be less able to identify issue spots and continue to learn the section of music incorrectly. The professional musician saves time and energy by identifying the issue spots and having a high level of concentration.

The traditional method, often called the conservatory model, of music learning involves taking lessons individually with a single instructor, but studies have been conducted on music learning with groups of students. In contrast, Johansen & Nielsen (2019) conducted research on the effectiveness of a communicative music learning model. The communicative music learning model involves a large group of musicians learning a piece together with one instructor. The participants of this study were K-12 musicians of equal musical aptitude interacting with each other. The results were mixed – some students found that their individual skill did not improve during group instruction, and some even had trouble interacting with peers throughout the year. However, every participant indicated that musical development did take place.

Through a literature review, Lordo (2021) explored the effectiveness of deliberate practice and playing. The two main models explored were Bloom's model of expertise development and the Developmental Model of Sport Participation. The Bloom model categorizes learning activities between combinations of free play and deliberate practice throughout the three stages of expertise development: early, middle, and late. However, the Developmental Model of Sport Participation includes a new category, deliberate play, which combines aspects of play and deliberate practice. Examples of deliberate play include improvisation, playing in chamber groups with friends and family, as well as being able to perform in front of others. Lordo also explored the implications of these two models for music education arguing that if students can learn an instrument through deliberate play, then we should incorporate it into the curriculum. Including deliberate play in everyday music learning will help the curriculum match the student's developmental stage, as well as help improve engagement and retention.

Some researchers try to define emotional strategies used in effective practice. Mazur & Laguna (2019) discussed the role of affect and informal practice on music performance. The

authors examined different studies on the role of emotion in practice. The participants of the study were musicians of all age groups. In sum, their analysis found that the results of the studies varied, but in general, emotion and motivation have a role in the frequency, enjoyment, and quality of practice. For many participants, feelings of enjoyment early in the learning process resulted in higher motivation to learn and practice on one's own. Along with emotional factors, it is important to determine differences in the individual's practice routine and to support them in creating a holistic method for effective practice.

Miksza's (2011) article is a summary and discussion on music practice where he ponders four main questions: 1) What do musicians do when they practice? 2) How have researchers intervened with individuals' practice? 3) What individual difference variables interact with why musicians practice? 4) How is self-regulated learning relevant to practicing? The author presented a framework and instructional theory for practicing that summarizes many possible influencers and processes involved with the activity of practice, such as predetermined traits like personality, motivation, and cognitive style. He also indicated the importance of defining effective observation methods to conduct accurate research, and in a separate study presents research on three different methods of observing practice methods in high school wind players (Miksza, 2007). The participants completed three 25-minute practice sessions and reported their general practicing behaviors, while being observed and rated by researchers. The researchers rated the correctness of each participants performance of the etude. The results of the study indicated that many students practice at least once a day. The strategy of whole-part-whole, which is a strategy that involves playing music in large sections, separating music into small sections, then playing it in large sections was used by every participant.

The Neuroscience of Learning

Effective practicing has many variables and observable methods as reported above. There has also been research done on the science of learning related to the brain. Allen (2013) discussed detailed memory processes and neurochemistry as related to memory stabilization and mastering a musical example. The memory and learning of motor skills is also discussed. Typically, memory formation continues long after the activity is completed. The results show that skills and memory are enhanced during sleep. The findings indicate that the learning of one task can be inhibited by learning another task during the same practice session. The two tasks may compete for neural resources, which can cause issues with the learning process since the individual is focusing on two things at a very close proximity in time. Goodhart (n.d.) discussed neuroscience as related to the process of learning. The author presented a series of questions and answers while addressing the connections that must occur in the brain for music learning to happen. The participants in the study who learned one melody, then rested for a night and were tested the next morning, showed a significant improvement in their retention than the participants who learned two melodies with no rest period in between. He also presented a “plan-do-reflect” practice routine that has been proven successful. The first step, “plan,” allowed the individual to set a goal for their practice. The second step “do,” allowed the individual to execute the action of practice. The third step, “reflect,” allowed the individual to assess whether they have met the goals they set for themselves in the planning stage. In the last section of the article, Goodhart discussed how a teacher can help a student learn to recognize mistakes on their own. This process involves experimentation and failure, which will allow the student to learn what works for them and what does not.

Mindfulness in Music Practice

While many practice behaviors are observable, there are also unobservable variables that professional musicians present that make for effective practicing. Practicing mindfulness can help students reflect upon their own progress. Mindfulness traits can come more naturally for some people and less naturally for others. Butkovic, Ullén, & Mosing (2015) explored individual personality traits as predictors of music practice. The participants in the study included 10,699 twins aged between 27 and 54 that play an instrument or sing. The findings showed there were correlations between the success of musical practice and an individual who possesses the ability to create musical flow, how open they are to feedback, and how intrinsically motivated they are. There were also significant differences between gender and age when discussing motivation and practice hours. Females were more likely to play an instrument than males, but males were more likely to practice longer than females. Females scored higher in the areas of motivation and musical flow. Musical flow and music practice are variables that tend to increase with age. In general, musical flow was the most significant predictor in music practice. Musical flow is a term used to describe being focused and calm while playing a through a musical section resulting in a state of total absorption in a given task or activity. Flow is associated with how easily an individual can execute a musical passage. Along with intrinsic motivation, the way students approach music, and their level of engagement, can have a significant impact on their progress.

Using a 10-item questionnaire, Kostka (2002) conducted a study to research attitudes and expectations regarding music practice. Items included demographics, attitudes, use of time, skills, and strategies. While those items were not researched for the purpose of effective practice, they do relate to music teachers' expectations for effective practice. The findings indicated that both groups believed that musicality was the most important and memorization was the least important technique for improving musical skill. The author also reported that both students and

teachers in this study believed that self-regulation, a term describing an individual's ability to set goals and reflect upon performance, is the most valuable skill.

Miksza (2012) conducted a study that measured how beginner and intermediate students use self-regulated behavior in their music practice. Another goal of the study was to test the reliability and validity of the self-report methodology using a questionnaire. The study included participants from 10 middle schools. The items on the questionnaire included such topics as practice frequency, method, time management, and social influences. The model for self-regulated learning includes strategies such as identifying musical sections that challenge students based on their own personal tendencies, analyzing the music for structural cues, and to select how many objectives to work on during a practice session. The findings included that self-reported questionnaires are valid and that the model for self-regulated learning is also valid. Self-regulated behavior is a skill that advanced players continue to develop even into the professional level. It can even be said that players must develop this skill to learn music efficiently, joyfully, and skillfully.

Miksza (2015) followed up with a study on how self-regulation impacts advanced wind players. Volunteers were assigned and given practice instructions in two control groups: self-regulation and goal oriented. Those in the self-regulation group received instruction to practice self-regulation strategies such as concentration, planning, and included a rest and reflection period while those in the goal-oriented group received instruction to perform goal-oriented practice using strategies such as slowing, repetition, whole-part-whole, and chaining. Instructions were given through videos and audio recordings of the participants' practice sessions. Overall, both methods were found to be effective in different ways. Those in the self-regulation group achieved higher performance goals than those in the goal-oriented group. Self-regulation can

help individuals become more focused, more able to think things through, and more motivated to practice, with the act of playing an instrument itself becoming even more rewarding.

In a related study, Hallam, Papageorgi, Varvarigou, & Creech (2012) examined motivation and practice outcomes through a questionnaire that was distributed to a large sample of participants from public schools, community orchestras, and conservatories. While there were limitations to this research, the findings indicated that the learners who were in the self-regulated group had a higher rate of correct performances than those in the goal-oriented group.

One article by Agnes (2016) discussed the process and definition of relaxation when practicing an instrument. Relaxing when playing an instrument does not mean being floppy or limp. Relaxing means that you are not overly tense. Tension when playing an instrument over a long period of time is extremely detrimental to a musician's health and can cause permanent injury if not addressed. Bodily awareness is an important skill to allow one to eliminate unwanted tension. Awareness allows the musician to feel when they are in alignment or not, whether they have good posture or not, and as these come into balance they can relax. As they become more relaxed they become more aware and so on. Breathing and emotional states are also important elements in learning to be a relaxed player. Being a mindful musician can help facilitate the process of being aware of tension in your body, as mindfulness helps facilitate the process of being in the present moment.

Bruser (1997) elaborated in her book that music practice must spawn from the heart. The phrase "from the heart" means that to practice efficiently, healthily, and musically people need to play with lower levels of judgment and anxiety. Musicians must also be very sensitive to the unaltered emotions we feel when we play. While Bruser did not directly mention mindfulness in her book, themes from the theory of mindfulness are consistently mentioned. Bruser declared

that one way to make mindful practice effective is to take time to reflect before we begin practicing. The purpose of this reflection is to connect to ourselves, our emotions, and the composer who wrote our music. Bruser mentioned that not everyone has the opportunity to practice music, and that the experience of making music is a great privilege.

Clevenger (2015) described his research on the connection between mindfulness and music performance anxiety in collegiate music studies. Musicians experience performance anxiety at all levels of musical training, no matter their age or how long they have been playing an instrument. Oftentimes, the cause of anxiety is related to a fear of failure, inadequacy, and low self-esteem. When musicians think they have failed during a performance, it affects self-esteem, self-worth, and leads to an increase in pressure. In Clevenger's dissertation, mindfulness-based therapy is shown to decrease the cause of music performance anxiety. To study more about this subject, Clevenger delivered two surveys to 62 participants. The results of the study showed that use of mindfulness, years of experience, and length of time using mindfulness are not significantly correlated to performance anxiety. This research contradicted his original theory and exposed a gap in the knowledge of how effective mindfulness is in treating performance anxiety.

Diaz (2018) conducted research to decrease the gap in knowledge Clevenger described. His article presented research conducted on the relationship between mindfulness and performance anxiety. One factor that predicts the presence of performance anxiety is perfectionism. Perfectionism is defined by Diaz as "a personality trait defined by the desire to perform at an exceptionally high level while simultaneously being excessively critical of one's efforts." (p. 151). The stakes for a performance become much higher when an individual is aiming to be always perfect. When a mistake occurs, it can be devastating to the musician and

increase performance anxiety. To examine the effectiveness of mindfulness as a way to decrease performance anxiety, the researcher used an online survey. The survey asked what kinds of meditation strategies the musicians used to decrease performance anxiety, how they ranked on a perfectionism scale, and how effective they believed the meditation was. 263 music students completed the survey. Almost half of the students reported using mediation strategies. The students who reported using mindfulness strategies had less performance anxiety.

Dubetz (2018) presented research on the history and development of mindfulness. There are two meditations related to mindfulness that make mindfulness effective: focused attention and open monitoring. Focused attention ‘refers to practices in which “attention is focused on a given object in a sustained manner” (p. 8). Open monitoring “is the practice of non-reactive observation of present experience” (p. 8). Dubetz also discusses the clinical application of mindfulness. It has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and physiological manifestations of these states of mind such as blood pressure. Using mindfulness also greatly reduces the need for a patient to use drugs that affect mind, mood, and behavior. In education, mindfulness has been shown to reduce symptoms of mental illness in young people regardless of targeted intervention or universal intervention. These students are better able to focus in class and connect to their peers. For professional musicians, mindfulness reduces performance anxiety. In one study (Czajkowski & Greasley, 2015) referenced by Dubetz, vocalists can improve technique, tone and the ability to problem solve after using mindfulness in their practicing.

The Role of Teachers in Mindful Music Practice

Mindfulness and effective practice methods, such as self-regulation, are skills that take time and experience to develop. Teachers play an important role in guiding students to develop those skills. Baker et al. (2021) conducted research on why teaching through asking questions is

effective and important. The findings are split into three sections. Building trust, valuing experimentation and risk taking, and lightness and joy. These three teaching techniques encourage students to be curious, feel safe, and learn how to be creative problem solvers. It also teaches them that making mistakes is a part of the learning process. The impact that a music teacher can have on an individual is profound, and music in itself can be a gateway to self-discovery. One way music can be used as a gateway to self-discovery is examining music as a means of communication.

Cross (2014) examined music as a communicative practice comparing it to speech as a form of communication. Cross's summary of research examines music as a form of interaction between participants. He discussed music as a form of entertainment and through the lens of floating intentionality. Floating intentionality refers to how an individual can determine a unique meaning from music, but another individual can determine a different meaning from the same piece of music. Cross also discussed music as cognitive science and music as communicative media. Music as a cognitive science is typically researched as a manifestation of patterns in sound. Music as a communicative media is thought of as an active form of participation and social function. The social function of musical activities increases affiliation and bonding. This includes activities like keeping time or singing together in a group. Music has been studied in this way in individual forms, but its role has not been assessed in relation to an entire culture. Despite the lack of research in communicative music, there is much interest in music's role as a social function. Part of music's role as a social function can be discovered in the music classroom, where K-12 students have the opportunity to sing, perform on instruments, move, create, and participate in other musical activities together. Music teachers must be able to facilitate these activities.

Hallam et al. (2012) in their book, *Preparing for Success: A Practical Guide for Young Musicians*, address topics related to being a professional musician and teacher. The most significant include motivation, career advice, health, music practice and preparing for performances. Each chapter covers extensive information and provides resources for those looking to pursue careers in music. Some of these chapters include topics such as learning music, preparing for performances, composing, health, and career options. While this book is a useful resource for student musicians, music teachers can benefit from the information presented in the chapters involving music practice and performance preparation. Based on findings from the literature, the authors present traits and characteristics of effective teachers including being knowledgeable, organized, empathetic, and efficient. Teachers who possess these traits can better provide students with effective guidance and support needed to pursue development of musical skill.

In a related study, Stigler & Miller (2018) defined what professional teaching looks like, what the challenges of training to be a professional teacher are, and the vulnerability that teachers have to politics and circumstance. Professional teaching is described by Stigler and Miller as a working relationship between the teacher, the students, and the content being taught. They suggested the following as effective teacher qualities and traits: 1) being able to formulate learning goals, 2) selecting and implementing teaching strategies, 3) creating learning opportunities, and 4) assessing student progress.

Kiloran (2017) discussed the reasons for why she has begun to incorporate mindfulness into her courses. She works with elementary school students who display behavior issues. Many of the circumstances that cause the students to act out are beyond the students' control. There are three primary reasons she states for practicing mindfulness in her classroom. One reason is that

teachers are experiencing burnout. Another reason is that students are under immense pressure to perform well, which is causing them to experience high levels of stress. The third reason Kiloran began practicing mindfulness in her classroom is that she believes teachers need to become more aware of their students' needs. Stress levels in teachers and students are ever increasing. Kiloran believes teachers need to begin regulating this stress through mindfulness, as stress levels interfere with students' ability to learn and be happy within a classroom.

Description Of Methods

Instrumental K-12 band teachers who were known to the researcher and/or project advisors were invited to participate in this qualitative case study. Prospective participants were contacted by email and received a recruitment letter that explained the study. The recruitment letter informed prospective participants about the study, provided information on why the study was being conducted, explained what they would be doing if they chose to participate, that participation was voluntary, and provided information on how to contact the researcher with any questions. Prospective participants were assured that whether they chose to participate or to not participate, this choice would have no impact on their relationship to the researcher, the researcher's advisor, or Bowling Green State University, and that all data would remain confidential. Because only one teacher agreed to participate, an individual case study was conducted with this one participant.

After securing a participant for the study, a second email was sent to this participant with a consent letter attached. The consent letter explained again the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, the procedure for the interview, a statement of confidentiality, and risks and benefits of the study. The participant returned a signed scanned copy of the consent

form back to the researcher, indicating that the participant agreed to be interviewed and understood the nature of the study.

One individual semi-structured interview was conducted with the participant. They chose the date and time of the interview, which was conducted by the researcher over a password-protected Zoom meeting. The Zoom meeting was recorded so that proper transcription and coding of the data could take place. The participant was asked about their background, personal work with mindfulness, their school mindfulness program, and what they perceived to be effective strategies for teaching students mindful instrumental music practice. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Data sources included the researcher's journal, interview recordings, and interview transcriptions. The interview transcripts were coded and analyzed to determine themes, then compared to the research literature on mindfulness training and teaching in schools. As a result of data analysis, a few further questions emerged and the participant was contacted by email and invited to respond if they had time to do so, either through written response or a second Zoom meeting. The participant chose to send written responses. In the results section, the interview with this teacher is described and the themes are addressed in relation to the research questions and the relevant literature. Strategies for teaching mindfulness in music education programs in schools are discussed in the implications section.

Description of the Results

The results of this study were obtained by conducting an interview with a teacher who teaches K-12 music and who actively includes mindfulness strategies in their curriculum. This teacher has been teaching for eight years, with seven years of experience being in their current district. To begin the interview, the researcher asked the participant questions about school demographics. This teacher teaches at three different schools, and only teaches elementary instrumental band. School A is a Title One school with approximately 50 percent of the students

on free and reduced lunch. It is predominantly white and affluent. School A is also a magnet school specializing in world language with housing projects assigned to that district in that area. School B is predominantly white and affluent, with a larger Asian student population. It is also a magnet school, with a specialization that includes an International Baccalaureate. School B has a housing project assigned to the district in the area and students can apply to this school. School C is very affluent and does not have many students on free or reduced lunch. All three schools are considered suburban and are located on the east coast of the United States.

The participant teaches three different elementary school bands at the 4th and 5th grade level and sees their students for individual pull out lessons once a week for 30 minutes during a designated class time. Every band rehearses before the school day begins in full groups once a week for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Two schools have homogenous groupings, and one school has a heterogeneous grouping. In the Fall and Winter, the groups remain separated. In the Spring, the band combines to create full instrumentation and each class becomes heterogenous.

The next section of the interview explored effective music practice. The participant began by explaining that this is a difficult subject to discuss and that they have done a lot of experimentation over the years. One technique the participant feels strongly about is the use of practice logs. This teacher believes that practice logs do not encourage healthy practice, and that often students will simply not be truthful when completing them. They admitted that sometimes they even misrepresented their practice time on their practice logs while they were in school. One tool the participant uses often is Google Classroom, in which practice assignments the participant assigns are submitted and graded. In general, they ask the students to practice their assignment until they can play it accurately. The students are expected to record themselves performing the assignment, which is typically one to two minutes long. Students are also allowed

to record themselves performing the assignment as many times as they need. This teacher gives the students feedback about their playing for the students to apply for the next time they perform an assignment. The participant also includes demonstrations of themselves modeling the assignment for the students to watch and mentioned that it is important for students to understand their expectations for practice. Communicating with the parents about practice expectations is significant to the participant as well. In their class, 4th graders are expected to practice 35 to 40 minutes a week with more advanced students expected to practice one hour to an hour and a half over the course of a week.

The next section of interview questions involved effective teaching and mindfulness strategies. Similar to my own experience in mindfulness, the participant became interested in the subject in late high school and early college. They began reading articles about mindfulness even though they did not actively practice mindfulness at this time. In 2016 and 2017, they began looking for people who were conducting research on music and mindfulness. One of these people is Dr. Frank Diaz, a professor of music education at Indiana State University. Dr. Diaz hosted a pedagogy workshop about mindfulness in the music classroom during the summer of 2017 that the participant attended. An opportunity that arose because of attending this workshop was that the participant was able to pursue a year of study implementing mindfulness in their own music classroom. They implemented mindfulness strategies and received feedback from Dr. Diaz on how to improve. In 2018, they returned to the workshop and presented their experiences with mindfulness in the classroom. The participant's presentation included the ways they experimented with mindfulness strategies in the classroom. One of these strategies was breathing exercises that became part of the daily warm up routine. Much of what the participant presented on was figuring out what the students responded to in her classroom. Even if a technique was

said to work on paper, students may not buy into the strategy. At the end of the workshop, they received certification in Mindfulness-Based Wellness and Pedagogy (MBWP).

The next set of questions explored mindfulness-based teaching. The participant described mindfulness as an “awareness without judgment.” Mindfulness is also related to how your thoughts and feelings are affecting you. However, they do not directly mention this definition to their students. In fact, they do not even mention that the activities their students participate in are mindfulness activities. This is because if they explained that the activities were mindfulness activities, the students may place a judgmental connotation on the activity, which could render the exercise ineffective. This teacher simply explains the exercise, demonstrates it with the students, and uses very specific language to execute the activity effectively. They tend to use universal mindfulness strategies as opposed to targeted mindfulness strategies. Using a universal technique is more frequent since it takes less time and can be incorporated into a large-scale activity that includes everyone. For example, a universal technique in a classroom would be asking the entire class to observe their current emotion by writing it down on a piece of paper, and then reminding the class to be honest but not judgmental. This technique is generalized for the entire classroom and is not tailored to a specific student. Targeted techniques, such as are available to use for the participant since they see their students in small groups, but they are less frequent. An example of a targeted technique would be pulling a student who struggles with anxiety aside for a moment to execute a mindful breathing activity. This technique is tailored to one student to meet that specific student’s need. The students do not have the option to opt out of mindfulness activities, since it is part of the district of the curriculum.

The participant also described how the desire to participate in mindfulness activities makes a difference in how effective the mindfulness activity is. In short, yes, the desire to

participate makes a difference. Some students do not see the point in doing breathing exercises as part of the warm-up. This attitude makes the activity less effective, and the students do not buy into it. Some students are on board with the activities and do them without much pushback. The students are happy to follow along with the teacher's demonstration and this desire to execute the mindfulness activities makes them more engaging and effective. It simply becomes a part of the classroom routine and the students do not question why the participant requires these activities. There are a few specific strategies that this teacher uses to teach their students mindfulness in music practice. One of these is to include a sequence of these activities in warm-ups. The warm-up sequence typically works best in large ensemble settings, when the participant has all band students together in one class. The warm-ups include scale preparations, breathing activities and repetition. The language this teacher uses is very specific when executing mindfulness activities. For example, they may say "be here, be now, if you're thinking about your math test you have later, leave it at the door." They often play the warm-ups a second time after using a mindfulness activity, and the ensemble sounds much better. When doing self-reflection exercises, the participant asks the students what they *notice* about their playing as opposed to how they *feel* about their playing. Asking students how they *feel* may encourage negative thinking and judgment. Asking students what they *noticed* about their playing lets students reflect without judgment. Being judgmental takes attention away from the positives of their playing. The only situation in which the participant asks students what they feel when they play is when the students have a lot of tension somewhere in their bodies and the participant guides them to relax. This tension is caused partly by performance anxiety. Using mindfulness in the classroom has shown to reduce performance anxiety in many other circumstances beyond 4th and 5th grade (Dubetz, 2018). The participant does not use targeted mindfulness listening activities with the

students since they are so young. The participant has not seen a difference in students' individual practice routines.

Overall, this teacher indicated that mindfulness has made a positive impact on their students' learning. However, for the mindfulness to be the most effective there must be buy-in from the students. The groups that embrace mindfulness are overall more cohesive and can be pushed a little harder by the participant. There is often a strong group mentality seen in the groups where mindfulness is used effectively. Students can recognize that their presence and role in an ensemble affects everyone else. In groups where there is a negative attitude from the students about participating in mindfulness activities, the attitude will spread to everyone, and it is more difficult to execute the mindfulness activity. The most effective way to teach mindfulness in the classroom according to the participant is to make everything concrete. This means having clear expectations, clear directions, clear modeling, and very concrete solutions to issues a student may be having. Only focusing on one tangible aspect of your playing at a time is also helpful. It is important to not overload the students with goals because they will not know what to focus on. The participant may go into more gray areas with older students. A gray area means that the solution may mean different things for different students, or that there may be more than one correct solution. Older students need the teacher to be more of a musical guide than a music director. A music director typically tells students what to do, how to perform a musical section, and what needs to be improved. Being a musical guide means that the teacher may not provide all the answers to questions right away. The teacher could also allow the students to begin making their own decisions within the music.

Many teachers could benefit from mindfulness practices in their classrooms, their teaching styles, and their curriculums. The participant gives some advice for teachers who are

newly interested in incorporating mindfulness practice in their classroom. The first thing the participant mentions is that you must be interested in mindfulness yourself and to practice mindfulness yourself. If it is not something that is meaningful to you, your students will pick up on that, and it makes the mindfulness techniques seem disingenuous. If you are not confident that it will work, then your students will not be confident it will work either. Developing the practice in your personal life will assist you in developing mindfulness in your professional life. This teacher often videotaped themselves teaching and reflected on those videos. Again, being non-judgmental is important here as well. In these videos, they were looking for cues that the students were engaged and that they understood what they were saying. Having “the fly on the wall perspective” is crucial for the development of mindfulness in the classroom.

Mindfulness has impacted the participant’s teaching practice in several ways. They mention that mindfulness has improved their relationship with their students. This relationship aspect with students ties into the development of social and emotional learning (SEL), to which mindfulness can be associated. “We can define SEL as the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others” (Cristóvão, Candeias & Verdasca, 2017). Mindfulness can be a gateway to learning skills that define SEL. The participant says that using mindfulness has allowed them to build relationships with the students first and that relationships come as a priority before the actual teaching of music begins. This teacher also practices and demonstrates mindfulness activities themselves, so the students feel more comfortable using mindfulness knowing their teacher has first-hand experience. Ultimately, the students see that the participant is “more human,” meaning that the students understand that the participant cares for the students and has feelings of their own.

The last question in the interview asked if the participant had anything else to add. This teacher stated that mindfulness is a very positive influence in their personal life and their professional life. However, they also believe that mindfulness does not work for everyone. If you do not believe that mindfulness will be effective and helpful, then it will not accomplish what you want it to accomplish. The participant stated that not everyone is vulnerable enough to examine themselves in such a way. It takes a lot of vulnerability to examine your own thoughts and feelings in the way mindfulness requires you to. Ultimately, you must want to do it in order for it to work.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

This interview with a practicing teacher who uses mindfulness in the music classroom was very insightful. The mindfulness strategies that they use, as described above, can be easily adapted and incorporated into almost any classroom setting and are largely inspired by Diaz's research. Diaz (2020) defines mindfulness as "a set of mental skills that you can develop through daily activities." According to him, mindfulness has four main components: 1) openness, 2) awareness, 3) non-judgmental thoughts, and 4) awareness of the present moment. In the interview, the participant often mentioned the significance of being non-judgmental and aware of the present moment, as there are specific concerns when working with musicians of any age. These concerns include anxiety, overwhelm, self-doubt, poor concentration, and distraction. Diaz (2020) discusses three mindfulness strategies in his research that can help teachers deal with these concerns. The first is called "Breathe it Down." The first step is to lay down or sit somewhere comfortable. The second step is to relax your body. The third step is to breathe in for four counts, hold your breath for seven counts, and release your breath for eight counts. While you breathe out, you must be aware of the sound.

Another mindfulness activity Diaz practices is called “Mindful Stop” The first step is to physically stop what you are doing. The second step is to take a few deep breaths. The third step is to become aware of your sensations, feelings, and thoughts with curiosity. The fourth step is to proceed with what you were doing with intention. An important aspect that makes mindfulness so effective is self-compassion. Diaz mentions that we must be forgiving and understanding of ourselves in order to observe ourselves with no judgment. Higher rates of self-compassion lead to more prosocial behavior and less fear of perceived failure. The participant of my study mentioned connections to self-compassion when they discussed the language, they use to guide students. Rather than using words like “feel”, this teacher uses words like “notice” and “hear.” Bruser (1997) mentions that non-judgmental language helps musicians connect to themselves. Introducing language like “notice” and “hear” allows young students to naturally develop a non-judgmental outlook on their own playing and sets them up for success later in their careers.

After reading the literature that exists on mindfulness and analyzing the interview, I have come to several conclusions. The first significant finding from this study comes from the participant: Mindfulness will not work for everyone. This is not what I expected to learn, especially with a teaching strategy that is praised for how flexible and effective it is. For mindfulness to have a positive effect in your life and the lives of your students, then you must believe that mindfulness can make a difference. When a teacher believes in mindfulness, the mindfulness strategies used in the classroom are presented as authentic and genuine. A teacher who uses mindfulness is invested in the outcome of the mindfulness exercise, and the students become more willing to participate in the exercise. A teacher who tries to use mindfulness but does not believe that it will work may find that it is a waste of time. To be mindful, a person must be willing to be vulnerable and look inwards. Not everyone is interested in examining

themselves in a mindful way. The participant has found that using mindfulness has improved their relationships with their students and reduced performance anxiety. The participant often uses a combination of direct instructions with students and mindfulness strategies. One example of this may be that the teacher may tell a student to “notice what they played,” and then direct the student to play a correct note. One connection that I find to be very interesting is how effective practice strategies and mindfulness strategies can complement each other.

There are many effective practice strategies that we can synthesize from the literature review. Duke, Simmons, & Cash (2009) concluded in their study that experienced musicians are effective at isolating issue spots. In order to solve spots in the music that cause issues, musicians often use the whole-part-whole strategy. (Miksza, 2007). Byo (2004) conducted research on effective practicing methods, and he found that practicing on your own and solving your musical issues in a creative way are strategies that work every time. For example, being creative in music may mean changing the tempo, changing the articulations, identifying a mood for the music, changing the rhythm, or audiating the kind of sound you want. Initially, one might think that these strategies are completely separated from mindfulness. If a musician has a solid set of practice strategies, they will theoretically never struggle to learn anything if they can pull from these strategies when they are challenged by music. In my experience and the experience of many others, this is not the case. Practicing is not as simple as identifying issue spots and repeating a measure until the issue goes away. I have found that it is quite difficult to practice mindfully, as I often find myself being judgmental, worrying about future events, ruminating about the past, and generally being unfocused. As an educator, it is difficult to teach mindfulness because the experience of it is different for everyone and we often do not have enough time in a class period to go over mindfulness, as music educators are often preparing for performances.

I have synthesized mindfulness practice strategies from the literature. Butkovic, Ullén, & Mosing (2015) concluded that musical flow, intrinsic motivation, and openness to feedback are all significant mindfulness techniques that help students learn an instrument. A significant skill that relates to mindfulness in music is self-regulation. Self-regulation is defined as “self-generated thoughts, feelings, and actions for attaining academic goals” (Zimmerman, 1998, p. 73). Students who are self-regulated identify sections that challenge them, analyze music for structural cues, select objectives to work on during a session, have a high level of concentration, include a rest period, and include a reflection period after the session. The connection between effective practice and mindfulness became clear once I considered how we learn to practice efficiently. To identify issue spots, a musician must be aware of what they are doing in the present moment. To correct the mistake, they must be able to approach the issue with a creative and non-judgmental mindset. My own experience as a musician has affirmed that being honest, but not judgmental is very healthy. Being judgmental and comparing yourself to other musicians takes away the innate joy of playing music. To develop musical skill, musicians need feedback from other people with more experience than they have. Mindfulness strategies also encourage openness to many perspectives. A rest and reflection period after practice sessions is healthy and productive because you need to be aware of what you can do better next time you play. After examining the connection between practice strategies and mindfulness strategies, it became clear to me that every skill a musician needs to succeed is a mindfulness skill once you examine a skill in depth.

Part of what inspired this project was my own curiosity about mindfulness in the music classroom, and what I can do as a future music educator to teach music and mindfulness to my future students. One way I will use mindfulness in the classroom is by incorporating mindfulness

analogies into breathing techniques for instrumental playing. I will use sentences such as “Breathe calmly and with no tension, feel aware of the moment as you breathe.” Using sentences like this encourage students to relax and be focused when they are learning how to breathe for instrumental playing. Before performances, I will be incorporating Diaz’s “Mindful Stop” exercise to reduce performance anxiety. Less anxiety in a performance allows musicians to connect to the music they are playing instead of focusing on the audience. I will also use a lot of non-judgmental language in my teaching, like the participant from the interview suggested. Using non-judgmental language teaches students that it is ok to be honest with themselves about their performance in a way that encourages positive emotions and a desire to problem solve the issue they are facing in their music. One skill a musician needs to be effective is error detection. This can sometimes be a difficult thing to teach in a large classroom setting. I believe this is another place where mindfulness can help. After I run through a piece with an ensemble, I can ask the students if they made a mistake somewhere. I will ask the students to point to a spot in the music where they made a mistake. If they do not know where they made a mistake, it means that they were not truly aware of what they were playing. Asking the students to be mindful while they play and running through the piece a second time will fix some of these issues and teach students to always be aware of what they are playing.

While this study provided insight into mindfulness for teachers of beginning band, future research in this area must include larger numbers of participants to get a better perspective on effective mindfulness programs in school music. Additionally, research is needed on how mindfulness might be practiced in instrumental music classrooms with students who are older, particularly in 7th through 12th grade. Research could be conducted on specializations outside of instrumental band as well. Other specialization areas in music such as general music, choir,

strings, and music in higher education are all areas where effective mindfulness strategies could be explored and implemented. Using the mindfulness strategies described above, such as breathing techniques, specific and non-judgmental language, "Breathe it down", and "Mindful Stop", music educators can assist students in identifying negative thought patterns, tension, and performance anxiety. The musician's journey involves ongoing self-reflection, an identification of needs, vulnerability, and strategies for dealing with each of these elements. Through the development of mindfulness practices, music educators can support the development of healthy and happy musicians.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Demographics

1. What are the general demographics of your school and the student population you teach?
 - a. Is your school considered rural, suburban or urban?
2. What music classes and/or ensembles do you teach?
 - a. What grade levels do you teach?
3. How long have you been teaching music?

Effective Teaching Strategies for Music Practice

1. In addition to incorporating mindfulness strategies in music teaching, I'm interested in how to teach music students to practice effectively on their own – before we discuss mindfulness strategies, in general, how do you teach your music students to practice effectively on their own?

Effective Teaching and Mindfulness Strategies

1. What is your background in mindfulness? What training and experience do you have?
2. How do you define mindfulness, in general?
3. How did you get interested in teaching mindfulness to your students?
4. How do you define or describe mindfulness to your students?
5. Have you ever used a targeted or universal mindfulness strategy in your classroom?
6. Do students have the option to opt out of mindfulness activities?
7. Do you notice if the desire to participate in a mindfulness activity makes a difference in how effective mindfulness strategies are? As opposed to a student being required to participate, who does not want to.

8. What strategies do you use to teach your students mindfulness in their music practice as a part of your daily music curriculum? Do you have a set process or sequence?
9. Have you ever incorporated mindfulness into a listening activity in order to influence how your students listen to a piece? If so, what happened?
10. Have you ever used mindfulness to reduce performance anxiety?
 - a. Have you noticed any changes in students' practice routines and performance after using mindfulness strategies?
11. Overall, how has incorporating mindfulness strategies impacted your students' learning?
12. What do you feel are the most effective strategies for teaching mindful music practice to students in K-12 music education?
13. What advice do you have for teachers who would like to add mindfulness in their music teaching practice?
14. How has incorporating mindfulness impacted your teaching practice?

Conclusion

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?