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Cultivating Music Educators for Engaging in Varied Pedagogy Within an Increasingly Pluralistic Society

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**Cultivating Music Educators for Engaging in Varied Pedagogy Within an Increasingly
Pluralistic Society**

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HNRS 4990: Honors Project

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Abstract

As society continues to grow increasingly pluralistic, questions arise concerning how to better prepare preservice educators in teacher preparation programs. The purpose of this study was to determine the connections between P12 teachers' training, experience, and what is being done in the classroom. Three participants were hand-selected for participation due to their proven track record employing varied curricular practice. The participants represented a varied range of areas of expertise and years of experience. After exploring the experiences of these three teachers, themes of (1) getting outside of one's comfort zone, (2) engaging in musical amateurism, and (3) synergizing traditional and progressive pedagogies were found. In order to continue to push for increasingly varied practices in P12 and collegiate contexts, stakeholders should consider these themes as one point of consideration as to how music teacher preparation programs can better prepare pre-service teachers, as well as how such institutions can better support practicing music teachers in the field who are already working toward different possibilities in the classroom.

Introduction

Music encompasses a wide range of styles, genres, and approaches that vary greatly from one culture or geographic region to the next. In the United States, music education curricula largely centers on one specific musical tradition, known as Western Art Music (WAM). This musical tradition emphasizes reading and performing from standard notation, and it is rooted in the music of Western Europe (Mark & Gary, 2007). Problematically, this Eurocentric approach inherently centralizes whiteness (Hess, 2017, 2021; Koza, 2008), and music programs consequently reflect “stringent and restrictive notions of what constitutes musical competence” while embracing “narrow definitions of legitimate musical knowledge” (Koza, 2008, pp. 145-146). Therefore, although there are merits to all forms of music education, United States music programs that emphasize WAM traditions unintentionally privilege certain types of musicking and cultures, while devaluing or even wholly omitting others (Abril, 2009; Hess, 2017, 2021; Koza, 2008; Kratus, 2019). **Given this reality, it is important to examine these programs that deviate from such traditions in order to better understand the possibilities of varied curriculum in P12 music classrooms.**

In keeping with the focus on WAM traditions, music education curricula in the United States typically emphasize performance-based, semi-professional practices. In other words, P12 music programs center individual training and formalized concerts in the educational process with the goal (either explicit or implicit) of shaping semi-professional musicians. The concept of a semi-professional musician is one who strives to meet the musical expectations set by others but without the compensation of a full-time career (Kratus, 2019). This semi-professional approach is lived out through the performance-based ensembles of band, choir, and orchestra, where students are instructed in performance-based curricula (Kratus, 2019; Williams, 2011). These ensemble-based, performance-centered classrooms typify most P12 music programs in the United States (Elpus & Abril, 2019; Elpus, 2014).

Semi-professionalism stands in contrast to a model of amateurism. The word *amateur* derives from the Latin *amator*, meaning “lover,” and an amateur musician is one who engages in music purely for the love of doing so (Online Etymology Dictionary). Music education scholar Thomas Regelski (2007) identifies multiple criteria that characterize *amateurism*, among them:

- Amateurism is considered to be “*time well spent, even when it requires strenuous effort*” (p. 31)
- Amateurs are dedicated enough to find the time to engage in amateurism
- Amateurs improve by listening to musical models
- Most important, amateurism requires musical independence

This final characteristic is notably critical in that the amateur determines their own standards for success (Regelski, 2007). As such, in amateurism, musicians are encouraged to set their own standards for their level of music making, rather than meet standards required by employers or audiences. Researcher John Kratus (2019) offered a model for what amateurism could look like in a music classroom. In this model, the curricular musical content and the pedagogical approach is designed to fit the students’ needs and interest; this stands in contrast to typical systems, whereby students must fit the music that is taught.

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, the goal of American music education was to foster musical amateurism in students. However, since that time, the focus shifted away from amateurism toward promoting a type of semi-professional musicianship (Kratus, 2019; Regelski, 2007; Williams, 2011). Today, these semi-professionalism centered curricula are often assumed to be the primary pathway for instructing students in music. This limited approach likely affects the appeal of enrolling in school music classes. According to data gathered about the class of 2013, only 24% enrolled in at least one year of a course in band,

choir, or orchestra at some point during high school. Demographically, music students were 60% female and 40% male, and the racial/ethnic composition of music ensemble students was 58% White, 13% Black or African American, 17% Hispanic or Latino, 4% Asian or Pacific Islander, 8% two or more races, and under 1% American Indian or Alaska Native. Additionally, students from the highest socioeconomic status quintiles were overrepresented among music students (Elpus & Abril, 2019). The rather narrow scope of students enrolled in high school music classes may encourage music educators to wonder how their programs can reach a wider span of students. This goal is especially salient when considering that research has shown that the academic achievement of ethnically diverse students improves when they are taught through their own cultural and experiential filters (Gay, 2002).

Unfortunately, schools – historically and currently – are often part of the system that constructs barriers that impede students of color and other underserved students from achieving school success (Hess, 2017; 2021). As such, it is critical to explore more varied curricular practices, particularly in P12 music classrooms. For the purpose of this paper, varied curricular practices within the music classroom include engaging students in musicking outside of Western Art Music traditions, celebrating cultures outside the Eurocentric mainstream, and centralizing students' musical interests and unique voice in a manner that emphasizes intertwined social, artistic, and political domains (Allsup & Shieh, 2012; Gifford & Johnson, 2015; Hess, 2017, 2021; Kratus, 2019; Pawelski, 2013). In the end, employing varied curricular practices can enable teachers to reach a wider range of students.

Ultimately, the focus on semi-professionalism, combined with the focus on WAM, leaves little if any room for varied curricular practices in music education (Abril, 2009; Bond & Russell, 2019; Doyle, 2014; Forrester, 2019; Gay, 2002). Moreover, divergent ways of being musical are not typically embraced in universities and other areas of mainstream society, especially when these 'other' musical pursuits are thought to hinder progress in the 'serious'

study of music. In particular, universities often limit admittance to students who are trained in the WAM tradition (Abril, 2009; Koza, 2008). Koza (2008) points out that this practice “shut[s] out potential teachers from already underrepresented culture groups...tying the hands of teacher educators at a time when greater diversity, both perspectival and corporeal, is needed in the music teaching pool” (p. 146).

While there are many challenges that might prevent or be prohibitive for exploring varied curricular practices, such as systemic issues, funding, and teacher familiarity (Abril, 2009; Bond & Russell, 2019; Forester, 2019; Kelly, 2003), there are also many P12 music educators throughout the country who successfully practice varied curricula (Abril, 2009; Gifford & Johnson, 2015; Martignetti, 2017; Pawelski, 2013). These curricula can include content such as modern band, ukulele, drum circles, songwriting, and more, while pedagogical practices can center more on democratic principles, rote-based learning, collaboration, and community. Research shows that teachers who know their students and know how to develop learning activities that capitalize on their interests are much more likely to create a positive learning environment (Burton, 2011; Butler, Lind, & McKoy, 2007; Doyle, 2014; Hess, 2017). Though there is a dearth of resources on varied music pedagogy, there are teachers who are actively engaging in varied curricula. In this paper, I investigate these teachers, their musical and academic experiences, and how their experiences have informed their current practices.

Problem Statement/Research Questions

Among teachers who have varied curricular practices, it is important to determine the connections between training, experience, and what is being done in the classroom. In doing so, one can observe common narratives and themes that occur to inform how music teacher preparation programs can better prepare their pre-service teachers.

As such, the primary research questions for this multiple case study are:

1. What characterizes the training and experiences of teachers applying varied curricular practices in their music classrooms?
2. What characterizes the relationship between teachers' training, experiences, and the curricular practices they explore?
3. How do teachers' curricular values manifest in practice?

Literature Review

In order to approach the aforementioned research questions, it is important to first contextualize this inquiry within extant literature on the nature of varied curricular practices in music education, as well as teacher experiences and training.

Varied Curricula in Music Education

Research on varied curricular practices in music education seems to center on integrating the vast array of student interests, learning styles, personalities, and musical levels (Gifford & Johnson, 2015; Hess, 2017; Kratus, 2019). However, many approaches to varied curricular practice start with exploring music outside of the WAM tradition. For example, World Music Pedagogy (WMP) is in part a reaction to broader globalization, developing out of ethnomusicology and the practice of educating children in music as a cross-cultural and pan-human endeavor (Campbell, 2004; Campbell, 2016; McCarthy, 2004; Schippers & Campbell, 2012; Volk, 1998). WMP seeks to provide students with an understanding of music as a culturally differentiated human expression (Campbell, 2016). World music pedagogy aims at the global expansion of perspectives on music and culture and reaches beyond queries of “Why (world music)?” and “What (music, from which culture)?” to questions of “What (meaning does the music hold within the culture)?” and “How (can the music best fit into systems and situations of musical education and training)?” (Campbell, 2016, p. 96). Some aspects of WMP are learning by listening, repeated listening, making sense of music as an aural art, using music as a channel of creative practice, and using music as a means of personal and communal human expression (Campbell, 2016).

Other types of musicking are also explored in an effort to diversify music curricula in the United States. In a 2021 article, music education scholar Bryan Powell advocated for the use of Modern Band in public school music education. Modern band refers to educational experiences centering songwriting and collaboration on instruments such as guitar, bass, and drum set. He

states, “through democratizing the classroom by empowering students to make musical decisions....modern band educators have the opportunity to engage more students in culturally relevant music education practices” (p. 58).

Songwriting is also emphasized in practices beyond Modern Band. Both Kratus (2016) and Tobias (2014) assert that songwriting can be an effective tool to “think more expansively about what might take place in music classrooms” (Tobias, 2014, p. 331). According to Kratus (2016), there are several reasons for teaching songwriting, including its importance in addressing adolescents’ social needs and to help students connect to their own cultures through music. Songwriting also helps promote lifelong musicking.

Still other music educators advocate for exploring genres such as hip-hop (Kruse, 2016a; Kruse, 2016b). Kruse suggests that hip-hop is important not just because it is a musical genre, but also because it is a culture “whose roots are generally associated with people of color in economically disadvantaged urban areas” (2016b, p. 14). Hip-hop’s absence from traditional curricula is often attributed to concerns regarding perceived appropriateness, particularly with regard to language and negative social themes. Kruse (2016b) argues that appropriateness is context-specific, and that such topics can open the door for important conversations and critical thinking in the music classroom.

Teacher Experiences and Training

A range of guidelines inform undergraduate curricula in music education, from state to national requirements. Institutions accredited by the *National Association of Schools of Music (NASM)*, for example, dictate these programs include, “studies in music, including basic musicianship and performance normally comprise at least 50% of the total program; general studies, 30–35%; and professional education, 15–20%” (NASM, 2021, p. 121). Schmitt's (1989) research found some consistency within music education curricula, especially concerning topics such as lesson planning, evaluation, music education philosophy, and

classroom management form the core of most music education curricula. Within the undergraduate music education curriculum, content of a practical nature appears to dominate the curriculum, such as choral and instrumental techniques, methods and materials, and conducting.

In addition to the overall curricular content, several researchers have examined the perceived value of undergraduate music teacher coursework (Conway, 2002; Groulx, 2015; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009; Kastner, 2019; Schmitt, 1989). For example, some studies have determined that music educators largely find student teaching and other real-world teaching experiences to be among the most valuable courses (Brophy, 2002; Conway, 2002; Groulx, 2016; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009; Legette, 2013; Taylor, 1970), although early field experiences without a clear purpose were seen as less valuable (Groulx, 2016; Taylor, 1970). Other researchers determined that the perceived value of certain music-specific undergraduate courses can vary by participants' area of specialization (e.g., band, choir, or orchestra) (Groulx, 2016; Teachout, 1997).

While there are certainly many content consistencies, undergraduate music education curricula do tend to be variable across institutions. However, there seems to be a common formula centralizing WAM-focused large ensemble traditions. For example, according to Schmitt's (1989) research, topics such as music in world cultures, jazz band methods, and media/computers are not included in many music education curricula, which may make such topic areas feel inaccessible for many teachers. However, professional literature, ranging from the Tanglewood Symposium (Music Educators National Conference, 1967), and the Teacher Education Commission (Klotman, 1972) to the MENC Task Force Report on Music Teacher Education (1987), has reiterated the importance of varied curricula in music education.

Beyond music-specific content, there have been calls for music teacher education curricula to include more coursework specific to preparation in cultural awareness in the

classroom (Butler, Lind, & McKoy, 2007; Lind & McKoy, 2016). These calls often include a need for preservice teachers to develop a range of skill sets specific to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). According to scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995), teachers living CRP must embody three criteria:

1. An ability to develop students academically
2. A willingness to nurture and support cultural competence
3. A commitment to developing sociopolitical or critical consciousness

According to Ladson-Billings, when preparing to engage in CRP, educators must develop a cultural diversity knowledge base, design culturally relevant curricula, demonstrate cultural caring and build a learning community, have cross-cultural communications, and have cultural congruence in classroom instruction. Another important aspect of CRP is the concept of acknowledging and confronting implicit bias; doing so is crucial in facilitating cultural competency among preservice music teachers (Forrester, 2019). In embracing CRP, music teachers open the door to exploring more diverse curricular practices while also honoring the stories of their students. Unfortunately, teacher preparation programs seem to miss the mark on connecting these dots, which results in reinforcing more unilateral musical traditions (Allsup & Sheih, 2012; Butler, Lind, & McKoy, 2007; Lind & McKoy, 2016). Exploring varied curricular practices, particularly those that promote cultural awareness, can help teachers and students alike cultivate curiosity, acceptance, and empathy (Abril, 2009), pushing for moral engagement (Allsup & Sheih, 2012).

There have also been calls to explore amateurism more deeply in the context of music teacher training programs and, in turn, P12 music. For instance, in Kratus' (2019) article arguing for a return to amateurism in music education, he offers these three guidelines:

1. Expand curricular offerings to appeal to amateur musicians as well as semi-professional musicians.
2. Revise standards to include programmatic aspects for improving the quality and accessibility of music education for a diverse student body.
3. Raise expectations that students will use what they are learning in school once they are away from school.

Ultimately, because teachers tend to gravitate toward strategies that are both familiar and comfortable (Bond & Russell, 2019), embracing amateurism and other varied practices in the music classroom can sometimes receive resistance. As such, it is important to unpack the unique experiences of those music teachers who have, indeed, met the charge of reimagining school music curricula in the United States.

Method

In the spring of 2022, I obtained exempt status approval from the Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board to conduct this multiple case study (IRB Approval 1902249-2, See Appendix A). My primary data sources were multiple, one-hour long interviews. All three participants were interviewed a total of two times each in the summer of 2022. These interviews had a semi-structured protocol and complemented each study participant's unique background (See Appendix B). Interviews were transcribed, inductively coded, and analyzed for themes. As relevant through the data collection process, I also created analytic memos. Member checks helped address trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2020; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020).

This study employed purposive sampling. Participants were hand-selected for participation due to their proven track record employing varied curricular practice. To achieve a comprehensive perspective, I engaged with teachers in three geographically varied sites. In addition, the participants represented a varied range of areas of expertise and years of experience.

Participant/Site Descriptions

Diana

Diana is an arts, music, and special education educator working at an urban transfer alternative school in the Northeast. She is the founder and director of the music and arts program at her school. She received a Bachelor of Arts in film and photography and a Master of Arts in Special Education. Her school's program utilizes an entirely student-driven, experiential, project-based curriculum that mimics a foundation year in art and design school. She enjoys engaging in music through playing by ear, playing bass and guitar in rock bands, and frequently going to see live music performances.

Diana runs an internship-based program where the curriculum involves artist development, songwriting, producing, recording, music technology and engineering, and live performance. Self care practices are also embedded into the curriculum. A standard day in Diana's classroom looks like open work time at recording stations set up around the classroom, live performance rehearsals, listening to each other's work and giving feedback, group seminar style discussions, and written reflections about their progress.

Though an internship-based program, Diana's school offers a diversity of credits so students meet the requirements needed to receive a high school diploma. For instance, English credits look like journals, reflections, and lyric writing. The economics project is the economics of the music industry. The science project is focused around sound waves and the science behind how Digital Audio Workspaces (DAWs) work, such as analog signal, EQing, compression, and frequency. For US history and global credit, students can pick an artist who discusses social issues through their work, create a biography of an artist and analyze a song by them, or pick a social issue that is important to them and write about it.

George

George is a teacher at a public suburban middle school in the Midwest. The school is 99% free and offers a reduced lunch fee. He just finished his first year of teaching since graduating with his Masters in choral conducting. George enjoys engaging in music by singing and being in choirs. But especially since he started teaching, he enjoys listening to wide varieties of music from different genres to expand his musical vocabulary and to get out of his comfort zone.

Band, choir, and orchestra programs are all offered at George's school. He runs a mostly traditional choir program, and he teaches the 7th/8th grade choir and 6th grade general music classes. His curriculum involves ukuleles, history, listening to music of a wide variety of genres, and composition. He also directs middle school musicals. When planning instruction, George takes the state standards and his students' ideas into account, in order to create fulfilling musical experiences for his students.

James

James is a music teacher for grades 6-12 at a charter school in a Southwestern city. The school puts student choice, authentic teaching and learning, and post-secondary readiness at the forefront of its educational model. He just completed his eighth year of teaching. James enjoys engaging with music through improvising on piano in popular style, being a church musician, and being involved in musical theater.

James teaches various ensembles, music history, music production, music theory, musical theater, and expressive arts therapy. The classes run in 22-day terms for high schoolers and 44-day terms for middle schoolers. Many of his courses involve project-based learning, and he is continually developing new curriculum and evaluating student feedback.

His ensemble courses consist of guitar, orchestra, vocal ensemble, and musical theater. He has taught various music history classes, such as music of the twentieth century,

popular music, history of American popular music, evolution of African American music, and music of New Mexico. He has also taught seminars on composition, music theory, digital audio workspaces, and expressive arts therapy.

Researcher's Lens

I am finishing my last year of my degree as an undergraduate music education major at a traditionally structured college of music. The scope of the program is rather narrow, in the sense that the majority of my instruction has been confined to Western Art Music traditions and classical piano performance. More recently, I began studying jazz piano and started composing—both of which have expanded my musical horizons and led me to explore worlds of music I was once too apprehensive to approach.

Though, this exploration has potentially biased me to favor varied curricula over traditional ones, especially concerning traditional BCO music classrooms. As I evaluated my research, I made sure to give myself time away from the data I collected in order to view the data holistically, and I spent substantial time evaluating extant literature so I can base my findings around them.

As I have expanded my identity as a musician, my identities as “teacher” and “musician” have fused together. As an artist, I feel inclined to make art by way of sharing stories through music. As a teacher, I feel called to teach others how to share their own stories through music. Additionally, teaching is a direct way for me to live out my values, given that I view teaching as a means to serve my community and to invest in the lives of young people.

Since moving closer to being a full-time educator, I have felt unprepared, nervous, and conflicted, especially as I have developed a higher awareness of educational inequity. How do I present content in a way that is special, relevant, and accessible to all the students I will have in my classroom? How do I expand my curriculum in ways that allow me to explore various avenues of music with my students? How do I ensure my students are reflected in my curriculum? I embarked on this project as I sought clarity, and this project has allowed me to get into the heads of people who are actively responding to these questions.

Findings

Following the interviews, participant's stories were reviewed and analyzed for possible themes. Initial themes centered on notions of participants as seekers, as well as participants as connection makers. The term "seekers" refers to participants taking initiative to seek out opportunities and resources to make certain ideas happen in the classroom, or participants' efforts to find or learn information helpful toward their goals. The term "connection makers" references participants' efforts to bridge the gap between musical and non-musical worlds (e.g., art, technology, politics), in order to create an interdisciplinary classroom experience that centralized relevancy. Another theme centered on participants' philosophies of music, which often emphasized process over product and centering the students' experience.

Diana's Program

Diana teaches at a transfer alternative school in the Northeast. The school opened in the 70s to address students who were overage, under-credited, and not going to school. She describes the purpose to be, "How do you engage the most at-risk, the most disconnected, and disengaged students?" Through this program, students earn credits needed to graduate and receive a high school diploma.

Diana's school practices a student-driven, experiential, project-based curriculum. The curriculum involves artist development, songwriting, producing, recording, music technology and engineering, and live performance. Rather than standard school-day hours, students spend 15-18 hours a week at school. Diana describes her job as, "I teach at an internship school and I run an internship-based program... You could frame it in thinking about what a record label would do." Through the program, students are equipped with the tools they need to launch a career in the music industry. Diana shares:

Instead of teaching kids just to be engineers, the focus was how do we help young people who want to be recording artists... How do you want to make money off your art or your music? What will it take to get there? That's what we teach... It's all around the individual artists and each person. They do collaborations, but it's mostly about... clarifying life's direction.

Diana describes her approach to music education as artist development, and her favorite aspects of her music program are the freedom and authenticity.

The fact that the young people get to come in and do the music that matters to them, and that we focus on songwriting and self-expression... We don't prioritize technical prowess, or technical achievement first. We prioritize self-expression, expression for connection, and music for healing and for discovering yourself. And so I love that I create a space where kids get to come in and be whoever they are, for better or for worse, and they don't have to pretend to be something else. And yet, they can be the best iteration of themselves.

Additionally, Diana's music program is grounded in expanding accessibility and centralizing relevancy. When she began working with this program, she worked to expand the program to include a wider variety of genres and musical experience. She describes this experience:

There were only a handful of recording studio internships when I got here, and there was a very high bar. Kids had to have existing either instrument or engineering skills. And in my quick survey of the first year I was here, that tended to predominantly be white young men who were wealthier, because

those were the kids who had guitar lessons since they were whatever. They were kids who already had their laptops. So there was a whole group that was left out. There was also not a lot of space for hip hop artists or vocalist.

Diana always gives students the option of choice within the styles of music they chose to explore. The autonomous, individualistic aspect of her program gives students pathways to explore the kinds of music they are interested in exploring and creating within. However, sometimes she experiences a push-pull with wanting to share her own interests and musical preferences with her students:

Every now and then I'll be like—let me share a band I like. But no, it's always, always their choice... Sometimes we'll do topic things. We'll partner with a social rights organization or social justice organization, and we've done some really cool songs about sexual violence, we've done fundraisers for gun control. So we sometimes will give them that, but the style is always up to them.

Diana's knowledge of and background in popular music genres strongly informs the entire scope of her program. She describes the advantage of being fully immersed in the culture of the music she teaches:

I came up in a DIY punk scene, and I go to all the concerts in the city. I'll go to concerts and see my kids there. Or I'll go see my kids' bands...I know a lot about hip hop and one of my colleagues is a hip hop artist and a music producer. So if you don't know those cultures, I guess it would be very hard to teach that way... It [music] becomes a reflection of your cultural experience and

the way that you live. So if you don't live, or your friends aren't doing rock music, you just don't really know about it, in terms of a direct connection to the culture.

Overall, Diana's music program is grounded in using music to connect and express. Her passion for expressing herself through music is reflected in her curriculum, where she fosters students' musical expression by giving them the tools they need to express themselves through music. She continually asks, "How do you get people to connect to their musicality? To their creativity? To their storytelling?" She summarizes her philosophy as follows:

I believe that music is the most powerful way that we connect and we express. It serves all purposes, right? Happiness, sadness, joy, anger... Just kind of thinking that music is the way that we understand ourselves as humans, and how we understand each other. And so, being able to help people—young people—be better people or know themselves better through music, I feel really lucky.

Diana's Story

Diana's pathway to becoming a music educator began with teaching gymnastics growing up and through college. Teaching gymnastics sparked an interest in teaching, so she enrolled in an American education course as a film and photography major. Through this course, she discovered that education could be a pathway for her to live out her values through her career:

I took a non-degree graduate class in American education and it was super progressive and amazing. We read Paulo Freire and bell hooks, and I was just like—alright, this is it. Because I would say, more than I knew that I wanted to be a teacher, I'm equally an activist. And so, when I took that class, it was like, oh, this is the way to live my values, instead of just being a protester. To me, it was very clear that that was the way to impact things that were really important to me at a real—you know, policy level or direct exchange.

This revelation led her to join a teaching fellows program. She hoped to work with elementary-age children, but she ended up being placed in a high school special education classroom. Despite being placed outside of her comfort zone, she embraced the opportunity and ended up thriving in the position. Through the program, she was enrolled in graduate classes and received a special education teaching license and a masters in special education. She shares:

When I applied for the Teaching Fellows, I applied for elementary school since I'd spent seven years working with young kids. When they told me that I got high school special education—since they assign what they need—I was like, no way! There is no way I can teach high schoolers... And then, when I got into the classroom in that summer school I was like, oh actually this works, and now I can't imagine doing anything else.

When she first began teaching, she didn't think she would be a music educator. She reflected on the rather narrow pathway into the music education profession and noticed the limitations this narrow pathway can create.

When I first started teaching, I didn't think I would be a music teacher... We would talk a lot about how narrow music education programs are and how you have to be classically trained or know the jazz cannon, and you have to read music. And it creates a very small box for music teachers.

Though Diana teaches music, she is not a certified music teacher. Rather, she is a certified special education teacher. The unique context of her position allows her to carve her own musical experience into her job in a way other positions may not allow for.

I don't have a music education degree. But I know that, at least a few years ago, there were only three or four universities in the country that accept pop music, popular music training, as opposed to classical or jazz... If I had to have a traditional music education license, I would be cut out from the system.

Maria taught at several different schools before her current position, but she never taught music in traditional (BCO) ways. Her background in music reflects the way she practices music in her classroom, as a self-taught musician within popular genres who is actively involved in local music scenes.

I started playing music when I was young. My dad is a musician and a guitar player. I started playing bass when I was 15 in high school because I love The Smashing Pumpkins and I wanted to be like D'arcy, their bass player. All my friends in high school were musicians but, similarly to the program I run now, I

was never in the music or traditional music program at school. So I would just play around in punk bands and rock bands.

Another unique aspect of her career is the culture of the city and community she lives within. There is a focus on social justice and social-emotional learning centered practices, and she has a very similar core to her teaching. When she teaches, she asks, “What do they [students] want and need, and what are they bringing to the table?” She encourages teachers to find ways to bring relevancy into every music classroom, regardless of how traditional. As she suggested, a simple way to do so is through repertoire selection. She shares:

[At our school] the whole lens from top down is anti-racist education, social emotional supported education, and so there's really... an incredible opportunity to bring all of those things to our teaching... You have those ideas, you bring them in in the ways that you can, and you kind of try the things... where you're learning to teach this certain way... We've all seen the incredible band performances of the incredible Kendrick Lamar or the Rage Against the Machine ones—you can fit within the structure. Like if you have to run a concert band or do an ensemble performance or the marching band, but mix it up with the choices of music, you know.... I know a lot of this is driven by administrators and the expectations of the music program—but then you bring it in. You're like, “No, I'm doing the thing. Look, they're all performing, they're all here, they all know thing, but we chose this song or this song.” So I think there's a lot of ways, but also it takes a while... do what you can and do what feels good, and each year you'll grow and build.

Diana also discusses what it looks like to synergize the traditional and progressive. Her city has a balance of both traditional and progressive music programs, and before her current job, she worked at a school with strong performance arts programs. But there is also a strong presence of hip hop education, music technology, and music production in music education within the city. Through these varied ways of approaching music education, Diana has seen new curricula emerging:

My city... has a very strong traditional concert band performing arts programs in a lot of schools. So I've taught at schools that have had a full several hundred kids in the concert band, jazz band ensembles. The band director was the director of a marching band, so we have a very strong presence for that. But because we are such a cultural hub in this city and because there are a lot of, you know, very cool teachers, there is a big hip hop education movement, and big music tech and music production groups... I don't know what it's like in any other city, but I would say we probably have a little bit more than a lot of other places. I know several of my friends and people who work at schools that will have traditional music programs but also have pretty good music tech, music production, beat production. And then several of our really strong nonprofits support a lot of schools. One has really incredible curriculums and teaching artists who come in to do hip hop focus education and music education and songwriting. So yes, it is very much Western music focus, but I think there's more emerging, about how to approach songwriting, music analysis, and using more contemporary and popular music, and with a focus on hip hop education.

Additionally, Diana has seen what progressive spins on traditional programs can look like, such as when students wrote their own musical to perform:

At an earlier job we did do quite a few musicals. We did Dream Girls and A Chorus Line, and that was kind of fun and mixed it up a little bit. But definitely mostly auditorium, big group, big ensembles, choral. And then, when I started teaching it at my next school, doing the musical that the kids wrote themselves, it was really beautiful and kind of a way to function within a format that everyone's used to, like auditorium musical, but bringing in their own stuff.

Diana's experiences all culminate into how she runs her current music program, especially with how she centralizes relevancy. As she stated, "That's the point of our school, to help kids refine and get into the industries that they want to get into." She finds that students are excited and passionate about their work.

They write, record, if they have the opportunity to perform they're super hungry for it. So it's not even so much a thing that we make them do, it's something that they're kind of begging for. And particularly pre-pandemic, and when we were doing our residency, we couldn't do enough shows. We do more and we would have concerts that were like five hours long because there'd be 25 kids and we give each kid a song or two, or sometimes three. And one after another, after another, and they're all you know, supporting each other in the crowd and singing along. So yeah it's not even a question. They're just like, "Oh yeah, who's got the mic? Let's go!"

Diana also had meaningful experiences of music as connection within the classroom before her current position. In these ways, she was able to expand students' communication and expression.

I did the rock band after school, or the spoken word poetry club. And to me, I think, those moments were more intimate. And doing a small band or helping a kid write a song is very different than directing, you know, 40 kids in an orchestra ensemble.

Throughout her wide variety of teaching experiences, she addressed gaps in her musical training, specifically with music technology. This relates to her embodying a seeker-mentality. She describes this experience:

At the beginning... I was insecure about my engineering skills, my music production skills, my comfort... in Logic, and Pro Tools... For the first two years of the program, most of the music production was being run by our professional mentors. And then over the time of the past six years I have become such a better engineer, I can make beats, I can engineer, I can make things... I run the studio, I know all the equipment, I manage all of it... I have noticed that my music skills have grown tremendously. And then in that, I feel much more comfortable writing my own stuff, recording at home, or just working with my friends.

Overall, teaching has been a process and a journey for Diana. She has spent years finding ways to identify what works for the community of students she serves, and she has gradually developed the skills she needs to teach how she teaches now. Even though it has

not been an easy journey for her, she says, “But I really know that what I'm doing is valuable, and I know that's in alignment with my values and how I want to make change in the world.”

Diana goes on to say:

Every semester we'll have a kid speak for everyone and look around at the end of one reflection and be like, “I have always hated coming to school and I can't wait to come to school because of this program.” Or kids will post on Instagram—like what this kid just posted the other day of, “I used to quit school to stay at home and make music, but now I get to go to school and work in the studio all day.” So that's like a very common thing, so I love that I also love that. Actually all of our mentors say the same thing, all of our music mentors, as well as me, say, “I always wish I had this program when I was young.” So that's the purpose of it.

George's Program

George teaches at a public suburban middle school in the Midwest, and he just finished his first year of teaching. His school's music program has been built with BCO traditions. The majority of his day is spent teaching 7th/8th grade choir, but the choir is split between four class periods. This allows for smaller class sizes, but is not the norm for school choral programs. However, he has adapted to the schedule and hopes to see the older students rise up as leaders in the future. He describes the program structure:

I've got four sections of the 7/8 choir. I've got first, second, third, and fourth period, and my largest one is 15-20 kids. They all come together and there's 50

of them, but in four classes. It's kind of weird because it's four smaller groups that make up one choir. It's been something that I've had to deal with a little bit. It's been interesting... Next year, my goal is to use upcoming eighth graders as kind of the pros to help lead the leaders and pull along some of the seventh graders that didn't have choir last year.

George also teaches sixth grade general music. It is a semester-long course, and he has more curricular flexibility with teaching this course, and he has built this curriculum upon finding creative ways to meet music learning standards while still making the material relevant and engaging for his students. George describes the mix of content explored in this course:

We do all sorts of stuff in there. I teach them about note names, we do solfege, we do rhythm counts, we do instruments, the orchestra, we do ukulele, musical symbols, definitions, all that stuff... I have the standards in front of me, and we have to hit these things. If I do this, it hits this. If I do this, it's these. Can I do some sort of project with this?... A problem that I ran into sometimes was making sure that it all built upon each other, and not going too fast, not going too slow. Trying to find a sweet spot for that.

George also seeks out ways to make choir class relevant for students. One way he has done so is through choral journals. He has always found listening to be a key way he engages with music. So in addition to learning repertoire, he does a lot of listening with his students. He has them listen to a wide variety of music from different genres and they write about what they hear:

We'll listen to a different thing each week, and I try to make it a big variety. So listen to a really old thing, and then we'll listen to a Pentatonic song, and then we'll listen to a world music piece, and then we'll listen to Joshua Fit the Battle, or something like that, and just give them a variety—and maybe even a jazz tune... I have a choral music playlist that I've been adding to since undergrad, so every time I had a choral rep class, I would just add the whole playlist onto that playlist. It's 26 hours worth of music, I think. And I can just scroll through there and stop and then figure out what I might want to do that week. This whole year, I don't think I did any Whitaker, so I could probably do a Whitaker next year. That'd be interesting for them. Just different stuff that I think they'd be interested in or that I'd be interested in exposing them to.

A key project he developed for his general music class was a composition project. This project was a culmination of all the musical skills they worked on throughout the semester. The project generated excitement in many of his students, but even for the ones who were disinterested, they appreciated the ownership that came with writing their own composition. George describes this experience:

So then I'll play it [their composition] on piano and I'll sing their song and they'll play along on their percussion instrument. And then they get to keep the piece of paper that I've printed up with their song—that's their first song. First semester was really cool because I had several kids that were like, "Oh my gosh I'm taking this home to show my parents—this is my first song!" That was awesome. Second semester, I had a lot of kids that weren't as interested... I was like, "Okay do this." And they would just do the bare minimum, just write rhythms on

there. But I think it was even still cool for them to see it in writing, when I finally got to that point when I actually put it in and I gave them their physical copy... Even though they were just going through the motions and they are just trying to pass, they appreciated—they were like, “Oh, this is kind of cool that I could see it written out here now.”

Overall, George has an overarching desire to see students enthusiastic and taking ownership of their learning. He is very passionate about empowering students, and this vision is at the core of how he builds his curriculum in his music classroom. He shares:

I would like to see enthusiastic kids. I'd like to see my kids have ownership and kids be involved. One of the biggest things that frustrates me about these kids is they'll either give up right away, or they won't put in the effort whatsoever to begin with. And it's like, but you're smart, you can do this, why are you choosing not to do this? And most of it's because they don't have people challenging them sometimes, so they get by with not putting in the effort, not doing stuff. So being there for them, being able to be a good influence for them and challenge them to take it up to the next level, and figure out how to improve my pep talk skills, because kids need it. Especially middle schoolers... That's what I'd like to see—more involvement and more enthusiasm, and see kids use their whole brains.

Another key factor that informs his curriculum is student feedback. He gives his students structured surveys, as well as taking into account offhand comments and suggestions they may give.

First semester of general music looked vastly different than second semester of general music. And they're different kids so technically I could just teach the same class, but I took a lot from that first semester. I found stuff that worked, found stuff that didn't. You can do an informal observation just realizing kids are disengaged. Some of the best ideas I got for the curriculum in that class came from students. Sometimes I did surveys of "What can I do differently? What would you appreciate to see?" Or even just an offhand comment, where a student's like, "It'd be really cool if we did this." And you're like, "Oh yeah that would be pretty cool..." I'm thinking ahead to that, trying to use student feedback and do some of the stuff that they would appreciate and some stuff they want to do.

George continually centralizes students' backgrounds and interests in his curriculum. He finds that teaching "old," foundational musical concepts through mediums they could relate to, such as popular music or YouTube videos, is effective.

I don't call it that [CRP], very often, but I guess it's just trying to shape your curriculum around the kids in your classroom. I have a group of kids that thinks anything before 1990 is old, so trying to teach some old concepts, maybe through some new music or through some stuff that they can relate to, like a YouTube video.

Ultimately, George finds that synthesizing student feedback with the standards works well for constructing his curriculum.

It was putting that [student feedback] hand in hand with the standards and trying to create a fulfilling musical experience from day one to whatever at the end. And kind of take them somewhere, have them feel like they did something good. I had several benchmark things. I've done a project at the end of both semesters that I've really liked where they've composed their own music.

George's Story

George's pathway to being a music teacher began when he switched his major in college to music education. He describes:

I switched to music ed and I never looked back. It was just this thing I wanted to do and I was really passionate about it and really—I kind of opened my eyes in undergrad to the scope of class or repertoire, the scope of stuff.

When reflecting on his undergraduate experiences, George recalls a history elective that encouraged him to get outside of his sphere of understanding:

One of the best classes I took in undergrad was actually not even a music class, it was an equivalent of a history elective essentially. It was called Africa's past, our future, and it was about how all of humanity is sort of descended from Africa, and taking a look at different structures that were born in ancient Africa. There's like—ancient African civilizations were—a lot of them are matriarchies, and what that looks like and why. And versus today, the juxtaposition of what patriarchal society versus a matriarchy...it was an awesome class... That was one of my

undergraduate experiences that enlightened me to get outside of my sphere of understanding. And not necessarily musically, but just in general, to kind of get outside of a box of thinking.

Immediately following his undergraduate program, he went to graduate school to study choral conducting. During his time studying at his graduate program, he found himself wondering how he could expand his horizons as he was reflecting on his own identity and experiences. He shares:

I was trying to battle with my own personal, mental, musical identity, and it kind of coincided with like the Black Lives Matter movement and stuff like that, where it's like—okay, so yes I love all this classical choral music, but the world doesn't necessarily need more Beethoven... the world doesn't really need me to do more Mozart... How can I expand myself and get a better understanding of stuff outside of my comfort zone?

Once George left the walls of academia for the first time, he experienced culture shock, especially when realizing the differences with how academic institutions tend to engage with music versus how his students were engaging with music. Thus, he embodies a seeker-mentality as he seeks out ways to promote student engagement. He describes this experience:

And then I went out teaching and it was like another sort of smack in the face of—I've been in undergrad and I went right to grad school, and it's been six years of standard Western music, teacher preparation programs stuff. And then I went into the real world, and it was like—this is not at all how it's like... At least at my

school where I'm at now, the kids think that anything before 1990 is old. So how can you teach them about the stuff because on the Ohio state standards, you have to teach them about music history and about classical composers and all this stuff. So how do you teach them that while one—keeping them interested, and two—also giving them enough of more contemporary stuff that they can really dig their teeth into.

George primarily engages in music through performing and listening. More recently, since he has been busy teaching, he mainly engages in music through listening. In addition, he uses listening as a way to push himself out of his musical comfort zone:

When I was at school, I did a lot of singing in choirs... Performing stuff through school, performing in church choirs, stuff like that. After I got out of school and since I've been teaching, it's really been a lot more of just listening... Coming into the place that I've come into and working where I've worked and experiencing the people I've experienced, I've been trying to just push myself out of my comfort zones into music... that wasn't necessarily in my vocabulary last year. So whether it's music from African American tradition, or world music in general, stuff that's maybe a different genre that I'm used to... I listened to a lot of music. That's a good way that I enjoy music.

George also reflected on a time he explored amateurism during his undergrad. He took two years of violin lessons, having never played the violin before. He reflects:

There were two years—I took violin lessons in undergrad, and that wasn't my primary instrument. I'd never played violin before. That was a fun experience and I played the last chair in the orchestra. I was a second violin for two years. It was really interesting to see because I did trumpet for a month in sixth grade, but I was never even a bad kid. So I never really learned note names or anything like that. Seeing an instrumental rehearsal as an amateur violinist, versus being in a choral rehearsal where I'm much more comfortable, I was able to see what was different there, and that was really interesting, that was really fun.

Although, George sometimes finds himself self-conscious when he is engaging in amateurism. In his words:

I'm sort of self-conscious about performing stuff that isn't necessarily my forte sometimes. I don't want to be appropriative or anything like that... But honestly, I have a hard time engaging with stuff outside of my comfort zone as an amateur because I don't feel like I'm doing a good job with it. I don't feel like I'm giving it the energy it needs, or the insight that it requires to perform it well. Which comes from that school stereotype of semi-professionals, where it's "if you can't do it well, just might as well not do it." It's stopped me a lot from experimenting, like doing other stuff as a musician. I have my stuff that I'm really good at, which is choir, and to a lesser extent singing. And that's kind of where I've stayed. I did that experiment with violin and that was fun... She [my violin teacher] understood that, for me, it was like it wasn't my thing. I was just there to learn and have fun. That was a really fun lesson experience to take lessons with her and have that experience. But I've fallen off that.

In further reflecting upon his experiences in his first year of teaching, George discusses disparities between preparation and reality:

No one cares what you've done, no one cares what you can do, they just care if you're there for them, first of all, as far as students are concerned. They also care—just show them if you can do that tik tok or whatever, you're cool. It doesn't matter if you a professional dancer. It's a much different expectation, as far as that semi-professionalism is concerned, when you get into the real world. That's not reflected very well in higher education schools.

In addition, George has been thinking more about the implications of performances and how he wants to frame performing for his students. In his eyes, the experience of music ultimately transcends performance. As he says:

I've had to take small victories and be like, you know, despite the fact that it was always hidden to me, you're preparing for the concert and you're going to put on this beautiful concert... It created a lot of anxiety for me, coming up to concerts in the beginning. And I kind of had to just let myself go and be like—it's not all about this. It's an important part of it, but it's also about the relationships you develop with the kids. It's about the relationships they developed with each other. It's about the music... Maybe the written assessments you take or the projects you do, or stuff like that. It's what they get out of it. It's not necessarily the performance.

James' Program

James teaches at a charter school for grades 6-12, and they have a unique curriculum design based around “flavors,” which are small terms structured in the form of a seminar. Terms are 22 days long for high school (8-12), and 44 days long for middle school (6-7). His ensemble courses run on a semester schedule, but he offers classes that involve music history, music production, and inner-arts collaboration as options for flavors. As he describes:

Our terms last for 22 days, and so I had to figure out how to make a curriculum fit into that. They're seminars, and it's kinda project-based in a way, but we're supposed to be offering everything in “flavors.” So I might offer music history in a different flavor. Last year I was offering it in Black Lives Matter and protest music. And another one was New Mexican music. I did your traditional Western classical music as well. But the other teacher who took on some of those classes is doing 20th century music and things like that.

James offers a wide variety of flavors for his students, and the options vary by the term. Here he describes some of the topics he has covered:

I offer music history classes that are more project-based and in creating some type of project to recreate history. So the different flavors that are offered are music history of the 20th century, like popular music, history of American popular music, Black Lives Matter protest music, the evolution of African American music... I've offered music of New Mexico, which is Native American and heritage music. I've offered music production classes focused on digital audio workspaces, creating compositions based on those. I've offered composition classes, a music theory course—I've had several different levels of

music theory, an expressive art therapy class, a musical theater class, and then I have guitar, orchestra, vocal ensemble.

Usually James' teaching schedule is set up in a way where he teaches three ensembles and then two seminar-style flavors. As he describes:

So I'm usually teaching two different classes that are identical, and then a drop-in class. That's where you don't need a prerequisite necessarily to join that class, and it's easier to just come in at last minute. And then I have usually three classes that are the semester long ensemble courses.

Often, his curriculum involves some sort of inner-arts collaboration where the music and arts teachers do a cross-curricular project together. In the future, he is hoping to implement computer science into the art program. As he says:

I offer this musart class. I've collaborated with the art teachers as well at my school, so our art festivals that we do, the art teachers include their artwork. We often do collaborations, either myself or the other music teacher... We use the Makey Makey system, so that when the viewer would go up and touch a certain piece of artwork they would hear that composition. I want to do more collaborations with the art department, we already are. Next year I believe we're going to be implementing computer science into the art program, so that students will be coding. We don't know exactly what it's going to look like yet, but they'll be coding things like shapes and colors, and also coding so that maybe when somebody moves across a camera, they start to make music that way.

James is constantly generating new curriculum and collaborating across subject areas to offer unique musical experiences for his students. In the future, he is hoping to implement hip hop and rap, as well as creating a new ensemble, a “rockestra,” that combines a rock band with orchestra. Here, he describes these ideas:

I didn't teach any music history courses this year, because I was so fried. I taught so many history courses last year because it was online. So possibly bring back the music history courses, but look at hip hop particularly, hip hop and rap music. I thought about teaching dance or also teaching some type of hip hop performance class... In the future we're looking at implementing more of a “rockestra” where we have a rock band working with orchestra type of deal. And I don't know if we'll do like an advanced ensemble or if it will be a collaboration, where I'm teaching like the string side of it and he's teaching the rock band side of it, and then we just collaborate some of the time.

In addition to the wide variety of classes offered, many of the ensembles and flavors are taught across all grade levels to where there are many different skill levels in the same class. James speaks to this experience:

Right now, all courses are open to everyone, because I'm mostly teaching beginning, and I'm having to rebuild the program after the pandemic closed us. That will change this a little bit as the kids will begin to grow their skill. So all my beginning ensembles anybody can join them. My vocal class, anybody can join at any time because there is the ability to teach different levels, so I have different levels within the same. The drop-in courses, like I said, those are open to anybody who wants to take it. Even music theory I opened up to anybody, so

I just tried to bring it to a level they could understand... But let's say piano lab. I have students who are several different levels. I have students who took five years of lessons and others who hadn't touched a piano at all before. That's my biggest thing I do with that, is in repertoire. I will ask students their level, what they're looking for, and then I'll adjust whatever repertoire they're working on. I do that for guitars, we'll all do some independent projects. And then orchestra, again, I mostly get beginners. I had some people who actually want to be pulled back to basics. They're okay with most of the basics, but I will challenge them by arranging music so that they have a more challenging part, or a solo.

Within the curriculum he develops, James incorporates technology and other relevant domains of experiencing music. An example he gives is piano MIDI visualizations on YouTube.

I already incorporated YouTube a lot into the piano classes, because that's what kids are already doing. They loved utilizing YouTube. And so maybe looking at something like that where their ongoing project, maybe they're copying something off of YouTube, maybe doing something extra with that. Maybe I can even have students record their music, just like those YouTube stars do, and figure out how to get the—I forget what they call that—but you know how they have the visualization of like the MIDI of the notes and things like that. Maybe have students do that, so that they can kind of become their own YouTube star if that's what they want to do!

Overall, James' favorite aspect about his music program is his ability to create his own curriculum and explore innovative ways to explore music with his students. He elaborates:

My favorite aspect is just my own ability to create the curriculum the way that I want to do it. And then the students also get to choose their own flavors. So that, and I would say and in addition to, because I can do that, I can be a lot more innovative and try out a lot of different curriculum that's not in a traditional program.

He was inspired to instate this curriculum from his own personal interests and from surveying students to gauge their interests. Seeking out ways to make his instruction more relevant is a common practice for James. When asked what led him to instate his curriculum, he responds:

Mostly just personal interest. And then, in my master's program, I completed this survey having students rate what non-traditional person they're interested in. There was a lot of interest in musical theater, there was a lot of interest in film scoring and video game music. And so, when we hired a new music teacher this year, I asked that teacher if they were comfortable teaching film scoring and things like that. And they were. So I didn't know if she would teach that one this year, but they did teach the musical theater class since there was a lot of interest. So student surveys and then just my own personal interest.

James finds that his students are very engaged in his classes, especially with his musical theater class. He found that the material resonated both with himself and his students. He describes that experience:

My musical theater class I think was the most fun for me to teach this term. It was the first time I've ever put on a musical. It was the specific match of the demographic... there's a lot of non-binary students in there. We just felt so passionate about musical theater. And something about that just jived so well together with me, and I think I found my passion too. I love musicals, I just didn't know I would love teaching it so much. I think that it was a good match for both the students and myself.

But as a whole, James sees a great amount of excitement and high levels of engagement from his students. In the future, he may even teach courses outside of music, such as interior design, which was prompted by both his personal interest and student interest.

But I see excitement in everything, and I'm going to be introducing new classes next year, I'm sure. So some more excitement for those. I'm thinking about teaching other things other than music, so I'm looking at maybe teaching an interior design course next year that I heard a lot of students were interested in. So I'm hoping to do that.

As has been evident, students' voices play an important role in James' curricular decisions and in how he selects repertoire. As he says,

And then the other thing that I really work towards is student voice in the music they're playing. So I have a lot of either personal projects that they complete or I have them vote on music that they want. I try to use a consensus model, so it's not just the majority wants this, but I try to be... that everybody can get on board with. Student voices have an extreme impact and influence in what I do in each

term, and that's every 22 days... I'm constantly asking students what their opinions are or what they suggest for either repertoire, or just in general, ideas that they want to do for performances.

One of the main driving forces of James' curricular development is an interest to expand his own knowledge. Here he expresses this seeker-mentality:

It goes both ways where it's interest from students—I ask my students every year what they listen to, like their music preferences, and oftentimes I'll have them link music for me so I can look them up.... There's just a lot of hip hop music preference. There's hip hop, and also just pop music in general. Rock music as well, I find that one interesting because students kind of like the classic rock. Like we're talking about 80s, you know 60s, 70s, and 80s rock. There's so much interest in that one. But also, I have such a personal interest in expanding my own knowledge. I don't know much about these things, so I always want to learn through my teaching practice.

James' Story

James had many positive experiences with music growing up, especially from his church and his school band. He taught himself how to play piano in middle school and also started developing an interest in visual art. In addition to being a certified music teacher, he is also a certified visual arts teacher. As he explains:

Most of my interest in music maybe came from the Church. We had a lot of singing. And then in middle school, well actually in sixth grade, I joined band. I had a really positive experience. I really liked band, I played the clarinet, and in middle school I also started learning piano on my own. But then once that came around in middle school, I started also developing other interests in visual art. I'm a certified visual art teacher as well, so that's why I incorporate a lot of art.

His interest in music continued to grow in high school, and he was involved in choir, theater, and band. He was inspired to pursue a career as a music teacher during this time. He describes this here:

My interest grew in high school. I was exposed to the choir program, the musical theater program, and drama. So I was in band, I was in choirs, and drama/musical theater. And then I also went to All State, and that's where I wanted to become a music teacher. So my high school experience was extremely influential in my life. And my high school music teacher was influential in the sense that I was like, "Oh, I like that. I like what he's doing."

James enrolled in a WAM-centric undergraduate music education program, but he did not particularly enjoy his experience. Even so, his goals, drive and student teaching experience gave him motivation to continue into the music education profession. In his words:

It's my own goals, it's my own ambition, and then my student teaching experience made me love music again. I student taught in an arts integrated school at an elementary school. That's where I was originally going to teach...

Having that cooperating teacher... When you're outside of that little bubble of college music education, I feel like I give more with that person than I did with a lot of the music people at my school.

James' experiences while student teaching exposed him to a wide variety of music curriculum he had not previously seen before, especially with integrated arts curricula:

In my student teaching... because they're an integrated art school... they had a lot of different methods of integrating art in everything. So one of the things they did was look at a piece of art and put sounds with it. I guess it was like a soundscape or something like that, from what I can remember. So that was my first experience with something integrating like that. So I started to really see the fun things that could happen through that school. They did children's opera, because they were working with this one person who composed new operas every couple years. And then they would do a musical the year after that... That teacher also did Orff style accompaniment with the kids, doing all like a bunch of different things at the same time... they require choreographing, and they're doing movement while doing Orff...

These curricula likely resonated with James because of his interest in the visual arts and theater. He took various art and interior design classes and has always had an interest in synergizing his experiences with music and the visual arts. As he explains:

When I was in high school, our church did these things called fine arts festivals... We had things called human videos where you would create a story,

and you would move and lip sync to music. So I feel like I was exposed to a lot of interesting, really non-traditional things there... I almost minored in it [visual arts]. I took a lot of art and also interior design classes through different colleges.

When thinking about explorations in amateurism, James initially could not think of any experiences. But he soon remembered his experience in learning modern band instruments, digital audio workspaces, and songwriting:

For myself, I don't think I have [engaged with amateurism]. I haven't had time to do things outside of just my job, really. Well that's not true. When I taught at the nonprofit, that's where I wanted to start learning some new things. So actually that is completely untrue. So I started learning a little bit of drums, I learned a little bit of guitar, a little bit of bass guitar. I also started learning music production elements. I had a friend who knew a little bit about the digital audio workspaces and I would learn a little bit from him. So I started recording music, even though I knew nothing about it really. And I even wrote a song, even though I didn't know how to write that.

James' high level of exposure to the arts led him to continually integrate domains outside of music into his curriculum. He began integrating visual arts into his curriculum from his first year teaching, as he describes:

My first year of teaching I did black light theater. I did black light movement, and we did shadow dancing where we put a big giant screen and some lights and

the kids choreographed this Korean song and did this really amazing choreography with it. I brought in my ideas from my teacher plus from that fine arts festival stuff, the black light theater specifically.

In addition, James began to start developing non-traditional curriculum out of traditional programs. Here he describes his efforts to develop his own curriculum:

I taught middle school after that... I was exposed to a lot of traditional methods of teaching there. The non-traditional aspects that I started developing—I didn't know how to teach drama. I had been a part of drama programs. I had to develop a curriculum. So I went to the Brigham Young University website where they have this curriculum... Incorporated puppetry into that drama program, learned about stage design and things like that... I have utilized my stage design and set design, things like that, in my program... And I set up the light system, I learned about lighting, contemporary lighting, through all of the research that I've done to create something that was visually based.

When James began teaching at his current school, he began building his program. He has very diverse performing ensembles in terms of instrumentation, since they do not have enough students to form traditional ensembles. Here he describes how he used BCO traditions as a framework to create something that worked for them:

We have a really interesting program. We just finished our performances, on Friday, where we have an arts festival.... I had a guitar group, an orchestra group, a vocal group... We had a rock band, an instrumental ensemble which

was like our version of a band, where we had like one person on tuba, one person on clarinet. Electric guitar, bass guitar, drums... Because we have a weird population of students, we can't necessarily offer traditional courses because we don't have the numbers necessarily. So all these people—and then we had a performance, where we had the rock band playing with the vocal ensemble and the orchestra all together as one... The traditional aspects are more traditional in my instrument ensembles. So I'll address technical things. I do use a method book for the beginners, the very beginners, to kind of base off of.

In these ensemble courses, they do a blend of traditional and progressive repertoire.

James shares how this works in his classroom:

A lot of the repertoire we do is not traditional. And that's just because kids really interact well with the contemporary stuff. I'll play a lot of music and ask them to decide which of these pieces they prefer. And of course they go for the—well I shouldn't say of course—but they do go for a lot of the contemporary material. I'll bring in traditional repertoire when it's specifically just good for their level. So for instance, I brought in simple gifts, the folk song. So maybe it had half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, very playable, and very good for their level. And anything that the method book suggested that is good for their level as well.

In addition, James frequently engages his students in self-directed learning. In this way, he approaches learning as Exploration as opposed to learning as mastery. He describes this approach as it functions in his guitar ensemble and his piano lab course:

I tell them, it has to be based in some technique [of guitar] you don't know yet. You have to have some kind of challenge to it. Maybe it needs to involve these chords. And then also I have composition projects in those classes, and also improvisation, where I'll put on a YouTube video that has chord charts, and I'll ask them to improvise within those chords. And that goes for all my instrumental classes... I have a piano lab where I have my basic curriculum... I teach a lot of chord based things. First let me dive into notation, and then putting notation and improvisation together in one. But that one's largely student driven. You bring in things that you want to learn and we'll decide how we want to go about it.

James also teaches non-performance based seminars, such as his expressive arts therapy course. This class functions as a way to support students' SEL and to present a new avenue of musical engagement students likely are not aware of. As he shares:

And I teach, like I said, the musart class I talked about. I teach an expressive arts therapy course—it's a career based course, I want people to know what careers exist in music. And it's also just wellness activities, so that they have a place to be stress free.

He frequently uses approaches learning skills through creating, such as learning music theory through composition. In this way, James synthesizes traditional and progressive and is constantly evaluating his curriculum to find what works:

I've taught music theory, I've done both—this is the traditional college college level way to do it—but then this year I experimented with it in a more contemporary manner, where we're looking at contemporary music and looking at chord-based notation. And we were composing music to learn music theory.

Overall, James is always seeking new ways to learn and grow. Here he describes how he networks with like-minded others:

I'm a visual person, I love that artistic side of myself. As I went into my nonprofit school, I picked up a lot of ideas about how to teach guitar and drums from there. I got to talk with all these interesting people who went into the non-traditional route, as well as people who had masters degrees in composition. So I just started like picking their brains a little bit asking them about how they did things. And then I also wanted to take lessons so I could start teaching my own students. That's how I learned how to teach violin. Well that's not how I taught, but I took some lessons on how to play violin. And then I did my own research of how to teach it through my own curriculum and things like that... The flavor thing is what made me really think about how to get out of the box. How do I make flavors of everything?

James also has a passion for synthesizing his non-musical interests with his music curriculum. He discusses how his interest in expressive arts therapy inspires his curriculum:

And then it's just my own interest in expressive arts therapy that made me want to create things like that. And then the visual art things—we have something called Meow Wolf in Santa Fe. It's an interactive art museum where you can touch things and it makes music and things like that. So my experiences at Meow Wolf have really come down into what I'm doing now. And my next big project I want to do is an interactive painting that I've seen. You can put nails in an artwork and as people touch the painting it comes alive. So I wanted to do that this term, and it didn't happen, just because my life is crazy, so instead I was like, we're making nightlights! We're gonna make these etched into the night lights, and we'll just have a QR code with the compositions in it.

From visual arts to expressive arts therapy, James is continually looking outside of music for inspiration for his classroom. He shares how he does not like boxing himself into a category. Rather than viewing himself as a musician, he views himself as a creative person:

I remember I first learned about music therapy when I was applying for colleges, and that kind of sounded interesting to me. Somehow along the way I got exposed and found expressive arts therapy, which is all modalities. It's art therapy, drama therapy, play therapy, sound play therapy, music therapy, it's everything combined. And that really interested me because I don't like boxing myself into a category. I'm not a musician, I'm a creative person, that's how I generally view myself.

Discussion

The first research question centered on the characteristics of the training and experiences of teachers applying varied curricular practices in their music classrooms, while the second research question centered on the connections between those experiences the curricular practices participants chose to explore in their classrooms. There were several common themes regarding the experiences amongst these three participants. These themes included (1) getting outside of one's comfort zone, (2) engaging in musical amateurism, and (3) synergizing traditional and progressive pedagogies in the music classroom. The themes captured what was salient in these teacher's training and preparation to lead them to explore varied music curricula in their classrooms. Following the exploration of each of these themes, I will more specifically unpack connections between these experiences and how they influenced classroom and curricular decisions.

Getting Outside One's Comfort Zone

The notion of "getting outside one's comfort zone" references a willingness to explore classroom activities, musicks, cultures, and contexts with which there is less familiarity. This theme was especially present in Diana and George. When Diana participated in the Teaching Fellows program, she was not expecting to teach high schoolers. However, despite her surprise and initial hesitancy, she ended up connecting with this age group and became passionate about teaching and mentoring them.

Likewise, George found himself getting outside of his comfort zone when he wrestled with his personal and musical identity in light of social justice movements. He felt a need to expand himself and reach a deeper understanding of music beyond WAM traditions. This marked the beginnings of George being able to open his mind to the possibilities of engaging students with music who do not resonate with WAM-centric instruction, which oftentimes end

up being the underserved student population. He continued to seek music beyond his comfort zone through listening. Now, George is intentional about listening to a wide variety of musical genres and styles with his students. Through his choral journals, he taught them how to listen to and analyze music, similar to his own process he discovered.

In contrast to Diana and George's focused stories, James never told a direct story or expressed discomfort or hesitancy with regards to getting out of his comfort zone. Rather, he continually described his passion for ingenuity and exploration. In this way, he consistently expanded the boundaries of his knowledge by seeking out new ways to engage his students and incorporating various domains of art into his curricula.

Ultimately, getting outside of their comfort zones allowed the teachers to explore avenues of teaching and music they may not have identified in their regular day-to-day experiences. These instances marked important milestones in their journeys as educators and paved the way forward into what would be core staples in their curriculum.

Engaging in Musical Amateurism

A second theme that emerged was participants' willingness and interest in engaging with musical amateurism. Researchers have noted that musical amateurism, which is exploratory and imperfect in nature, stands in contrast to the otherwise semi-professional approach to musicking in the United States (Kratz, 2019; Williams, 2011). In some ways, engaging in amateurism was a way for these teachers to reinforce their seeker mentalities, in the sense that they look to live in a state of earnest learning and growing.

James, and especially Diana, were both self-taught musicians. Though James participated in various school ensembles, he taught himself how to play piano while he was in middle school. Later on, he sought out help from friends to learn about music production. Diana, on the other hand, taught herself everything she knows about music completely outside

of traditional school music programs. Through learning to teach themselves music, Diana and James invested in their seeker mentality. They became equipped with the tools they needed to continue to explore music and to teach their students to do the same.

George found himself engaging in musical amateurism amid violin lessons during his undergraduate program. Having never played the violin or played in an orchestra before, he found himself excited to try something new. He spoke positively of the experience, but since then, he has been very apprehensive about amateurism. He has struggled with amateurism out of a concern of being appropriative, or with not doing a good enough job in terms of insight and energy. He described the stereotype of, "If you can't do it well, just might as well not do it at all." Connecting the stereotype to semi-professionalism, he described how he has internalized these stereotypes and how it has stopped him from exploring unfamiliar musical experiences.

Synergizing Traditional and Progressive Pedagogies

The third overarching theme centered on the idea of synergizing traditional pedagogies (i.e., those centered on performance-based practices and/or those centering Eurocentric, WAM approaches) with more progressive, inclusive pedagogies (i.e., democratic classroom practices, amateurism, exploration, varied musicking approaches). Similar to the Orff process of imitation-exploration-creation, these teachers experienced a process of seeing-imagining-creating/manifesting.

For instance, while James was student teaching at the integrated arts elementary school, he began to see opportunities to integrate visual art and music. These experiences led him to imagine what his classroom could look like, and he began incorporating visual arts into his music curriculum from his first year of teaching.

In a similar vein, Diana was exposed to a wide range of both traditional and progressive approaches to education in her city, including hip hop education and music

technology/production. Diana also serves a vastly underserved population of students, and her students inform her decisions to exercise progressive pedagogies in her classroom, especially with regards to democratic classroom practices and centralizing students' voices. A key moment for her was watching a teacher lead a group of students through writing their own musical. Though she currently teaches in a non-traditional internship-based program, she continues to encourage music teachers to embed the progressive within the traditional.

In addition, George built his curriculum upon finding creative ways to meet music learning standards while still making the material relevant and engaging for his students. He centralizes students' backgrounds and interests in his curriculum by giving his students structured surveys, as well as taking into account offhand comments and suggestions they may give. In these ways, he engaged in democratic classroom practices.

Traditions and Deviations in Training

As described above, all three participants exhibited interest in: (1) getting outside of one's comfort zone, (2) engaging in musical amateurism, and (3) synergizing traditional and progressive pedagogies in the music classroom. These interests arose nearly universally across all three participants, despite differences in their training: George and James received WAM-centric training and approached licensure through traditional pathways, while Diana did not.

For Diana, the non-traditional approach kept her mind open to outside-of-the-box practices in the classroom. For example, P12 music education often centralizes around group expression; in contrast, Diana's program fostered individual expression. Perhaps fostering individual musical expression came so naturally to her because the notion of self-expression reflects Diana's own journey as a self-taught musician. Often, developing one's own musician voice within a large ensemble is difficult. Musical voices are most often developed through

exploration on one's own. Diana's program was unique in that it fostered self-expression and individual musicianship. This approach caters to students who do not connect to WAM traditions by letting them explore the contexts of their own voices.

As mentioned, George and James' training and personal experience were more traditional in nature. In spite of this (and perhaps because of this), they both capitalized on opportunities to look outside of music for inspiration and ideas to drive their individual knowledge and skills forward – yet another reflection of the seeker mentality. For example, when George enrolled in an undergraduate class outside of his major about the history of Africa, he found himself “enlightened to get outside of [his] sphere of understanding.” When James developed interest in the visual arts while growing up, he found himself invigorated by opportunities to synergize art and music. One such opportunity was through his church's fine arts festivals where they did human videos, which told stories through music and movement.

George and James' experiences suggest that WAM-centric training is not prohibitive for teachers to be explorative with their curricula, but there must be initiative on the part of the teacher. Regardless of WAM training, all participants demonstrated a seeker mindset initiative, and their initiative played a key part in forming their curricula.

When connecting these themes and commonalities to extant literature, the participants found their student teaching and other real-world teaching experiences to be among the most valuable experiences, similar to much previous research (Brophy, 2002; Conway, 2002; Groulx, 2016; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009; Legette, 2013; Taylor, 1970). Notably, Diana's less mainstream experience in the Teaching Fellows program and James' experience teaching at an integrated arts school both paved the paths for their careers. Though George had the most traditional student teaching experience of the three, he still spoke highly of the student teaching experience.

Considering topics commonly left out of music teacher education curricula, Schmitt's (1989) research discusses how topics such as music in world cultures, jazz band methods, and media/computers are often overlooked or excluded, which may make such topic areas feel inaccessible for many teachers. The participants in this study, however, seemed to exhibit unique interest and even agency in these types of topic areas. For example, music technology and production was a common point of interest with James and Diana, who both taught themselves how to utilize music technology in their classrooms. Formal instruction in music production was not present in any of the participants' undergraduate programs, so this sense of agency seemed to buck notions that this and other topic areas felt inaccessible to study participants.

A final connection can be made between participants' training, experiences, and personal resonance with CRP. Teachers living CRP must embody 1) an ability to develop students academically, 2) a willingness to nurture and support cultural competence, and 3) a commitment to developing sociopolitical or critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Diana particularly connected with these criteria, especially given that CRP has been heavily present in her school curriculum and mission. George and James also demonstrate these characteristics, primarily with the first two points. For example, many of the "flavors" James offered as courses spoke directly to the notion of nurturing and supporting cultural competence.

Relatedly, a common experience of teachers who apply varied curricular practices was a desire to develop heightened cultural awareness and empathetic views of students (Abril, 2009). All three participants exhibited this perspective, through things such as prioritizing student feedback, CRP, and wanting to see young people thrive. James reflected, "Student voices have an extreme impact and influence in what I do in each term," while George contributed, "Being there for them, being able to be a good influence for them and challenge them to take it up to the next level... that's what I'd like to see—more involvement and more

enthusiasm, and see kids use their whole brains.” Diana echoed these sentiments, sharing, “I love that I create a space where kids get to come in and be whoever they are, for better or for worse, and they don’t have to pretend to be something else. And yet, they can be the best iteration of themselves.”

Putting Ideas into Practice

The final research question centered on “how” – in other words, how did participants’ curricular values manifest in practice? In examining participants’ experiences, one sees this “how” living out in an emphasis in student choice and student-centered curricula. Participants’ reflections also illuminated the prioritization of centralizing relevancy for their students, both in how they expanded curricular offerings to include a variety of genres adapting to a wider range of students’ musical experiences, as well as through how they selected program goals that fostered student self-expression.

Diana worked towards expanding her program from the moment she started working at her current school. She saw that some students and musicians did not have a place in the program because of their preferred genres or access to technology. As a result, she worked to expand accessibility to her program, and now she reaches a much more varied range of student musicians in her program. Similarly, George expanded his program by way of repertoire programming and in giving projects that allowed students to create and take ownership of their own music. He prioritized finding music that felt central to his students’ life experiences. Additionally, since the age disparities in his 7th/8th mixed choir lead to differing ability levels, he worked to create a culture of mentorship and leadership in his choir classes. James similarly worked within a wide range of levels in his ensemble classes and applied differentiation strategies to ensure all students were engaged and learning. In addition, he taught beyond music performance in many of his courses, such as his career-based course of

expressive arts therapy. Finally, James also worked to center the student experience by incorporating SEL activities into all his classes.

With regards to fostering self-expression, Diana's passion for expressing oneself through music was consistently reflected in her curriculum, where she fostered students' musical expression by giving them the tools, strategies, and classroom opportunities integral to express themselves through music. Relatedly, James frequently engaged his students in self-directed learning, creating a ripe environment for the emergence of self-expression, creativity, and democracy in the classroom. George reflected upon how performances might or might not connect with students' self-expression, striving to reframe performance so that students might find opportunities for self-expression that transcends that end-goal mentality.

In the end, all three participants spent time finding what is relevant to their students and worked to include some of those things into their curricula, which influenced students' access to self-expression opportunities.

At times, the efforts participants put in with their own students made them think back to their own school music experience, and what it did or did not include. For example, Diana reflected on how her musical opportunities at school were not relevant, and she said, "I always wish I had this program when I was young." George thought about his overarching desire to empower his students as he said, "I would like to see enthusiastic kids. I'd like to see my kids have ownership and kids be involved." James described his passion for his student-centered approach to planning instruction when he said, "I'm constantly asking students what their opinions are or what they suggest for either repertoire, or just in general, ideas that they want to do for performances."

When connecting notions of curricular expansion to address opportunities for student self-expression to extant literature, one sees a strong link to Powell's research in modern band curricula (2021), where democratic practices and independent agency are central parts of the

student experience. Participants' explorations in teaching songwriting also complement these goals, supported by the research of Kratus (2016) and Tobias (2014). The exploration of curricular expansion was also evident in other musical genres. For example, Diana's program was heavily based in hip-hop traditions, and James hoped to implement more hip-hop in his classes, building upon a growing interest in the larger world of music education (Kruse, 2016a; Kruse, 2016b). Finally, while George still functioned within a fairly traditional model of music classroom, he still incorporated a notable amount of listening and creative practice into his classes, which are both elements of World Music Pedagogy (Campbell, 2016). Such curricular expansions ultimately push against what music education scholar Julia Koza criticized as the "narrow definitions of legitimate musical knowledge" pervasive in United States music programs today (2008, pp. 145-146).

Looking at the elements of student-centered curricula lived out in the participants' classrooms, there were many instances of involving student input and student-led decision-making. For example, Diana always gave students the option of choice within the styles of music they chose to explore. When she teaches, she asks, "What do they [students] want and need, and what are they bringing to the table?" A passion for relevancy remained a common theme in student-centered instruction. When participants wondered how to best engage their students, they *asked* their students and engaged them in conversations that allowed them to take ownership of their learning.

In both George and James' classrooms, they regularly collected student feedback formally and informally, through surveys and in passing remarks. George found that synthesizing student feedback with the standards worked well for constructing his curriculum, and James' curriculum is heavily informed by student interest. In addition, the nature of James' entire school culture was student-centered and student-driven, in that the students choose what flavors of classes they enroll in. Much of James' instruction was constructed from

independent projects that allow him to differentiate instruction for different levels of students in the same class. In the end, there were a range of ways in which participants' were able to connect their values and personal experiences to how curricula played out in their classrooms.

Additional Considerations: On Amateurism

A recurring idea in this study centralized the experience of amateurism. As concerns amateurism, it is worth stating that pursuing amateurism by no means denies one's professionalism. Rather, amateurism acts in multiple ways; first, in humility, by way of allowing adults to recall the process of learning something new, and second, by fostering a seeker mentality and setting an example for others of what it looks like to be a life-long learner. After all, people often stumble across their passions by way of exploration and through trying something new. Oftentimes these teachers engaged in amateurism as they took initiative to fill in gaps they noticed in their musical training. This reaction stemmed from their seeker mentalities and their desire to be life-long learners. As James stated, "I have such a personal interest in expanding my own knowledge... I always want to learn through my teaching practice."

All three teachers operated within a similar mentality, but not all three approached amateurism in the same ways. George, being steeped in classical tradition, approached amateurism with apprehension. He was aware of the influence the semi-professionalism culture had on him, being that he was no longer comfortable being an amateur. George's experience of being an amateur grew into feelings of anxiety. These feelings, though difficult, prompted George to set his focus beyond performance to relationships and the experience of music as a whole.

James and Diana had less apprehension in exploring new domains of music. They have both grown in their music production skills since entering the profession. James's

exploration of new avenues of music, such as integrating art in music, showcases a world where emergent amateurism appears as being outside the box. In both James and Diana's experiences, amateurism led to professionalism. Once Diana became more fluent in music production, she said, "I have noticed that my music skills have grown tremendously. And then in that, I feel much more comfortable writing my own stuff, recording at home, or just working with my friends." Both James and Diana pursued excellence while inhabiting a seeker mentality. This framework allowed them to be explorative and creative – they thought outside of the box in a way most music educators are not traditionally trained to do.

These observations draw a strong connection to Kratus' research in amateurism (2019), where he states three guidelines for a return to amateurism in music education:

1. Expand curricular offerings to appeal to amateur musicians as well as semi-professional musicians.
2. Revise standards to include programmatic aspects for improving the quality and accessibility of music education for a diverse student body.
3. Raise expectations that students will use what they are learning in school once they are away from school.

The participants' desire for increased relevancy in their classrooms has inevitably led them to meet these guidelines. In the grand scheme of things, all mastery has its roots in amateurism. At some point, all of these teachers stumbled across their passions through exploration. Thus, giving students opportunities for this kind of exploration was of great value. Often, amateurism can be a pathway to exploration, but as previously stated, pursuing amateurism by no means denies one's professionalism. All of these teachers are professionally pursuing their crafts, but they are also embodying to others what it looks like to embody a seeker mentality of a life-long learner. As these professionals go to show, true professionals never stop learning.

Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

In order to contextualize the findings in this study, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. One limitation is the limited sample, in that only three teachers were interviewed. To better understand varied curricular practices at the national level, perhaps a broad scale survey study would be telling. Other limitations were time in access. If given more time, a longitudinal study with immersive field experience could help the researcher more deeply understand these teachers and their practices. In addition, future research could also include interviewing preservice music teachers who show interest in varied practice and seeing how those interests stand at odds with (or complement) their undergraduate curriculum.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to determine the connections between teachers' training, experience, and what is being done in the classroom. After exploring the experiences of Diana, George, and James, themes of (1) getting outside of one's comfort zone, (2) engaging in musical amateurism, and (3) synergizing traditional and progressive pedagogies were found. In order to continue to push for increasingly varied practices in P12 and collegiate contexts, stakeholders should consider these themes as one point of consideration as to how music teacher preparation programs can better prepare pre-service teachers, as well as how such institutions can better support practicing music teachers in the field who are already working toward different possibilities in the classroom. Doing so may not only broaden curricular practices in the music classroom, but it may also help directly address the issues of equity, access, and devaluation inherent in the current WAM-centric system.

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Appendix A

IRB Exemption Letter



BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance

Institutional Review Board

DATE: May 5, 2022

TO: Maggie Brown
FROM: Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [1902249-2] Increasing Accessibility in the Music Classroom: Developing Practices Through the Lens of Social Justice

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: May 5, 2022

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board has determined this project is exempt from IRB review according to federal regulations AND that the proposed research has met the principles outlined in the Belmont Report. You may now begin the research activities.

As an Exempt review, changes may be made to the study without IRB approval. However, amendments or modifications to Exempt studies that *substantively changes or alters* the criteria used to make the initial Exempt determination must be submitted to the IRB for approval.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact the Institutional Review Board at 419-372-7716 or irb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board's records.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Interview #1 (teacher background)

1. In what ways do you enjoy engaging in music?
2. How would you describe your overall experiences with music? (e.g. positive/negative)
3. What was your experience in your primary and secondary school's music programs?
4. Was music present in your childhood home? If so, what types of music?
5. Why did you decide to become a music teacher?
6. Was Western Art Music a prioritization for admission into your college?
7. What types of music were emphasized in your teacher education program?
8. How was performance approached/emphasized at your college? (e.g. conservatory model versus another)
9. What field experiences did you receive throughout your college education?
10. Most music programs, in secondary and higher education, use models of semi-professionalism. Have you ever engaged with music as an amateur post-high school?
 1. If so, what was your experience like?

Interview #2 (teacher curriculum)

1. What types of music classes do you run in your program?
2. What is your favorite aspect of your school's music program?
3. What led you to instate this music curriculum into your program?
4. Are you familiar with Culturally Relevant Pedagogy? Does CRP inform your practices?
5. What informs how you practice music in your classroom?
6. What students are eligible to enroll in your courses? (previous experience needed? open to all students?)
7. How would you describe the demographics of the students enrolled in your classes?
8. Do you ever take students' musical interests into account when planning your classes?
9. Where would you like to see your program go in the future?