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ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for intensifying student motivation to increase their weekly instrumental practice time. The targeted population was second and third-year instrumental music students in grades 5-6. The students were drawn from two different elementary schools within the same district in an upper-middle class community adjacent to a major metropolitan area. Intervention strategies included a student survey on choice of repertoire, arrangement of the chosen selections in keys and tessitura that were appropriate to the age and experience of the target population, and the scheduling of a special concert for student to perform their selections. Post intervention data indicated an increase in practice time and a decrease in attrition rate for students in the experimental group. Further analysis yielded no significant change in lesson attendance for either the control group or the experimental group. Students from both schools expressed a desire to explore music of different styles and genres. (Author/EH)

# INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF STUDENT-SELECTED REPERTOIRE ON THE PRACTICE HABITS OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC STUDENTS

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# ABSTRACT

This report describes a program for intensifying student motivation to increase their weekly instrumental practice time. The targeted population consisted of second and third year instrumental music students in grades five and six in two different elementary schools within the same district. This upper-middle class community is located adjacent to a major metropolitan city. The problem of motivational deficiency is documented by student and parent interviews, anecdotal records of the district's instrumental music faculty, and a general decrease in student progress during the second and third year of study.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that children reach an early level of frustration with their instrument due to a lack of experience with proper methodology in their practice technique. It was also recognized that children in elementary school have increased demands on their time, both educationally as well as socially. In addition, teachers noted that students were not keenly interested in the standard repertoire promoted by the school district's instrumental music curriculum.

A review of solution strategies suggested by the professional literature, combined with dialogue with members of the targeted population and instrumental music staff resulted in the following interventions: a student survey to choose a selected set of repertoire from a compendium of commercial music sources; arrangement of the chosen selections in keys and tessitura that were appropriate to the age and experience of the targeted population; and the scheduling of a special concert for the students to perform their chosen selection.

Post intervention data indicated an increase in practice time and a decrease in attrition rate for students in the experimental group. Further analysis yielded no significant change in lesson attendance for either the control group or the experimental group. In addition, students from both schools expressed a desire to explore music of different styles and genres.

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# CHAPTER 1

## PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

### General Statement of the Problem

The instrumental music students in the targeted schools exhibit a lack of motivation to practice at home in their second and third year of study. Evidence that the problem exists include interviews with students and their parents, anecdotal comments from the instrumental music teachers in the district, and a general lack of progress in the students' performance.

### Immediate Problem Context

This study will involve the fifth and sixth grade band students in two K-6 schools. For the 1996-1997 school year, school A has a population of 487 students. The school's ethnic diversity report yields the following: 77.0% White/non-Hispanic, 17.9% African American, 2.9% Asian, 1.6% Hispanic, and 0.6% Bi-racial. Students attending school A generally come from upper middle income families, being the progeny of professional, white collar parents. School A has one full time administrator, two full time office staff, one half time nurse, 20 regular education teachers and two special education teachers. School A also has three full time special area teachers, (visual arts, general

music, physical education), a full time media specialist, a full time technology instructor, one full time social worker, and a full time speech therapist. This building also has one part time adaptive physical education teacher and two part time instrumental music teachers. Among the certified staff, the average years of experience in the classroom is 18.5 years and 78% have earned at least a master's degree.

For the 1996-1997 school year, school B has a population of 570 students. The student ethnic diversity report returns the following: 63.3% White/non-Hispanic, 27.2% African American, 3.7% Asian, 3.5% Hispanic, 1.6% Bi-racial, and 0.2% Native American. A majority of the students attending school B are the products of upper middle income families. There is a small segment of the school's population (approximately 8%) who meet the criteria for the state funded free lunch program according to the district financial disclosure records. School B has one full time administrator, two full time office personnel, one full time nurse, 21.5 regular education teachers and one special education teacher. School B houses the physically challenged students for the entire district and employs three full time orthopedic specialists to service these children. In addition, there are 18 paraprofessional instructional assistants assigned to the orthopedic program. School B also has three full time special area teachers (visual arts, general music, and physical education), a full time media specialist, a full time technology instructor, one full time social worker, one full time speech therapist, and one full time reading specialist. This building also has one part

time adaptive physical education teacher, one part time physical therapist, one part time occupational therapist, one part time English as a second language teacher, and two part time instrumental music instructors. Among the certified staff, the average years of teaching experience is 17.9 years and 72% have earned at least a master's degree.

The instrumental music program in both schools is identical. Students may begin instruction on any orchestral or band instrument in the fourth grade. The lessons are given once a week and are 30 minutes in duration. All instruction is given during regular school hours. This program is gratis to the students, although they are responsible for providing their own instrument. Most families take advantage of a rent-to-own program offered by most music stores in the area. Beginning band and orchestra students have one performance opportunity in the spring of the year. Children in their second and third year of study have a weekly ensemble rehearsal during the school day in addition to their lesson. These students perform at large, all-district festival concerts throughout the year as well as local performances in their own buildings. Both schools have experienced a steady growth in student population over the last several years, and as a result, instructional space within the buildings is at a premium. Instrumental music lessons have been relegated to such areas of the school as the basement, lunchroom, hallways, converted locker rooms, or other surroundings that are less than conducive to the educational environment.

## The Surrounding Community

The school district serves a suburban village on the western border of a major Midwestern city. It measures one and one half miles from east to west and three miles from north to south. It is considered a bedroom community, that is, a town whose improvable land is covered primarily with single family homes ranging from unpretentious bungalows to opulent Frank Lloyd Wright mansions, town homes, and multiple family condominiums and apartment buildings. There is virtually no industry and only a very modest commercial district with small retail shops and business interests. Needless to say, the burden of funding the public school system rests squarely on the shoulders of the homeowners who have supported education time and time again through the passage of tax referenda and local fund raising efforts.

The population of the village, as reported by the 1990 census figures, is 53,648 and is a very ethnically diverse community. In fact, residents pride themselves on fostering the human dignity and cultural pluralism of all its citizens. The racial profile of the community, as provided by the village Chamber of Commerce, breaks down as follows: 74.8% White/non-Hispanic, 18.0% African American, 1.9% Hispanic, 1.3% Asian, 1.1% Bi-racial, and .2% Native American. The median family income is $51,737 with the average house selling for $164,000.

The educational institutions in the community include eight public elementary schools, two public middle schools, and one public high school. There are also six private elementary and two private senior high schools.

The public school system in which this study will take place has 25 full time administrators and 358.4 full time equivalent (FTE) certified teachers. The average salary for teachers for the fiscal year 1996-1997 is $42,807 and the average salary for district administrators is $79,221. Among the certified staff (including administration) the average years of teaching experience is 16.5 with 31.1% of the staff holding a bachelor's degree and 68.9% with a master's degree or beyond. The median age of the staff is 47 years with 81.6% being female and 18.4% male. The professional staff is comprised of the following ethnic groups: 82.5% White/non-Hispanic, 17.1% African American, 1.6% Asian, 1.0% Hispanic, and 0.2% Native American.

## National Context of the Problem

The subject of student motivation has been written about in the professional journals of music education for years. Barfield (1981) states that although keeping her private students practicing often proved to be the backbone of the school music program, she found no easy answers to the question of student motivation. Her efforts to assure that her pupils were becoming better musicians through individualized instructional time did not always provide the driving force the students needed intrinsically to succeed.

"Motivating students to practice is a perennial concern for teachers and parents" (Wolfe, 1981. p.34). After the initial excitement and novelty wears off, he wrote, and the pieces become increasingly difficult, the daily practice routine becomes a chore. This is especially true of students who, in their first year or two of study have had a fair amount of success on their

instrument without putting in a great deal of work. Even the most naturally talented child will become bogged down in the technical demands of more difficult repertoire if the discipline of day to day practicing is not entrenched.

Suchy (1980) observed the same phenomena with her young students. The initial progression through the beginner books is non-stop, eagerly looking forward to each lesson, practicing every day, as they would proudly proclaim. Then after the first year or two, the excuses would start to materialize. Too much homework, soccer practice, scouting, and visiting relatives are but a few of the many reasons children have for not having the opportunity to practice their instrument as in the past. In recent years, a new excuse has become more and more popular. Children of divorced parents, who often do not know from one week to the next where they will be spending the weekend, will forget their instrument at mom's house or are unable to practice because they were spending the weekend with mom and their instrument was left at dad's.

There is actually a predictable pattern of behavior for beginning instrumental students, according to Sandene (1994). Most first year players go through successive phases of excitement, difficulty, and finally adjustment in their attitude toward the program. During the first few weeks of instruction, the beginners are energized as the experience of playing is a novelty. The method book seems inviting and a welcome challenge. During the second stage, students need extra patience to overcome the inherent difficulties of their particular instrument. The final phase finds the students

staring with eyes glazed over at the mundane literature in the typical method book and themselves asking the question "Is that all there is?"

In their defense, young children today have so many more activities besides their music lessons that fitting in as little as 20 to 30 minutes of practice time into their busy day may be almost impossible. The problem, noted Obenshain (1980), is intensified as children progress through late elementary school with the increased opportunities of extra-curricular activities. Where does their motivation come from to practice their instrument at home, a relatively isolated experience, when they could be running around on the basketball court or joining the after school computer club with their friends?

Finally, Adams (1977) perceived a slightly different twist to the problem of practice motivation for young musicians. She believed that practicing and improving musical abilities is basically the students' problem. The sooner teachers and parents can distance themselves from the "making the child practice" mentality and move them toward assuming responsibility for their own success, the sooner the children will find satisfaction of achievement that will make musical study a pleasure and a joy.

# CHAPTER 2

# PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

## Problem Evidence

In an effort to document the problems of low lesson attendance and a high attrition rate, weekly class records for the past six school years have been analyzed. Data presented here is a compilation of those records for all fifth and sixth grade instrumental students in both schools A and B from school year 1990-91 to 1995-96.

The average annual rate of lesson attendance for school A over the six year period was 58.1%, while students in school B attended lessons 69.1% of the time over that same period. An absence here is defined as the child not physically present in the class for any reason including, but not limited to illness, field trips, standardized testing, special projects in the regular education classroom, and all school assemblies. Any student reporting to their lesson without their instrument was not counted as absent for the day, as they were still present for any instruction, even if their actual learning experience was limited due to the inability to perform new skills with the rest of the class.

It should be noted here that school A had a consistently lower attendance rate across the six year span. Students in this school (especially in the fifth grade) have traditionally taken many more field trips than those in school B, as the general philosophy of the regular classroom teachers in this building relies heavily on site based, experiential learning. Besides the obvious absence from instrumental classes that result from multiple field trips, students also miss lessons as they feel compelled to stay in their classrooms during preparatory discussions before the excursions take place, as well as for the debriefing sessions once the field experience has culminated. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the yearly lesson attendance for each school.

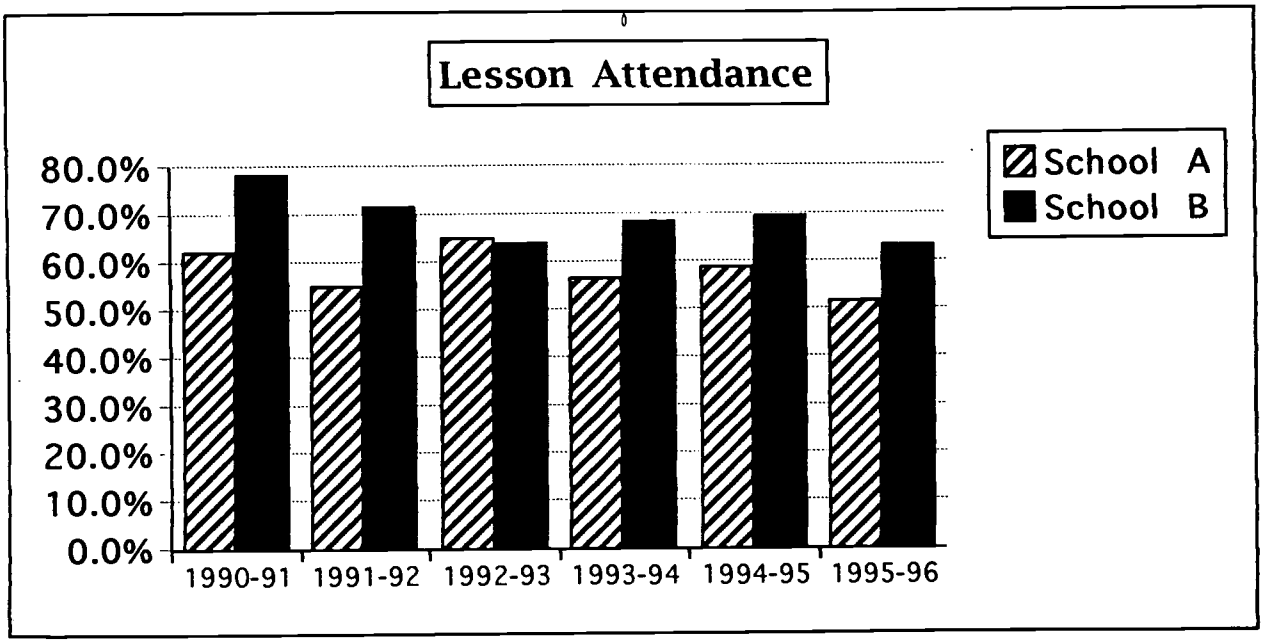


Figure 1 Lesson Attendance - Schools A and B for 1990 - 1996

The average rate of program attrition for school A during the six year period was 19.4%. Students in school B relinquished their instruments at a rate of 23.4% in the same time span. Attrition here is defined as students

who no longer play within the confines of the school program, either through weekly small group instruction, or through participation in the large group ensembles that meet once a week for all fifth and sixth grade students. It is prudent to mention at this point that an undocumented number of students will choose to continue their study of the instrument outside of the school environment under the tutelage of a private instructor. Since this study concerns only those students within the auspices of the school program, children studying on their own are still included in the attrition data.

It is curious to note that school A had a slightly lower average dropout rate than does school B, even though they attended their lessons less frequently. Another factor that would seem to preclude a higher attrition rate for school A is the availability of outside activities that these students are afforded. Though the opportunities are equitable for the populations in both schools (in fact, the two buildings are separated geographically by one half of a mile) children in school A generally come from a more affluent background than do those in school B, as noted in chapter one. It would be natural to conclude from this that these students would be more likely to take advantage of the various outside interests, leaving them less time to devote to the study and practice of their chosen instrument. There is one more factor that the attrition data seems to contradict. At two other schools in this same district whose populations are clearly in a lower socioeconomic position, the rate of students who discontinue playing their instruments after one year is ten to twelve percentage points lower on average than the two

schools in this study. The general theory here is that once a parent of a child with limited resources makes the financial commitment to monthly payments on an instrument, that parent is more likely to encourage the student to stick with it than their more prosperous neighbors across town who view the payment as disposable income. Figure 2 gives the annual attrition percentage for both buildings.

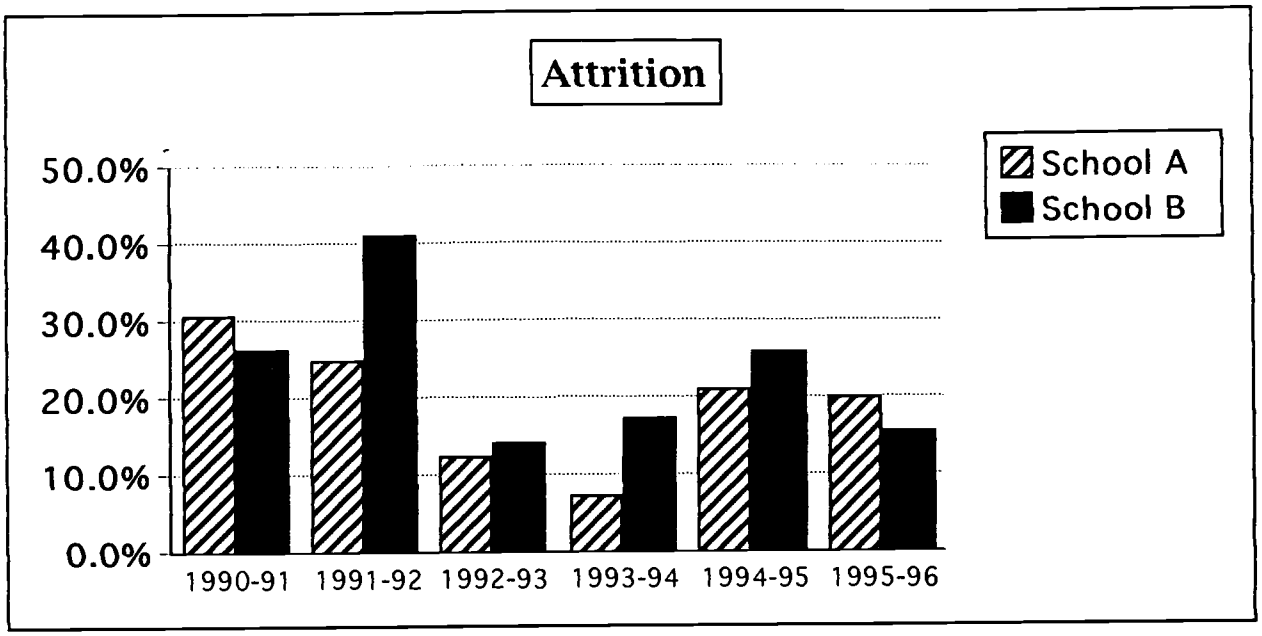


Figure 2 Program Attrition - Schools A and B for 1990 - 1996

Documentation of the third problem, lack of motivation to practice at home, will consist of anecdotal records of the researcher and the other instrumental music instructors in the district, as well as the observations and comments of the parents of the students involved in this study, and interviews with the students themselves.

There are many observable behaviors that make it painfully obvious when a student has not picked up the instrument between lessons. One of the district's instrumental music teachers noted that he can tell within 30

seconds if his students have practiced their assigned lesson for the week. He went on to explain that the muscular development of the embouchure, as with any muscle group, must be strengthened gradually, day by day, week by week. Without the constant alternation of contraction and relaxation of the facial muscles, the proper timber and intonation cannot be achieved on any wind instrument.

Another teacher, a veteran of 22 years in the music classroom, conceded that children today are simply not putting in the time at home practicing their instruments the way students did when she first waved a baton in front of a class. What used to take a year to accomplish in the area of technical development now takes half again as long. The daily commitment to playing an eight or sixteen measure phrase until it was perfected simply is lacking in today's young musicians.

One of the newer members on faculty is realistic about expectations, but is no less frustrated. He does not expect the majority of his students to have the same "fire in their bellies" as he, or any of the staff. After all, music is the staff's chosen profession and has been a preeminent part of their lives since the time they were the same age as these fledgling musicians. He does not expect most of his students will pursue careers in music. This fact, however, does not diminish the travail of class after class of under prepared students.

How do we motivate them? This is the primary question voiced by another member of the instructional team. She finds that her students are

willing to practice the music for concerts, and are genuinely prepared to perform in front of a live audience. The problem, she stated, is that the concert music conditions the children to hone those skills required by those pieces, and only those skills. It is not possible to program enough music for performance that will encompass all of the keys, scales, and arpeggiated figures to truly establish the technique and musicianship required to be a productive member of an ensemble. The "nuts and bolts" as she terms them, are incorporated in the weekly lesson material, which most of her students are reluctant to spend sufficient time practicing to achieve mastery.

And yet another member of the instrumental faculty has been teaching for twenty years, the first fifteen in a small farming community, and more recently in the targeted school district. He sees a tremendous disparity between the practice habits of his current urban centered students when compared to their rural counterparts. In the bucolic atmosphere of his previous employment, children had two basic choices how they could spend their leisure time: athletics and music. Those who did not possess great bodily or kinesthetic prowess often turned to music as a source of camaraderie and sense of belonging to a team. Most students who started playing an instrument in the fourth or fifth grade generally stuck with it through high school, and did so with the same commitment to practicing as did their classmates on the football field or basketball court. The students he teaches today, he expressed, see music as "one more social outlet" to be

discarded once the monotony of daily drill proves to be more than their attention span can employ.

These teachers all share in the same frustration. Day after day they arrive at school with all of their years of music making and teaching, which has become such an integral part of the fabric of their lives. The goal for each of them is to share some of that excitement and love for the art that they feel with their students. The desire is to lead children toward a path of self actualization and aesthetic satisfaction that only the study of a higher art form can provide. And what they walk away feeling is anxiety and at times self doubt about their profession and their ability to deliver the type of instruction that would move students toward those lofty heights. What is the cause of this apparent apathy of children toward their own musical progress? What are the underlying reasons why very bright and often naturally gifted students find no intrinsic motivation to practice the instrument that only a few months ago they were so eager to play?

The researcher has noted two common threads amongst the vast majority of the children in both schools involved in this study. When asked why they are unprepared to play the weekly assignment, many children claim that they simply do not have time to practice. The second observable phenomena is the almost unanimous lack of interest in the standard lesson material once the initial excitement of playing a new musical instrument has worn thin.

## Probable Causes

The first question that should be raised at this point in the investigation is this: Are there cultural or societal influences that have put students in a position to regard the study of music as simply one more extra-curricular activity to be explored and then discarded? As with any other experience, young children glean from their surroundings attitudes concerning everything from what clothes to wear to what is politically popular at the time. It is very important for middle school children to be in vogue, or at the very least be able to give the impression they are living on the very edge of what is considered chic. Over the passed decade, countless educational referenda have failed throughout the metropolitan area where the targeted schools are located. Time after time, when boards of education are encumbered with major fiscal policy decisions based on insufficient funding, the arts have traditionally been among the first programs to be eliminated, or, at the very least, curtailed. The impact on the students when the budget axe falls cannot be dismissed. Their community, maybe even their own parents, have said to them that these programs are simply not worth supporting financially. This sends a powerful message to young people about what is to be highly valued within their community and what should be considered of secondary importance.

The second question, then, that must be addressed concerns the teaching of music itself. If music is insignificant enough to be the first thing on the budget chopping block, why teach it at all? As one elementary school

administrator in the targeted district once said when faced with a similar funding crisis in 1989, "You can't cut second grade." But even this seemingly flippant remark begs the question "Why teach music?" What impact does it have in the daily lives of the population in general and in children's lives specifically?

Bloom (1987) rather eloquently offered the following:

> Music is the medium of the human soul in its most ecstatic condition of wonder and terror. Music, or poetry, which is what music becomes as reason emerges, always involves a deliberate balance between passion and reason, and, even in its highest and most developed forms -religious, warlike and erotic - that balance is always tipped, if ever so slightly, toward the passionate. Music, as everyone experiences, provides an unquestionable justification and a fulfilling pleasure for the activities it accompanies. Out of the music emerge the gods that sent it, and they educate men by their example and their commandments. (p. 71-72)

The Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (PMEA) offers perhaps less poetic but very practical arguments why music should be taught as part of a complete educational curriculum. Music, according to the PMEA, is a science. It is exact, specific, and it denotes precise acoustics. A conductor's full score is a chart, a graph which indicates frequencies,

intensities, volume changes, melody and harmony all at once, with the most exact control of time.

Music is mathematical. It is rhythmically based on the subdivisions of time into fractions which must be executed instantaneously, not worked out with a pencil and paper.

Music is a foreign language. Most of the terms are Italian, German, or French, and the notation is certainly not English, but a highly developed form of shorthand that uses symbols to represent ideas. The semantics of music is the most complete and universal language.

Music is history. It usually reflects the environment and times of its creation, often even the country and/or racial feeling.

Music is physical education. It requires fantastic coordination of fingers, hands, arms, lips, cheek and facial muscles, in addition to extraordinary control of diaphragmatic, back, stomach and chest muscles, which all must respond instantly to the sound the ear hears and the mind interprets.

Yes, music is all of these, but most of all, music is art. It allows a human being to take all these dry techniques and use them to create emotion. That is the one thing that science and all the most sophisticated computers in the world cannot duplicate: humanism, feeling, love, emotion.

But just as attitudes have changed, teachers in the field of music education must adapt their thinking and approach to the maze. Boardman (1992) wrote that the student population of the 21st century will be very

different from the population of the schools in which most teachers today received their education or taught their first class. Musical pedagogy must be prepared to embrace musical diversity, from the current popular and concert hall music of our time to the contemporary musical practices of the global village to ethnomusic.

Another phenomena that can not be denied is the breakdown of the nuclear family in society. Many children today are coming from homes where only one parent resides. According to Elkind (1988), children in this situation are stressed by what he termed "responsibility overload". Besides all of the normal schoolwork children are given, and on top of all the outside activities children have to participate in, children in single parent households feel a responsibility and share an undo burden of their families. Children assume parental roles and obligations. Such commitments as looking after younger siblings, sharing in meal planning and preparation, cleaning and other household chores, as well as looking out for the well being of the parent are a lot for young people to shoulder. As a result, they are forced to call upon a finite amount of physical and emotional energy reserves for an infinite number of tasks. Is it any wonder, then, that children in this life situation often suffer from emotional overload?

Still another problem that children face as they enter the world of instrumental music is a knowledge deficit on the proper techniques and procedures of how to practice. When left to their own devices, children will wander aimlessly through their practice sessions and very soon reach a level

of frustration over their lack of progress. Many members of the instrumental music staff voiced the same concern. They spend much of their instructional time demonstrating practice techniques to their students, leaving precious little time during the small group lesson or large ensemble rehearsal to attempt new material. The concept of taking a piece of music and breaking it down phrase by phrase or even measure by measure into its separate components of note duration, fingering combinations, dynamics, articulation, and musical style involves a very complex set of highly organized thought processes.

This struggle is not limited to the fledgling band or orchestra student. As children progress through their second and third year of instrumental study, they must begin to endure the necessary evils in developing technical proficiency known as scales and arpeggios. It is a constituent of learning to play a musical instrument, Bordo (1994) wrote, that every student must accept and take ownership. He offered several traps in which many young musicians seem to fall victim. First, students are reluctant to practice scales at all because the very thought of spending fifteen or twenty minutes droning through diatonic tetrachords would be an experience close to death. He suggested that three or four minutes a day is sufficient. No activity, no matter how mundane or trivial could become boring when held to such brevity. Secondly, Bordo pointed out that students lack variety in the way they approach the practicing of scales and arpeggios. If they would do something as simple as experimenting with different articulation patterns with

each scale, or perhaps some rhythmic variations, it would add some interest to the drill.

His final two arguments are directed at the music practitioner. All too often, teachers will assign scales in certain keys as if they were islands unto themselves. All scales have either a major or a minor tonality, and most pieces of music (Western Art as well as popular) are in one those twelve major or twelve minor keys. If the instructor would take time to draw some connections between the assigned scales and the current literature being rehearsed in the school ensemble, the students could then experience transfer between the two, thus adding some validity to the director's instruction to spend time practicing the scales.

His closing remark dealt with honesty. All music educators were once students of the art and they, too, were in the same position as their students, faced with the same daunting task of mastering the dozen major and minor scales and arpeggios. It is safe to assume that the vast majority of teachers also found them to be boring if not mind numbing. They should not be wary to admit this to their students. If they would relate their own experiences, students would appreciate their candor and maybe even relate a little more closely with their mentor.

Discussions with the students' parents seem to confirm the problem of a lack of proper practice methodology on the part of their own progeny. One parent, who has an extensive background in music, stated that her child will sit down and play through the assigned material once, maybe twice, without

actually working out any of the technical details of the music. She feels like her child is going through the motions of practicing without achieving any of the expected benefits, not because of a lack of motivation or caring on the child's part, but rather an experiential deficit in proper practice technique.

Another parent who has very limited personal experience in the field has had three children go through the program with varying amounts of success. Though she claims no expertise, it has generally seemed to her that practice sessions with all of her children proceeded rather helter skelter, flipping from one page or selection to the next without any sort of genuine focus on the task at hand. It is little wonder then, that her children, like many students, will arrive at their weekly lesson unprepared and exasperated at their apparent lack of progress.

A well organized home practice session for a ten or eleven year old child would be fifteen to twenty minutes in duration, and would typically include the following elements: 1) A brief warm up (one to two minutes) of long tones covering the middle tessitura of a child's range, 2) two or three minutes of scales or other technical exercises to extend the upper and lower ranges of the instrument and to build the muscles of the embouchure, 3) eight to ten minutes working out new material including notes and fingerings, rhythms, and dynamics from the method book or large ensemble music, and 4) work on any solo or other material the student chooses to play. The final segment can last as long as the facial muscles and interest level of the student endure.

The researcher interviewed several second and third year students from the targeted schools, some extremely advanced, others less so, about their practice routine. Care was taken during the discourse to assure students that this was not a confrontation about whether they practiced or how often they took out their instruments at home, but rather a focus on their methodology once they actually did practice the weekly assignment. Several students commented that they tend to gravitate toward the songs that they liked or were at least somewhat familiar. They found these selections most enjoyable of all. If there was any time left, they might play through the newly assigned material once or twice, but more often than not, the new material that seemed purely technical in nature was ignored.

One sixth grade student, who has been playing the clarinet since fourth grade, said he finds the method book "a real bore" and would rather work on his band literature when given the opportunity. After playing in the program for over two years, the thought of playing another five or six lines out of the "blue book" (Standard of Excellence, Book 2) was not exactly his idea of a fun filled Sunday afternoon.

Having a parent with at least some musical background seems to have an effect on how the student proceeds with their practice method. A second year oboe student has a mother who is an accomplished pianist. The student's daily schedule includes a regular time for her instrument, and although her mom can not help her with the technical end of the oboe, she is able to give guidance in the nomenclature of music, be it rhythmic or note

reading. Another student, a sixth grade trumpet player, has a father who played the trumpet all the way through college. Although he does not often have the opportunity to sit down with his son to give instruction, he gives him inspiration to practice as his son looks up to him having similar aspirations.

Many students voiced a separate frustration. Their lesson is only once a week and it is but 30 minutes in duration. If a new concept is introduced at their lesson on Monday morning and they do not sit down to practice until Wednesday or Thursday after school, the new concept is but a distant memory, an enigma to ponder briefly and ask about at the next lesson. Some will not even remember what page it was on, and without the hope of seeing anyone they can ask until the following Monday, they will generally throw their hands up in despair and give up on it for the day. This then leads to the familiar pattern of aimlessly searching through the book, playing whatever catches their eye, and ten minutes later, the instrument goes back in the case with their practice time elapsing without direction or purpose.

The professional literature provides support for this scenario. Wolfe (1984) noted that the quality of time spent with the instrument becomes less and less productive because the student does not know how to practice. Practice behavior, like social skills, historical facts or mathematical concepts, has to be learned. If children are motivated to practice, it is because they learn to associate certain behaviors with certain outcomes. Students reach an early (and often intense) level of frustration, according to Clark (1976), when they don't learn the correct techniques of practicing.

The third reason students seem to loose their incentive to practice has to do with all of the opportunities and choices they have pulling on their time. Today, more and more demands are put on children by school, their parents, and social pressures to "conform" to the peer group.

An interesting question was raised by Wolfe (1984) on the subject of student choices. Why should a child want to practice when it is much easier to watch a favorite television show or play video games on the home computer? And on the subject of today's children and their hectic daily schedule, Suchy (1980) stated that starting in 5th or 6th grade, terrific demands are made on the time and talents of youngsters. Nancy Plantinga is a middle school band director in Naperville, Illinois. In an interview, Lenzini and Thomson (1996) asked her about some of the toughest challenges she faced in keeping children going in her program. She found that many parents in the community push their kids to be involved in several extra-curricular, intramural, or outside school activities. The second biggest problem is the increase of families in which both parents are employed outside the home. This makes attendance at special evening rehearsals and concerts a challenge due to transportation difficulties caused by hectic and often conflicting schedules. There are simply too many activities, too much homework, scouts, sporting opportunities, church, and the list goes on and on.

The children of the targeted district reflect what is going on in society as a whole. Parents want to provide for their children every conceivable

opportunity that they themselves never had growing up. This, it seems to the researcher, is part of the human condition that has been perpetuated ever since the great European infusion into this country since the late 18th century. As a result, children from an affluent populace have all the latest technology, the newest sports equipment, and are enrolled in every after school athletic, fine art, or philanthropic organization their community has to provide. Combine this with the academic demands parents put upon their children, and it is no small wonder when these students manage to fit in fifteen or twenty minutes a week let alone a day to sharpen their musical skills.

Music programs must compete for the time and attention of their students from another source: the media. The world of radio, MTV, compact discs, cassettes and boom boxes provide students with what Postman (1979) coined the "first curriculum," while the classroom delivers music of the "second curriculum". Many students spend up to 50 hours a week with their first curriculum and only from one to ten hours a week exposed to their second. Therefore, the students' tasks, values, and knowledge will be shaped more from the former than the latter.

A discussion of mass media would not be complete without a reference to television. At issue here in this study is not so much the programming and advertising that the children are exposed to on a daily basis, but rather the mode of delivery itself, its effect on students, and how they process information. Television, according to Elkind (1988), allows children to experience things they could never have without it. But more importantly, it

simplifies experiences carried vast distances and from anywhere on the globe. Just as the digital clock has simplified the task of telling time over the analog clock, the television makes reading and learning about places and historical events unnecessary. The quandary is twofold. First, it makes the comprehension of these events secondary. Children process information incompletely by picking up bits and pieces only when they can connect them to previous life experiences. Secondly, and here is the implication for education, television has a torpid effect on the cognitive and subsequent metacognitive processes, as information is transmitted to the audience through a quasi electronic osmosis. Learning, then, becomes a reactive rather than a proactive enterprise.

One final factor, and the one this study will address, is the subject of repertoire. Music teachers are, after all, professional musicians. The vast majority were driven by the mastery of classical literature, and by virtue of the fact that they have pursued music as a career, were highly motivated to learn and play this music for the beauty and aesthetic satisfaction intrinsic in the music itself. Out of the thousands of grade school children who begin an orchestral or band instrument each year, a small percentage will undertake music as a vocation. Therefore it is feckless to assume that all children will develop the same passion for Mozart and Brahms that the teachers have cultivated.

Each year, during the first two weeks of school, the instrumental music faculty in the targeted district travels as a group to each elementary building

in the village to perform the annual ritual of recruiting fourth grade students for the program. During the demonstrations, which last approximately 45 minutes, the children are exposed to the sounds of each of the standard orchestral and concert band instruments. So what do these professional, highly schooled musicians play for their prospective students? Pachelbel's "Canon in D major"? Would perhaps Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" be more to their liking? Or might these nine year old children enjoy a lively rendition of the slow movement from Brahms' violin concerto? No, this group of very talented, classically trained musicians play Disney favorites and the greatest hits from Hootie and the Blowfish, and that is what captures the attention and imagination of the typical fourth grade student! And yet, when the recruitment is terminated and all of the students have been signed up and scheduled into their lessons, they are served a steady diet of 19th Century French folk songs and other toe tappers such as the "Ode to Joy" from the Beethoven ninth symphony.

Once again, a examination of the professional journals in the field of music education points toward alternative ways to deliver the same substance in music curricula, with an emphasis on selection of repertoire targeted specifically for the young musician. As a private teacher for many years, Barfield (1981) concurred that even the most fascinating method book may seem boring if week after week the same material is used. Her prescription is to allow students to choose some of their own literature, whether it be timely holiday music, or popular music of the day (1983).

The conflict between teacher chosen verses student selected music is a recurring theme in the professional literature. Lenzini and Thomson reported Nancy Pantinga's view on the subject in their 1996 interview with the middle school conductor. If the director picks all of the music, it does not teach the students the skill of making good choices. If they are simply told what to do and what music is or is not worth playing, they only learn to regurgitate the artistic views of the teacher.

Sandene (1994) stated that there are three major reasons that students lose interest early on in an instrumental music program. Teachers often work out of only one method book, they use the same standard warm up activity at every lesson and rehearsal, and students are only given one style of music to play. He suggested that band and orchestra directors ask themselves two questions: Is popular music being used in the program? Is music of different cultures, folk songs, etc. being made available for students to play?

Suchy (1980) suggested that if asked what kind of music the students would prefer to play, the responses would include television show themes, selections from current movies, popular music of the day, and rock and roll. Stravinsky probably would not make many students' lists. Hedden (1990) questioned why more of his students were not more actively involved in his program. The answer seemed to revolve around the selection of music he had chosen for the children to play. Students from the elementary grades up through college age in Arizona were interviewed by the Public Broadcast System, as reported by O'Brien (1982). The subject was musical preferences.

It came as no surprise that across the board the music of choice was that performed by the popular groups of the day and not the "Classical" repertoire taught in classrooms all over the state.

Finally, Stuessy (1994) asked all music instructors to examine themselves and their attitudes about today's music. Practitioners must stay informed about the current state of the art. As painful as this may be for the professionally and classically trained musician, this kind of music is real music (to the students) and the stuff being taught in school is some anachronistic aberration.

Secondly, music teachers should never give a knee-jerk response to the students' music. Stuessy asked teachers to walk a mile in their shoes and imagine how they, the educators, would feel if someone bashed or denigrated the music of their favorite composer. The students are never going to be able to proselytize the teacher to follow them to the world of alternative rock alla the Smashing Pumpkins or the Dead Kennedys, nor should the teacher hope to convert his students into avid listeners of Bartok or Scriabin.

The last suggestion he had for those in the profession is to seize the opportunity to encourage dialogue with the students about their music in a meaningful and educational way. Once there is free and open communication established about the merits of today's music, the students will be more likely to accommodate an exploration of the music of a previous era.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Literature Review

### The Student-Centered Classroom

"Much of what we do and say in school only makes children feel that they do not know things that, in fact, they know perfectly well before we begin to talk about them." (Holt, 1967, p. 61). The notion of the student-centered classroom is not a brand new paradigm in education today, nor was it when John Holt published How Children Learn twenty-nine years ago. In the eighteenth century, movements in educational reform placed learning in a natural perspective where children were provided with unrestricted yet nurturing environments for their individual intellectual development (Shehan, 1986). One hundred years later, the Spencerian view of education held that children were directed little by the teacher but rather were given ample opportunity to explore their learning environment (Shehan, 1986). This philosophy continued into the progressive twentieth century movement where rote memorization was replaced by exploratory experiences which were

considered vital to learning. John Dewey believed that students' cognitive skills are increased when utilizing problem solving skills rather than memorization and formal exercise (Shehan, 1986). Twenty-five years ago, Silberman (1970) saw that a classroom could be child-centered as well as knowledge-centered. It can emphasize joy and individual growth without sacrificing intellectual discipline and development.

The nomenclature for this type of learning has yielded many educational buzz words over the years. "Informal education", "open classroom", "integrated curriculum', and "free school" to name a few, have all been born of one philosophy: Learning is likely to be more effective if it grows out of what interests the learner, rather than what interests the teacher (Silberman, 1970). But before a curriculum which focuses on student interests can be designed and implemented, identification of those interests must be ascertained. What motivates children in a particular subject area is a function of their experience and environment as well as their native endowment. The teacher's task, then, is to structure that environment so that it is responsive to the childrens' interests and needs (Silberman, 1970).

Teacher as Facilitator

The implication in all of this points toward an ever evolving role of the teacher in the classroom. No longer is the teacher seen as the supreme master of all knowledge and learning. Humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers spoke of the function of the teacher in the child-centered educational process in a different way. The teacher's role becomes one of facilitator,

thus students can confront the content (of the curriculum) directly in a participatory fashion (Shehan, 1986). Ideally, the interests of the children determine that curriculum. Child-centered and teacher-passive behaviors accommodate individual intellectual and artistic flexibility. O'Brien (1972) added to this theory. He stated that the teacher becomes one who guides students toward self-directed learning. He is a resource to suggest materials rather than a fountain of knowledge from which the students are expected to quench their intellectual thirst.

Benner (1975) shared some thoughts on self-directed learning and how it relates to music education. He wrote of a person's historically and anthropologically demonstrated drive to influence his environment. To function as a human being, man must strive for an awareness of self. The impersonalization of the industrial assembly line, which has removed the basic need for self expression and self actualization, should not be carried into the music classroom. Schools should not become mini-factories where every child plays the same tunes on the same day in the manner in which a Detroit assembly line turns out drive trains and transmissions.

Nancy Plantinga, band director at Gregory Middle School in Naperville, sees one of the crucial elements in retaining student interest in her program as the selection of good literature. If the music is interesting to play and exciting to the audience to hear, students will want to stay in the program. But, in her interview conducted by Lenzini and Thomson (1996), she emphasizes the fact that she alone does not choose which material her

bands will play. She will select a vast assortment of tunes throughout the year, more than the ensembles will ever be able to perform, and guides the students through a selection process of which pieces to program and which ones would be best to leave out. As their facilitator, she supplies them with the tools with which to build a well balanced and entertaining concert that will both challenge and musically satisfy the needs of all the students.

Student-Selected Repertoire

Marketing executives in the advertising industry discerned long ago that when it comes to the stylistic preferences, young people generally seem to prefer music of the popular genre to that of the great European masters. This was verified by a comparative study done by Brittin and Sheldon (1995) in which 200 college students were administered a listening inventory and were asked to rate their preferences among dozens of musical selections. While the crux of this study dealt mainly with the students' perception of tempo and rhythm (most respondents primarily favored those examples with a faster tempo and a discerning beat), popular music was chosen far and away more frequently as a choice for leisure listening than was the classical repertoire. The study's conclusion confirmed the hypothesis: "Because people seek out the music they enjoy, accurately gauging listeners' responses to music is an important component of music education, music therapy and music marketing." (P. 36)

Within the music classroom, there are two assumptions that are fairly safe to make. The first is that most students have a tremendous amount of

prior knowledge/exposure to popular music and secondly, they have definite likes and dislikes about the selections of the music to be studied and manipulated within the confines of the curriculum. If given a choice, most students would not put Rachmaninoff or Correli to head their list of favorite music to listen to or perform, and yet, the lesson books used in most schools are a veritable anthology of Western Art Music. Even the most fascinating method books can get tedious on a weekly basis. Musical humorist Robert Reely (1994) in a satire on Murphy's law quipped that a student's practice time is directly proportional to how many copies of printed pop music he owns.

Some band and orchestra directors will supplement the traditional classical music with that of a more universal persuasion. For example, some private instructors will assign only holiday music for their more experienced students between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. With younger students, the use of folk songs or children's play songs are used as a means of motivation (Barfield, 1981). Allowing students to bring music from home, be it popular selections heard on the radio or tunes that reflect their cultural heritage or religious affiliation, can add a great depth of understanding to those same concepts the teacher has been striving to communicate. For students who are quite facile on their instrument, introducing them to jazz and rudimentary improvisatory techniques can be a welcome addition to their repertoire (Barfield, 1983). Wolfe (1984), who advocates motivational contracts with the students and their parents, agrees that popular music is

an appropriate supplement but only after the standard literature has been mastered.

Graham Vulliamy and Ed Lee, editors of Pop Music in School made suggestions about how pop music should be handled in the classroom. They feel it should not be taught in the traditional manner of teacher being the master. The teacher must view the students as possessing considerable prior knowledge and should recognize his own limitations and become a pupil along with the students (O'Brien, 1982). It is time to bring Billy Joel and Whitney Houston into the same classroom as Beethoven. Why do standard curricula continue to be non-inclusive of popular music when it is what the students truly enjoy? All the same elements of music, timbre, rhythm, pitch, melody, intensity, texture, and form exist in both kinds of music (O'Brien 1983).

As much as this model of music education, where students are allowed to voice their opinions on music selection, has taken hold in many schools, it is not a universally practiced paradigm. In an interview with John Whitwell, director of bands at Michigan State University, Thomson (1995) revealed the conductor's beliefs of music education as it relates to performing ensembles. Whitwell asserts that only the director can develop a comprehensive curriculum which includes choosing the best possible literature.

Motivation - Why Practice?

The bottom line in all of this is a question of motivation. What is it that makes a child want to practice his instrument and learn all of the

concepts that make up the language of music? It seems there is a strong link between children's motivation to learn and their own natural curiosity. They show curiosity when they react positively to new elements in their environment by moving toward them and exploring and manipulating them in order to know more about them (Long, 1989). Children have a natural sense of motivation. They learn significantly only those things that they perceive as being involved in the maintenance or enhancement of their lives (O'Brien, 1972).

Allowing students to cull some of the music to study is one form of motivation that many teachers overlook. Young (1994) noted that rhythm, notation, articulation, and musical expression are important for any piece, and skills perfected in one style of music will generally transfer to another.

In the music classroom, that natural curiosity to explore rhythms and timbres and to handle their musical instrument is turned off when rigid techniques of playing are imposed. Benner (1975) suggested that music educators must devise materials and strategies through which all students can discover appropriate uses as a medium of interest and expression. It must include, therefore, the cultural forces of folk music, popular music, as well as ethnomusic and must not be confined to seventeenth through nineteenth century European offerings.

In June of 1990, Ball State University sponsored a "What Works Workshop" to bring music educators together to share research in the field of music education. Among the topics discussed were "What type of music

do choirs enjoy singing?" and "How does the music the group most enjoys singing relate to the music the individuals in the group enjoy listening to?" It should come as no surprise that the overwhelming response to both questions was the music within the students' every day experience (Karjala, 1991). The importance of presenting music that appeals to students greatly affects their motivation (Hedden, 1990).

There are many other innovative ideas written about in the literature of professional music education that have been generated nationally and abroad to keep instrumental students motivated to continue playing in various music programs. Diane Massie (1992) is a band director in Baldwinsville, New York. She lamented that today's children have a world filled with "instant gratification" via the half hour television program: conflict resolution in 30 minutes (not counting commercials). The students are pulled by video games, sports, and social activities. Her solution: Band Olympics. An ideal time to introduce it, according to Massie, is when the newness has worn off for the beginners and performance opportunities are scarce. The first task is to set goals for the students. These might include goals for tone quality, technique, practice time, long tones, etc. Once the targets are set, a point system is put in place along with a procedure to reward accomplishments. Charts are displayed in the band or orchestra room to track students' progress. The culmination is a "ceremony" to award ribbons, certificates, medals, or whatever recognition seems appropriate and the budget will afford.

Instrumental music students in Canberra, Australia currently use no method book of any kind (Bish 1993). Scales are played from memory (the students learn all of their concert pitches very early in their development), and exercises aimed at particular technical problems are created on the spot. All sheet music consists of concert arrangements of appropriate difficulty, and all instruction, essentially from the first day, is done through these pieces. By not using a method book, teachers have been very successful at motivating students and maintaining a high level of interest. This employment of music selection and instructional technique during the elementary grades is carried over to the secondary and high school levels.

Musical Achievement

When all of the research has been conducted, analyzed, and discussed, it all comes down to musical achievement. Children who demonstrate a higher level of intrinsic motivation for music also perform better on tasks requiring divergent thinking than those with low motivation (Wolfe & Linden, 1991).

In an experimental music enrichment program currently in place in Austin, Texas, children are given the freedom to choose the music they will hear. As a result, children as young as first grade are able to transfer musical concepts to musical instruments. The music for fifth and sixth grade students for their electronic unit is based on popular melodies, and the instructors report increased time on task and a mastery of musical concepts

far earlier than before the program was implemented (Forest, 1995). Rhythmic reading and pitch accuracy skills are well ahead of expectations.

In another experimental study, teachers in Dade County, Florida were asked to try a different modality of instruction in an effort to capitalize on the interests of the "TV generation" (Brick and Wagner 1993). During a four month period, classroom music teachers utilized a karaoke machine as a tool to assist in the delivery of instruction supplementing their traditional approach and materials. A karaoke machine uses a laser disc which has audio and video images of songs that appear on a television monitor. The lyrics to each selection appear on the screen, and through the use of electronic switching executed at the device's control console, the voice of the lead singer can be heard by the students or can be eliminated from the sound track. Microphones are looped through the karaoke's audio inputs allowing students to sing with or without the prerecorded soloist. In this way, students can experience what it is like to perform with a professional rhythm, string, and brass section as their backup.

At the conclusion of the study, students were given a survey and two important findings were uncovered. The karaoke assisted instruction held the attention and the interest of the students longer than the traditional method would have alone. Secondly, it was the students' perception that they learned the targeted musical concepts faster and with more ease through the use of the laser discs. The teachers confirmed that those students exposed to the technologically aided instruction attained a higher level of

understanding and retention of the musical skills covered throughout the duration of the study.

Shehan (1986) summed it up this way. "The key to effective instruction and consequent musicianship at all levels is the involvement of the children in the music-making process" (p. 28).

## Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of the use of student selected repertoire to increase practice motivation during the period from September, 1996 to January 1997, the fifth and sixth grade students from the experimental school (school B) will show an increase in both practice time and lesson attendance.
A decrease in program attrition is anticipated when compared to the control school (school A) as measured by the students' daily practice journal and review of the instructor's lesson attendance records.

In order to accomplish the terminal objectives, the following processes are necessary:

1. A comprehensive list of popular music will be compiled in the form of a student survey (Appendix A). The selections will include, but are not limited to the following:

A. Television themes
B. Movie themes
C. Cartoon themes
D. Holiday songs
E. Rock and roll
F. Top 40

2. In the Spring of 1996, the survey shall be administered to the students allowing them to select from the list which songs they would like to play. Space will be provided at the bottom of each category to permit students to write in their own choices not found on the prepared document.

3. The surveys will be collected and tallied. The 20-25 selections receiving the most interest will be arranged and written for all of the various wind and mallet percussion instruments in keys and within tessitura appropriate for the age and ability level of the students.

4. During the second week in September 1996, the researcher will meet with the students from both schools to distribute the parent information letter (Appendix B). At this time, the students will be given an explanation of the project including expectations of their participation.

5. During the 12 weeks of the study, students in the control group (school A) will receive weekly lessons as designed by the instrumental music faculty in the district's instrumental music curriculum guide. This will include instruction using the Standard of Excellence method book by Bruce Pearson, as well as weekly ensemble rehearsals utilizing standard band literature.

6. During the 12 weeks of the study, students in the the experimental group (school B) will receive all of the same instruction as described above. Additionally, students in school B will be allowed to choose selections from the prepared music arranged specifically for this study. Their lessons will be structured so that half the time will be spent on traditional curriculum

directed instruction and the remaining time will involve working on their chosen selections.

7. The students in the experimental group will have the opportunity to perform their pieces at the all school Festival of the Arts sponsored by the PTO in the early part of January 1997. This special event is the first of its kind for the school and will be a showcase for these students to present to the community what they have accomplished during the first semester.

8. During the 12 weeks of the study, students in both groups will be asked to record their weekly assignment and maintain a daily log of their at home rehearsal time in their daily lesson/practice journal (Appendix C). Verification of the student entries will be confirmed by a parental signature at the conclusion of each week. The journals will be collected at the start of each lesson by the instructor.

9. In addition to the students' lesson/practice journals, precise records will be kept by the instructor to track lesson attendance. This information will include the students' presence in class, punctuality, and whether or not all of the appropriate materials (instrument and accessories, method book, and solo and ensemble music) are brought to class (Appendix D).

## Project Action Plan

The following action plan was designed to facilitate the major solution components: involving students in the selection of their own music; assisting students in preparing their pieces; allowing students to perform for each other in class; allowing students the opportunity to offer constructive

critiques to their classmates in a collegial manner, as well as the gracious acceptance of them in return; and giving the students the opportunity to perform for family, friends, and the community as an individual or in a small group ensemble. The improvements sought as a result of this intervention are increased practice time for the students at home, improved weekly lesson attendance, and a lower attrition rate in the program.

During the week of September 9, 1996, the instructor will meet with all second and third year instrumental music students from both targeted schools during a special assembly. At that time, the daily practice journals will be distributed with a detailed explanation of how they are to be filled out. The letter to the parents explaining the project will also be given to the students. The final order of business at this meeting will be the distribution of the students' handbooks and lesson time assignments.

Starting the week of September 29, 1996, students will resume their instrumental music lessons for the 1996-1997 school year. During this first week of lessons, the instructor will present to the classes in school B all of the selections that have been arranged and written for this project (Appendix E). At this time, they will be allowed time to try out or sight read any of the songs that interest them. The instructor will also offer a demonstration of any tunes requested by playing them for the students. The students may take home two or three songs that they would most like to practice. Students who are interested in similar selections will be encouraged to get together between lessons and collaborate on the music.

During the second lesson, the classes will discuss the music that they took home. Questions to be discussed during this time are:

1) What piece did you enjoy playing most and why?

2) What piece did you least enjoy and why?

3) Describe one part of the music that seemed easier to play than it first appeared.

Students at this point will be given the option of continuing to work on these pieces for another week or choose alternate selections from the compiled list. They will be encouraged to take as many tunes home as they feel they have time to practice.

At the beginning of the lesson in the third week, the students will be asked to choose one song, or at least a part of one song that they have enjoyed the most, and perform it for the class. At this time, the instructor will model for the class how to critique the performance, offering both positive, complimentary comments, as well as well as pointing out areas that will require more of the student's attention in subsequent practice sessions. The students will be informed that during the next in-class exhibition that they will act as music critics for their classmates, looking for both positive aspects of the performance as well as areas that need improvement.

By the fourth week, it will be suggested that the students start narrowing down the pieces that they have tried to one or two that they might like to perform during the January concert. Now would be an ideal time to choose a partner or two for a duet or trio if they would feel more

comfortable performing in a small ensemble rather than playing a solo. During this lesson, the students will also play one of their selections for the class, and the students critiques described above will take place at this time.

During lessons on the fifth week, the instructor will introduce the concept of accompaniments for the solos. Each one of the selections chosen for this project has a piano part to supplement the piece and enhance the student's performance. The ability to play with rhythmic accuracy and steadiness of beat are paramount at this juncture of the young musicians development, as they will quickly discover upon playing their piece with another instrument for the first time.

Lessons during the sixth week will feature student performances once again. This time, the other students will listen for at least one area of the soloist's presentation that has improved noticeably since week three. During this lesson, the students will be asked to make a final decision as to which piece they would like to perform in January. They will also be asked to bring in a blank tape so that their accompaniment might be recorded for home use. The piano parts will also be made available at this time for those students who have someone at home with whom to practice.

As the project reaches the midway point, week seven will be an option week for the students. If any of them wish to take a break from their solos or small group ensembles, they may. Another option for them would be to explore someone else's solo in the class, or an entirely different one from the selected repertoire.

The lessons during week eight will be a time of reflection for the students. They will be asked to write down their thoughts, concerns, and overall impressions with regards to their solo and the different focus of the lessons when compared to last school year. The class will then engage in a discussion to verbally express their feelings.

Week nine features the Thanksgiving holiday. Students are only in attendance the first two days of the week, therefore, any student scheduled Wednesday through Friday will not have a regular lesson. In lieu of regular class instruction this week, the instructor will schedule two large group assemblies, one for the fifth grade instrumental students,and one for the sixth grade instrumental students. The students will have the opportunity to perform their solo or ensemble for their whole grade level. This will take place in an informal setting, without critique from either the instructor or the class.

Week ten marks the beginning of December and students in all of the classes will be given the chance to sight read some holiday music. This will be a whole class experience rather than an individual task. Everyone in the group will get to choose at least one favorite song for the class to play. This is another scheduled break for the students from their chosen solos as they begin the final push toward winter recess and the January concert.

Week eleven is the final tune up before the students play for their peers the following week. All solos and ensembles will be rehearsed with live accompaniment, with an emphasis on stage presence including the proper

way to enter and exit the performance area, and audience awareness and acknowledgement.

During the twelfth and final week, all instrumental students, including those fourth graders in their first year of study, will assemble for a performance of all the solos and ensembles prepared by the fifth and sixth grade instrumentalists. Proper audience demeanor will be addressed at this assembly. At the conclusion of this demonstration, there will be a discussion of the Festival of the Arts concert in January and what aspects of the players' performance they should concentrate on during the winter recess. The daily practice journals will also be collected at this time.

## Methods of Assessment

The literature would seem to indicate that if students are given some ownership in determining the direction of their curriculum and made partners in choosing their instructional materials, they are more likely to become immersed in their education. In order to analyze the effects of the intervention of student-selected repertoire, data will be collected and analyzed in the following categories:

1. Home practice time
2. Lesson attendance
3. Program attrition

### Home Practice Time

The student practice logs will be tallied, and the following data will be examined:

1. The average number of minutes practiced per child per week.

2. The average number of minutes practiced by the control group per week.

3. The average number of minutes practiced by the experimental group per week.

Lesson Attendance

In investigating the frequency and preparedness of students at their lessons, great care will be required to determine the number of lessons each child could have potentially attended. Within the 12 weeks of this study, reasons for excused absence from class can include, but is not limited to the following:

1. School holidays

2. Class field trips

3. All school assemblies

4. Parent-Teacher conferences

5. Stanford-9 testing

Once each of these circumstances for absence have been sorted out for each class, the following data will be analyzed:

1. The percentage of lessons attended for each student.

2. The percentage of lessons attended for the control group.

3. The percentage of lessons attended for the experimental group.

In addition to the collection and analysis of purely numerical data, each student in both the control and experimental groups who are still actively

enrolled in the program will be surveyed with regards to attitudes toward music selection and practice regiments. There will be separate survey instruments to reflect the nature of the different treatments of the two groups, though they will be similar in content. The questions in the Student survey (Appendix F) for school A will focus on the possibility of adding popular music to the curriculum in the future and what effect that might have upon their daily practice regiment. The questions in the Student Survey (Appendix G) for school B will address their experiences as they pertain to the popular music that was available to them during this project. In addition, they will be asked to break down their practice sessions into three categories (method book, band music, and popular solos) by the percentage of time spent on each.

Program Attrition

Historically, a proportion of students will no longer be participating in the program by the winter holidays. Sooner or later, every director is confronted by students who want to leave the program for a variety of reasons (Evans, 1995). Unfortunately, it is often too late to address the issue once the student decides to quit. To determine if the selection of music has any effect on a student's decision to discontinue study of their instrument, the following data will be analyzed:

1. The percentage of student attrition in the control group.
2. The percentage of student attrition in the experimental group.

A written questionnaire will be distributed to any student exiting the

program (Appendix F). In addition to determining the effects of the curriculum and its choice of music on the students, variables such as academic responsibilities and extra curricular activities will be analyzed as they relate to the student leaving the program.

# CHAPTER 4

# PROJECT RESULTS

## Historical Description of the Intervention

### Description Overview

The objective of this project was to increase the practice time as well as lesson attendance for the students in the experimental group (school B). In addition, the goal of the chosen intervention was to maintain student interest in the instrumental music program at an optimal level so as to decrease the incidence of attrition. The use of student selected repertoire and the utilization of popular music were chosen to actuate these changes.

Throughout the final two weeks of May, 1996, the students in the experimental group (school A) were administered a survey (Appendix A) which listed a variety of contemporary music ranging from television and movie theme songs to top 40 hits. The students were asked to choose from the various categories which selections they would be interested in playing the following school year (Fall, 1996). In addition to the list of songs compiled by the researcher, the children were afforded space after each category to write in titles of their own.

Once the surveys were completed and tallied, the 26 selections that received the most interest by the students were arranged for all of the wind and mallet percussion instruments in keys and tessitura appropriate for the students' age and level of experience.

Table 1

Student Survey Results - Top 10 Selections

| Title | Rank | Response Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer | 1 | 26 |
| The Macarena | 2 | 23 |
| Meet the Flintstones | 3 | 22 |
| The Brady Bunch | 4 | 19 |
| YMCA | 5 | 18 |
| Jingle Bells | 6 | 17 |
| Achy Breaky Heart | 7 | 13 |
| The Pink Panther | 8 | 12 |
| I'll Be There for You | 9 | 10 |
| The Circle of Life | 10 | 10 |

As Table 1 indicates, the ten most frequently requested songs received 10 votes or more. The other 16 selections accrued between five and nine votes each. Seven of the ten most requested songs (#'s 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 10) were from the preprinted survey, while three selections (#'s 2, 5 and 9) were written in by the students.

Throughout the twelve weeks of the project, students in the control group (school A) received instruction as per the district instrumental music curriculum. This included weekly lessons from the Standard of Excellence method book and a large ensemble rehearsal where conventional band literature was read and rehearsed for performance.

Students in the experimental group (school B) were given instruction using the same methods and materials described above. In addition to this conventional curricular model, these children were allowed to select from the 26 titles arranged for this project as many songs as they would care to play. These students were informed at the commencement of this process that they would have the opportunity to perform one or more of these pieces either as a solo or in a small group at the school's Festival of the Arts concert in January, 1997. Instructional time during their weekly lessons was divided between the core curriculum and the tunes designated by the students for this project. A more detailed description of that intervention will follow.

Students in both the control and experimental groups maintained weekly lesson/practice journals (Appendix C) logging their weekly assignments and charting their daily practice time. Journals were verified by parental signatures and turned in during class weekly. Lesson attendance was maintained by the instructor on the daily attendance record (Appendix D).

Description in Detail

Students in both schools met separately with the instructor during the week of September 6, 1996 to discuss the use of the lesson/practice journals and to receive the parent information letter (Appendix B) describing the project. At these assemblies, students also received their student handbooks published by the instrumental music department, as well as their weekly lesson and large group rehearsal times.

During the first two weeks of the study, the children in school B were given the compiled list of songs (Appendix E) available to play as a result of their surveys the previous school year. They were allowed to choose as many pieces from the 26 as they desired but were encouraged to focus on perhaps two or three to begin their study. The instructor demonstrated any of the tunes for the students that they requested to assist them in becoming better acquainted with the selections.

By the third and fourth weeks of instruction, the students were asked to perform at least a portion of one of the songs they had been working on at home for their peers during their lesson. The original project time line, outlined in chapter 3, called for students to critique each other's performance during the fourth week. But the presentation of these selected solos generated so much enthusiasm within the classes, the instructor thought it prudent to move this piece of the action plan back one week and allow the students to bask in the satisfaction of playing music that was actually familiar and enjoyable to them.

The students' reaction to the popular music necessitated divergence from the action plan again during week five. By this point, the instructor had hoped the students would start to narrow their choices for the January performance as well as to begin to assemble the members of the small groups that would perform together. The children, however, had quite a different agenda. The propensity to play as many of the 26 selections as possible was still the driving force for many of the targeted students. At this juncture in the project, they were not interested in the honing of their skills on a specific song but rather in the protraction of the exploratory phase of the endeavor. Rather than squelching their enthusiasm, the instructor acquiesced and allowed for more discovery on the part of those who desired further inquisition.

Throughout the lessons during week six and seven, the instructor brought in piano accompaniments to much of the repertoire selected by the children. Students were asked to choose the song they felt they performed the best and were then given the opportunity to play either alone or in a small group along with the keyboard. For many of the students, this was the initial time they had played these selections with anybody else, and as a result, it provided an eye opening experience for them. Many ensuing class discussions centered around the urgency of such concepts as rhythmic competency, active listening, and some of the finer intricacies of small ensemble performance. They discovered that playing in a group of three or

four was quite a different phenomenon than participating in a band of 90 to 100 musicians.

By week eight, very few students had begun to finalize their selections or partners for the all school festival concert. With the winter holidays swiftly approaching, the typical eleven year old child does not have visions of January concerts dancing in his head. The instructor, therefore, found it necessary to veer from the original action plan once again and steer the students on a course that would lead them toward the festival performance. For the first time since its inception, the intervention was brought out of the realm of the small group lesson and into the arena of the weekly large group ensemble. Band rehearsals heretofore had been completely devoted to the methodologies and literature involved in preparing young musicians toward a major band performance at the All District Festival concert, also in January, and had been completely void of the students' solo repertoire. During this rehearsal, the instructor allowed students to assemble into whatever groups they chose and to try some pieces together, with the ultimate intent being the selection (or at least the narrowing down) of a tune for the school arts festival. This turned out to be a most serendipitous activity.

Up until this moment, the solos chosen for this project had been restricted to the children's small group lessons. This put two limitations on the students. First, all of the lesson groups are scheduled by like instrument only; that is, flutes play with flutes, trumpets with trumpets, etc., which means that any small ensemble playing was lacking in variety of timbre and register

placement. Secondly, there is social segregation by the very nature of this system. Children who are good friends but play different instruments had never had the latitude in the school setting to play any of these pieces together. The excitement in the room during this large group experiment was palpable as students clustered, not by instrument, but in social circles to play their songs together.

Week nine through eleven featured two major activities. Additional holiday music was introduced for sight reading and general enjoyment. Secondly, students started to focus in earnest on the specifics of the group configurations and selections that would be their contribution to the January festival. In the end, all of the children who chose to participate in the performance did so in a small group rather than play a solo.

Circumstances beyond the control of any of the project participants (field trips, skating parties, all school assemblies, etc.) circumvented the plan to have all of the instrumental students in the school assemble for a preview performance the week prior to the winter recess as outlined in the action plan. In retrospect, the timing of this event was ill conceived.

At 7:30 P.M. on January 21, 1997, many of the students in the experimental group assembled in the school auditorium to participate in the Festival of the Arts concert. For the vast majority of these children, this was the first time they had performed in a small ensemble and in such an intimate setting.

## Presentation and Analysis of Results

In an effort to measure the effect of student selected repertoire on practice time, weekly lesson/practice journals were maintained by the students in both schools.

Table 2

Student Practice Journal Results - Average Minutes Per Child Per Week

| Week | School A | School B |
|---|---|---|
| #1 | 45.8 | 50.3 |
| #2 | 38.0 | 60.1 |
| #3 | 70.5 | 80.6 |
| #4 | 38.8 | 70.8 |
| #5 | 34.8 | 57.1 |
| #6 | 36.2 | 69.4 |
| #7 | 35.3 | 69.0 |
| #8 | 34.7 | 52.5 |
| #9 | 36.8 | 41.6 |
| #10 | 38.8 | 73.6 |
| #11 | 34.6 | 58.5 |
| #12 | 34.0 | 49.7 |

As Table 2 indicates, the experimental group (school B) practiced on average 31.2 more minutes per week per student than did their counterparts in the control group (school A). It would appear that the intervention had a positive effect on the practice habits of those students who were allowed to

choose and subsequently play popular music in addition to the standard curricular offerings.

Students in the experimental group were asked on their survey (Appendix G) to break down their practice time as if it occurred in 30 minute increments.

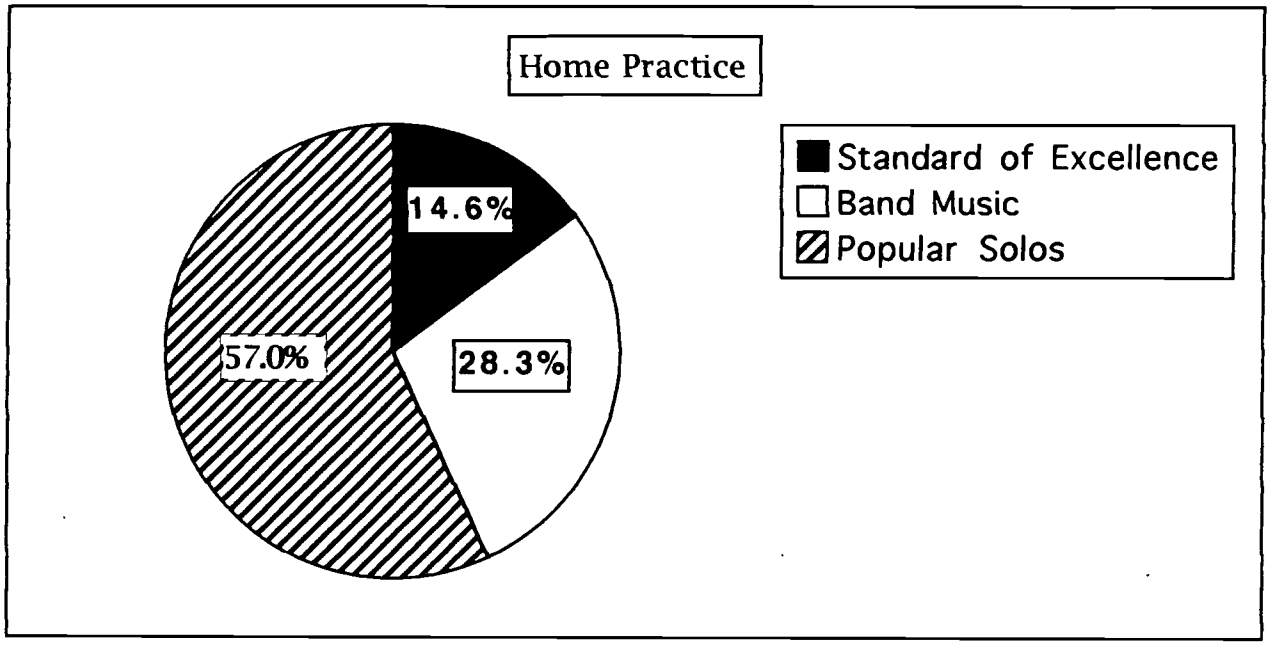


Figure 3 Survey Results - Experimental Group Home Practice Time Breakdown

Not only did these students spend 53.1% more time at home with their instruments than did the control group, but Figure 1 clearly purports that the majority of the time of their practice sessions was spent playing the popular music selections with only 43% of the time spent on the method book material and band literature combined.

The first question on both student surveys involved motivation to practice at home with regards to popular music. Figure 4 shows that a large proportion of the students from both schools (76.2% for school A and 72.5%

for school B) found popular music to be a factor that would enhance their interest in playing their instrument outside the confines and structure of the school environment. It is interesting to note that in the control group, who have had no experience with the intervention, fully one half of the students strongly agree that if given the opportunity to play familiar music on their instrument, they would be willing to spend more time at home practicing.

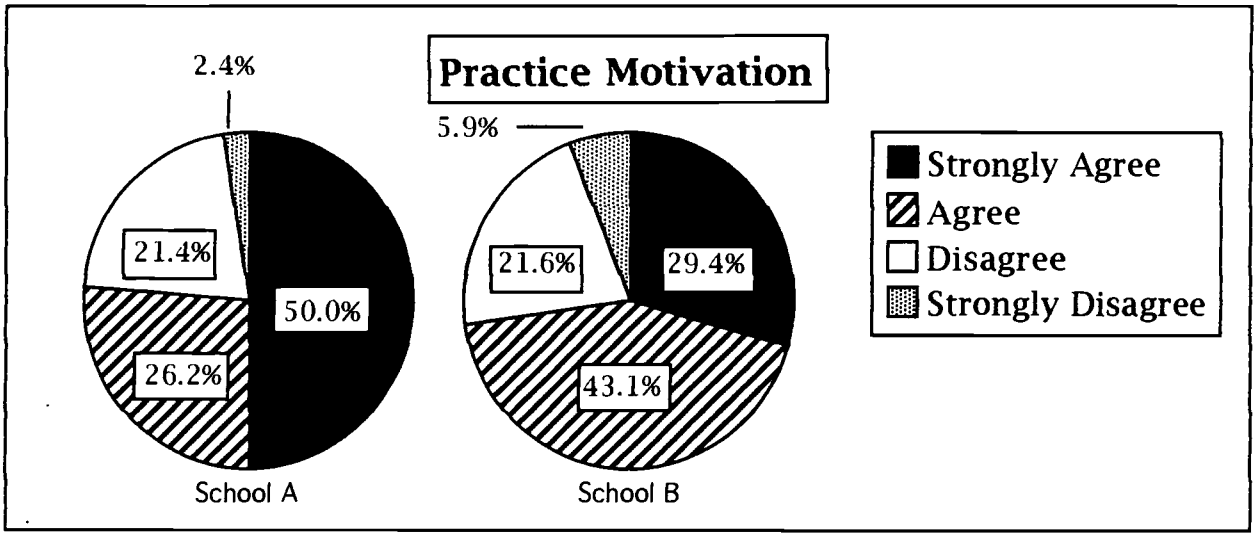


Figure 4 Survey Results - Schools A and B - Popular Music's Effect on Practice Motivation

Once a student has made the decision to practice at home, what type of music is most likely to keep them on task for the longest period of time? Question two on the student surveys addressed this issue. As Figure 5 indicates, the length of a student's practice time increased for the experimental group as a result of the popular literature, and the perception among members of the control group was that they would be much more inclined to participate in practice sessions of longer duration if they had something more to rehearse than just their method book and concert tunes.

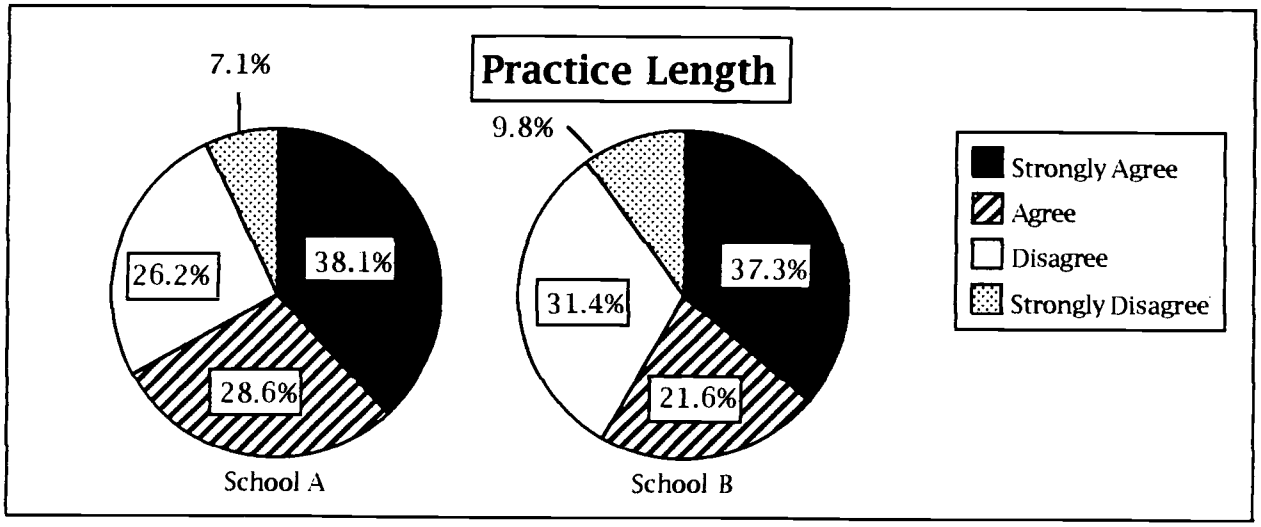


Figure 5 Survey Results - Schools A and B - Popular Music's Effect on Practice Duration

Conversations with students in the experimental group verify this finding. Week after week, these students came to class eager to play what they had been working on at home, not only for the instructor, but for the other members of the class. Entire lessons would be spent playing the music for each other they had so diligently labored over at home. Informal discussions with the parents of some of these children confirmed this phenomenon. Two major themes repeated themselves throughout conferences between the parents and the instructor. The first was astonishment on the part of their parents that their progeny were actually practicing more than they ever had in the past. The second point was one of gratitude. The parents remarked what a nice change of pace it was for them to hear some recognizable melodies coming from their child' s instrument rather than some esoteric exercise or yet another etude of diatonic delight.

The responses to the fifth question on the surveys seemed to corroborate what the professional research indicated. If students are given the responsibility to select some of the music that they will play and ultimately perform, they are far more likely to feel ownership in those selections and therefore practice them more diligently than if all of it is chosen by the instructor.

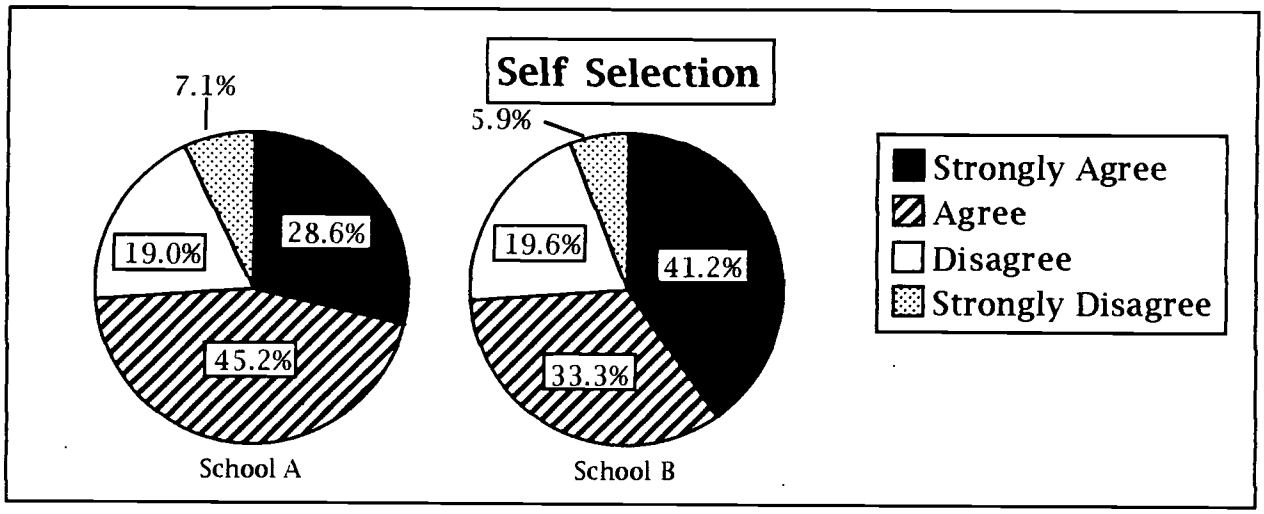


Figure 6 Survey Results - Schools A and B - Perception of Student Selected Music

Figure 6 illustrates that over three quarters of the children in both schools agree to some extent that selecting music for their own enjoyment and recreation would have a positive effect on their motivation to practice. It is intriguing to note that the concept of being allowed and even encouraged to choose their own music is so foreign to some students, that they overwhelmed by the choices. Several students from the experimental group remarked that they had a difficult time when faced with the preponderance of choices from the list of songs that they simply shut down for a time (the first two or three weeks of the study) until they had time to process the concept

of choice. One student made mention of the fact that the only choice he was ever allowed to make in any area of his academic endeavors was that of the multiple choice on a standardized test. He initially felt intimidated by the list of 26 songs, and felt that he might choose the "wrong" selections to play. It was not until he witnessed for himself the success and satisfaction that others in his particular class were enjoying that he felt confident enough to risk trying some of his own tunes.

One final reflection about student selected repertoire, whose genesis came from an unplanned discussion with one particular class, concerns the broader subject of academic choice. As progressive as the schools are in the targeted district, children generally feel that they have little or no options available to them in any scholastic discipline. They are certainly free to choose their own project for the science fair, and there is a certain amount of creative freedom that is inherent in the fine arts curriculum. But the academic freedom enjoyed by the faculty, which is guaranteed by the board of education and the teachers' collective bargaining agreement, seldom filters its way down to the student body. That, at least, is the perception of this group of children. The road to the constructivist model of education is a long journey indeed.

In an effort to measure the effect of student selected repertoire on lesson attendance, meticulous records were kept by the instructor. The frequency at which students were present for their weekly lessons was tracked using the Method of Assessment as described in Chapter 3.

There is no clear indication that the intervention had any significant corollary on the attendance patterns of the experimental group.

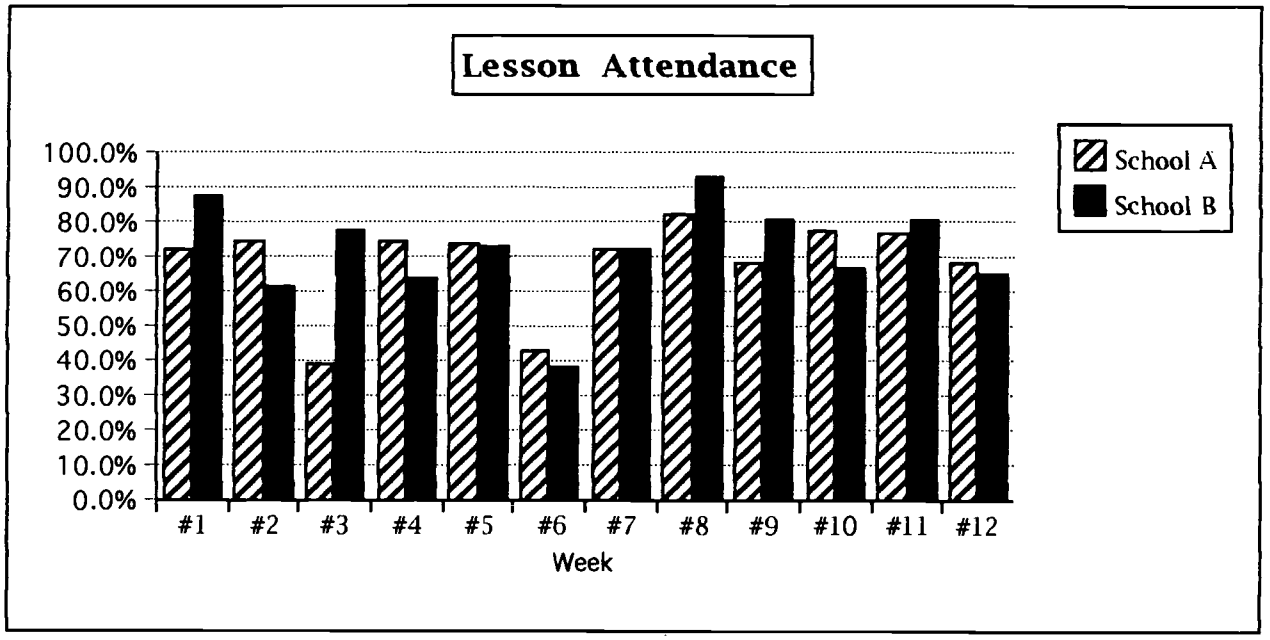


Figure 7 Lesson Attendance Rates - Schools A and B

Figure 7 reflects the average rate of attendance during the study for school A was 68.7%. This represents an increase of 10.6% when compared with the figures compiled from 1990-1996 (see Figure 1 on page 9). The average rate of attendance for school B during the 12 weeks of the study was 71.8%. This is an increase of 2.7% when compared to the same base line data. With the exception of week #3 in which the students in the experimental group were present at their lessons with almost twice the frequency, (school A had two field trips that week) weekly records show a variant range between 3.6% and 15.8% throughout the study. With this data, it might be concluded that there are other variables that effect the students' disposition to regularly frequent the lessons or not.

Figure 8 adds credence to this scenario. Slightly less than half the experimental group felt that the popular music selections were the primary motivating factor that brought them to their weekly instructional session. Further more, only 42.9% of the control group, as interested as they were to have this music included in the curriculum, felt it would make them want to attend their lesson more often than they already do.

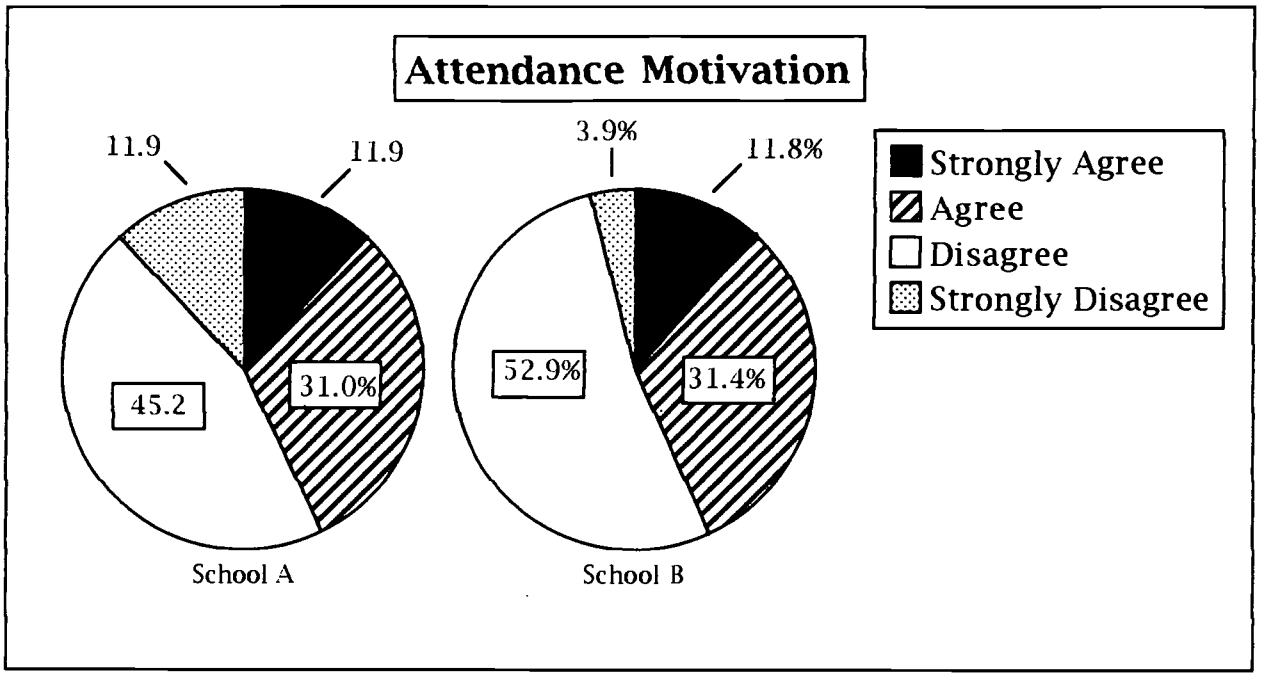


Figure 8 Survey Results - Schools A and B - Popular Music's Effect on Attendance

This last statement, it would seem, is the key to comprehending the significance of this phenomenon. Upon first review of the numerical data, the researcher found it to be a paradox. How could these students, who would spend a significantly longer period of time practicing their instruments with the inclusion of popular music to their cache, not find the same intrinsic motivation to attend their lessons? It was not until informal debriefing

sessions with groups of students from both schools that the meaning of the responses to this question became cogent. There were four reoccurring considerations the students cited as to the reasons they consistently attend their lessons.

First, by the time the children reach the second and third year of study on their instrument, they have attained a certain amount of proficiency of performance. They appear at their lessons because they simply enjoy playing music. The second most prevalent reason mentioned was the welcome diversion the program provides from the day to day routines of the regular classroom routines. Thirdly, many students use their lessons as a social outlet, another opportunity to be with their peers outside of the confines of academia. The final purpose was born of necessity. Many of the children in the targeted district have very high expectations placed upon them from home to excel in all areas of school life, not just in the core curricular areas.

What this points toward is the fact that these students attend their lessons for a myriad or different reasons, and the addition of the popular music factor, even if self selected, would have little to no effect on the consistency or frequency of their attendance.

In an effort to measure the effect of student selected repertoire on program attrition, records were maintained tracking the number of students who remained enrolled in instrumental music and those who terminated their involvement in the program. Exit interviews (Appendix H) were also given to

those students who discontinued the study of their instrument at any time during the semester.

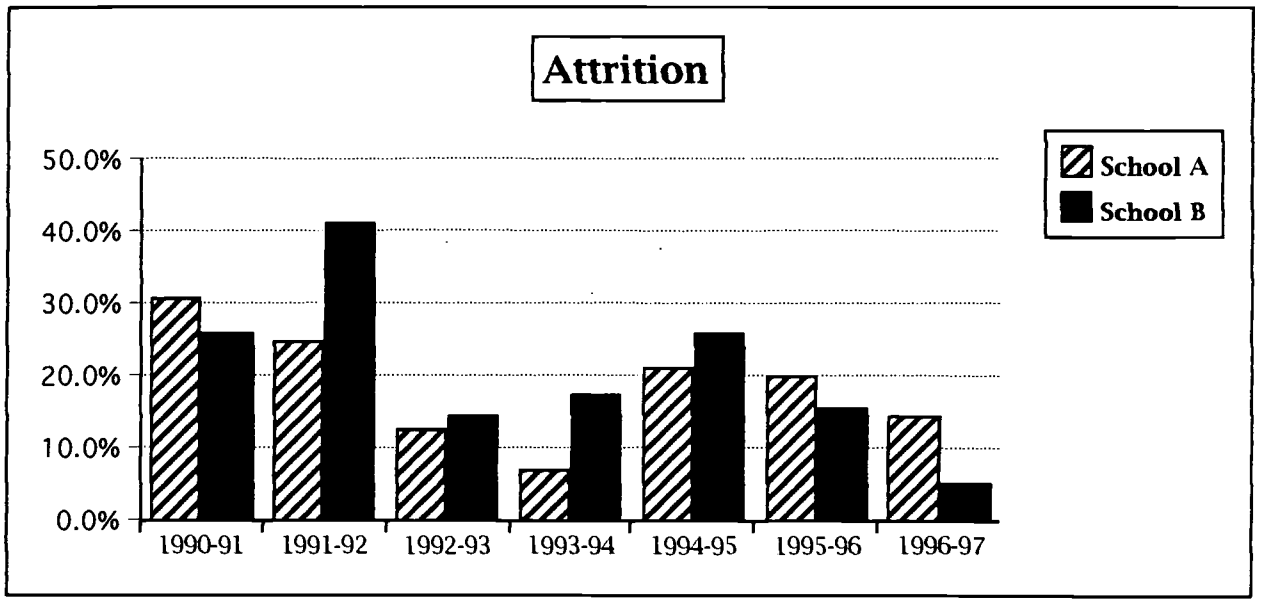


Figure 9 Attrition Rates - Schools A and B

Figure 9 illustrates the attrition rate for the study year (1996-1997) as well as the previous six (1990-1996). During the intervention, school A experienced 14.3% of the students discontinuing their musical study. This represents a decrease of 5.1% when compared to the average of the base line years. In contrast, only 6.7% of the students from school B left the program during that same time period. This is a decrease of 16.7% when compared to school years 1990-1996. It would appear that the introduction of student selected popular music had a positive effect on keeping students interested in the program.

Question four (Figure 10) on the student surveys solicits the participants to prognosticate on their future in instrumental music throughout junior and senior high, specifically with regards to the possible inclusion of popular music.

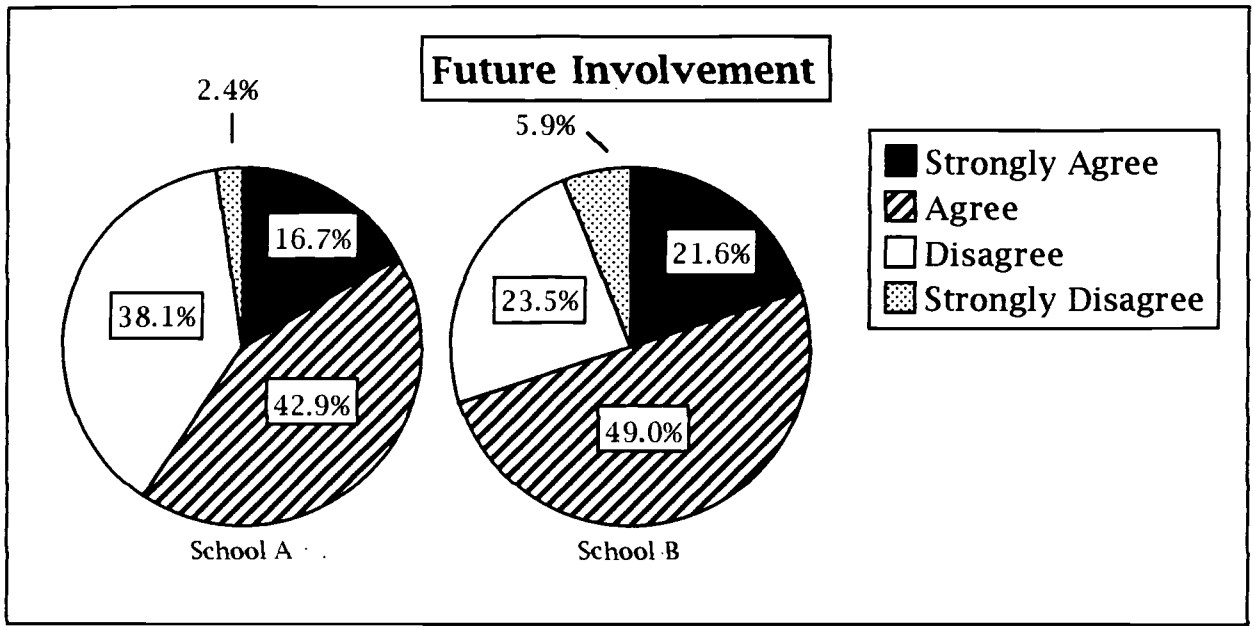


Figure 10 Survey Results-Schools A and B-Popular Music's Effect on Future Involvement in Instrumental Music

An overwhelming majority of the students in school B (70.6%) indicated that the promise of future opportunities to play "their" music would be a strong motivating catalyst to keep them involved with their instrument throughout their public school tenure. A sizable number of students in school A (59.9%) felt that given the latitude to play more contemporary selections would keep their interest vital as they enter middle and upper educational institutions, even though they had only experienced the traditional band repertoire and standard curricular method materials up to this point in their musical development. Many of the students in the targeted district have had siblings

come through the instrumental music program. In families where older children have been involved in the jazz program at the junior high and high school levels, the seed of alternative music has already been planted, and in some instances, was the primary link to the elementary program for the students in this study.

When results from the exit interviews given to those students discontinuing their instrument are analyzed, the presence of popular music for the experimental group or the absence of same for the control group seem to have little gravity on their decision to leave the program. The primary reason given almost unanimously by the children who left the program for not continuing was their daily schedules and extreme pressure they felt with all of the activities in which they were involved. The second most prevalent excuse cited was the conflict the instrumental program had with the academic demands placed upon them. Many felt they could ill afford to miss any additional time away from the regular education classroom for weekly lessons or ensemble rehearsals. In addition, the burden of their academic assignments to be completed outside the school day left little time to devote to the practice of their chosen instrument.

In responding to questions five and six on the exit survey, which involved the type of music played in school, most students agreed that repertoire should be updated to reflect the interests and culture of the nineties. However, the inclusion of modern music in and of itself would not

have been sufficient cause to keep them actively participating in the program or to further pursue their musical interests.

## Conclusion

Based on the assessment of the student lesson/practice journals and student surveys, members of the experimental group demonstrated an eager willingness to practice their instruments outside of the school environment as a result of the introduction of popular music that supplemented the standard instrumental music curriculum. The increased time spent with the solo repertoire cultivated a cognizance of rhythmic figures not found in the method book. In addition, stylistic variety and increased dynamic ability and tessitura (especially in the brass players) were also apparent, as the muscles of the breathing apparatus and embouchure were exercised with more frequency and for a longer duration. Not only did the opportunity to select some of their own music cause the students in school B to practice over 31% longer on average, but when surveyed, over three quarters of the students in school A expressed a willingness to spend additional time at home with their instrument if given a similar opportunity.

As noted earlier in the chapter, there are many variables students must consider when choosing to attend their weekly lesson, and the project intervention seemed to have an ineffectual impact on that decision. It was the overall impression of the researcher, however, that students in the experimental group spent more time per lesson on task, and demonstrated an increased willingness to play what they had practiced at home for

classmates than did students in the control group, though neither of these constructs were specifically measured for this study.

As the professional literature suggested, ownership and control over their environment are key components to the students' success and in motivating their interest in a particular subject area. Instrumental music, by its nature, is an elective area of study in the targeted district. Students may choose to enroll in the program or to void their participation in it at any time throughout the course of the school year. The dramatic drop in the attrition rate for school B during this study when compared to school years 1990-1996 seems to validate the importance of that control. Children who are intrinsically motivated to learn to play an instrument and succeed in that pursuit are likely to accomplish their goals whatever literature is placed before them. But the student whose musical intelligence is not as strong, or whose motor ability might not be quite mature enough at age nine or ten to physically manipulate an instrument, can be encouraged through the challenging years of development if they can feel some control over the music that they play, especially if the selections available are within their realm of experience.

## Recommendations

### For Music Educators

Today's popular music, whether it originates from television shows, movies, or is broadcast daily over radio frequencies, is the music of first choice for the preadolescent instrumentalist. Though most professional

musicians have matured in a system where standard method books and Classical literature have been the building blocks of technical proficiency and aesthetic wonder, not every student who crosses the threshold of the music room is destined for a career in a symphony orchestra or big band. Preparing young children to be artisans of the craft has never been at the philosophical foundation behind the curriculum or practitioners of the targeted district. If the purpose of music education is to foster a love and respect for the art of music, then the vehicles used to achieve those lofty goals should provide enjoyment and enhance the satisfaction of the participants. Students should be exposed to as expansive a variety of music as possible. Once they have learned the language of music and have achieved a certain level of technical proficiency on their instrument, they can transfer that knowledge and those skills to whatever genre of music that they choose for themselves.

The researcher strongly recommends the use of popular music as a component of a well rounded music curriculum for young instrumental students. There are, however, several caveats that should be offered at this time to anyone who would pursue this path. First, there are many published books and collections found in music stores that contain popular music arranged as solos for a wide variety of wind and string instruments. There are two major limitations to these publications: Many of them are simply too challenging for the younger players (clarinet above the break, trumpet above 'E', etc.) and because of copyright restrictions, much of the most current

music, especially top 40 and rock tunes, are not available for months and sometimes years after the song is released from the recording studio.

Secondly, many of the collections found in music centers do not come with piano accompaniments. Although these are not essential, they add an extra dimension of learning and enjoyment for the player.

The third consideration is for those who would consider customizing the pieces one at a time for the level and playing ability of their own students. There are several excellent computer programs on the market for transcribing and writing music. All of them are capable of receiving the musical data via a keyboard with a Musical Instrument Digital Interface setup, although keyboard proficiency is not critical as the notation can be entered by pointing and clicking. The cost of the programs and the additional hardware will run several hundred dollars, but is well worth the investment if supplying students with a steady inventory of quality pop music is the desired objective.

One final word about customization: the original formatting and data entry of the tunes are very time consuming procedures. (The researcher spent the better part of five months arranging the selections for this project). But once the songs are on disk, they can easily be manipulated and printed for any instrument and in any key.

For Future Research

If this study, or some variation of it were to be replicated, there are several modifications that, if implemented, would enhance the day to day operation generally, and the gathering of data specifically.

1) There was a small but consistent contingent of students from both the control as well as the experimental groups who regularly turned in their weekly practice logs without benefit of a parental signature. This, of course, compromises the validation of the data from those journals. Perhaps at the outset of the study, an open house, where the parents could gather to learn the details of the research project, could be held at each location. This would be an appropriate forum to discuss the importance of their verification of the journals.

2) The students in the targeted district received one half hour of direct instruction per week, sometimes in groups as large as five and six. The rhythmic complexities of many of the selections were beyond the experience level of many of the players, and it was an extremely arduous task to offer adequate assistance to these children due to the time constraints of the program. One of two approaches would be beneficial in the alleviation of this predicament. Either additional instructional time would have to be made available to the children (before/after school or lunch hour) or the rhythms would have to be modified to better accommodate the players level of expertise.

3) It might be useful to issue a preintervention survey to the experimental group to gauge their attitudes toward the possibility of adding popular to the curriculum in much the same manner the control group was surveyed after the fact. In this way, the two groups can be compared on a level field before the project, and whatever shift of attitude occurs, if any, in the experimental group can also be analyzed.

4) When arranging the 26 songs for the various instruments, the researcher chose the optimal key for each instrument that would put the selections in comfortable ranges for children at all levels. This process worked out well within the small groups of like instruments. When students from different groups got together to rehearse their favorite songs, however, problems began to manifest themselves. As they began to play for the first time, they immediately realized that they were not necessarily playing in the same key. While this can create an interesting tonal and harmonic effect ("Meet the Flintstones" played simultaneously in concert B flat and F major evoked some macabre images of 15th century organum) it is not altogether desirable for public performance. If the ultimate objective in cloning this project is to have children concertize their pieces, it would be to everyone's advantage to have the students choose their selections well in advance, as well as what instruments might be combined to avoid this musical faux pas.

## Finale

There is no doubt in the mind of the researcher that popular music has an integral role to play in the exploration of instrumental music. The

professional literature endorses it, the students in the experimental group thrived on it, and the students in the control group were in eager anticipation of it. As previously documented in Chapter 2, every musical element (pitch, rhythm, timbre, tempo, style, articulation, etc.) that is found in Beethoven has been bandied about by the Beatles. All of the drama and passion of Stravinsky is strewn throughout the soundtrack from "Star Wars". All of the riveting romance of Ravel can be relived in the recordings of the Ramones. And although television and movie themes will never replace music of the masters (nor should they), they have an appeal to young children that gets them involved and excited about producing a tone on a musical instrument. Once that vitality has been cultivated in their musical lives, the transfer to the appreciation of Art Music will be natural and seamless, and that is what will ameliorate the learning and loving of music for the rest of their lives.

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# APPENDICES

Appendix A

Survey

# INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC SURVEY

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Put an 'X' beside all of the titles that you might be interested in playing next school year if the music was available.

2. Write in the name of any song that is not listed that you might be interested in playing in each category next school year if the music was available.

## Television Themes

_____Hogan's Heroes
_____The Love Boat
_____M*A*S*H*
_____Cheers
_____Gilligan's Island
_____Mission Impossible
_____Friends
_____Who's The Boss
_____Hill Street Blues
_____Jeopardy
_____Star Trek-The Next Generation
_____The Brady Bunch
_____The Pink Panther

**Write in your own titles here.**

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## Movies

_____The Bare Necessities (Jungle Book)
_____Beauty and the Beast (Beauty and the Beast)
_____The Circle of Life (The Lion King)
_____Under the Sea (Little Mermaid)
_____A Whole New World (Aladdin)
_____Everything I Do (Robin Hood)
_____Zip-A-Dee-Do-Dah (Song of the South)

**Movies** (cont.)
_____Heigh-Ho, Heigh-Ho (Snow White)
_____Over the Rainbow (Wizard of Oz)
_____The Rainbow Connection (The Muppet Movie)
**Write in your own titles here.**

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## Cartoons

_____Casper the Friendly Ghost
_____Popeye
_____The Jetsons
_____Magilla Gorilla
_____The Flintstones
_____Rocky and Bullwinkle
_____Woody Woodpecker
**Write in your own titles here.**

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## Children's Songs

_____Puff the Magic Dragon
_____Rubber Duckie
_____Take Me Out to the Ball Game
_____Mickey Mouse
_____Home on the Range
_____I Love Trash
_____When the Saints Go Marching In
_____John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt
_____Camptown Races
_____Clementine
_____Do-Re-Mi
**Write in your own titles here.**

---
---

## Holiday Songs

_____Over the River and Through the Wood
_____Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer
_____Frosty the Snowman
_____Jingle Bells
_____Santa Clause is Coming to Town
_____Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer
_____Angels We Have Heard on High
_____Jolly Old St. Nicholas
_____Jingle Bell Rock
_____Deck the Halls
_____We Wish You a Merry Christmas
_____The Christmas Song
_____Winter Wonderland
_____Joy to the World
_____Let It Snow, Let It Snow, Let It Snow
_____Silent Night
_____Up on the Housetop

**Write in your own titles here.**

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## Rock and Roll

_____Blue Suede Shoes
_____Born to Be Wild
_____Hound Dog
_____Sweet Home Chicago
_____Louie, Louie
_____Old Time Rock and Roll
_____Rock Around the Clock
_____Some Kind of Wonderful
_____Takin' Care of Business
_____I Love Rock and Roll
_____We Will Rock You

**Write in your own titles here.**

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## Top 40

_____Baby, Baby
_____Cry for Help
_____Big Yellow Taxi
_____Hold My Hand
_____All I Wanna Do Is Have Some Fun
_____I Swear
_____Now and Forever
_____Love Will Keep Us Alive
_____Achy Breaky Heart
_____What Might Have Been
_____Boot Scootin' Boogie

**Write in your own titles here.**

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Appendix B
Parent Letter

September, 1996

Dear Parents,

This fall, I am conducting a research project as part of a Masters degree program through St. Xavier University. The study will run from the start of school until the middle of January, and all of my fifth and sixth grade students will be involved. Although you might not notice any drastic change in the method of instruction your child receives, there is one component with which I will need your cooperation. I will be asking the children to keep a daily practice journal to record the amount of time they are practicing their instrument at home. The students will receive a new journal each week at their lesson. On the form will be a place for them to write down the assignment for the week, as well as space for them to record their practice times. Also included is an area for you to communicate with me any thoughts or concerns you might have. I ask that you review this log with your child each week, sign it, and return it with your child for each lesson.

Rest assured that as with all educational research, complete anonymity as to the school and all of the participants will be kept in the findings reported in the document. If you have any questions regarding this project, please feel free to write me a note or call me here at school, and I will respond in as timely a fashion as possible.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you in advance for helping further my professional development.

Sincerely,

Lesson/Practice Journal

# WEEKLY LESSON/PRACTICE JOURNAL

Name _____ Date _____

My assignment for this week is:

_____

_____

_____

_____

This week, I practiced:

(Lesson Day)

| Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | |

Write in # of minutes practiced each day.

| Parent Comments |
|---|
| |

Parent Signature: _____

# Daily Attendance Record



| School A | | | | 9/23 | 9/30 | 10/7 | 10/14 | 10/21 | 10/28 | 11/4 | 11/11 | 11/18 | 11/25 | 12/2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lesson Time | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student | Instrument | Grade | Teacher | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lesson Time | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student | Instrument | Grade | Teacher | | | | | | | | | | | |
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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lesson Time | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student | Instrument | Grade | Teacher | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
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**Key**

**+ = Present**
**A = Absent**
***A = Excused Absence**
**WD = Withdrew**
**T = Tardy**
***T = Excused Tardy**
**NI = Present - No Instrument**
**NM = Present - No Music**

Appendix E
Song List

# SONG LIST

You Ain't Nothin' But A Hound Dog

Jingle Bells

Joy To The World

Popeye The Sailor Man

The Pink Panther

Do-Re-Mi

Casper The Friendly Ghost

John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt

The Brady Bunch

Achy Breaky Heart

Grandma Got Run Over By A Reindeer

Jingle Bell Rock

Rock Around The Clock

Born To Be Wild

The Bare Necessities

The Circle Of Life

When The Saints Go Marching In

Take Me Out To The Ball Game

Zip-A-Dee-Doo-Dah

Meet The Flintstones

Hold My Hand

Y.M.C.A.

I Will Always Love You

Boot Scootin' Boogie

I'll Be There For You

The Macarena

Appendix F
Student Survey
Control Group

In an effort to add more musical variety to the selections played, the instrumental faculty is considering the addition of popular music to the curriculum. Songs would include television themes as well as top 40 and classic rock and roll.

To help gauge student interest in playing this type of music, place an 'X' by the answer that best describes your response to each of the following statements.

1) I would be more likely to pick up my instrument at home if I could choose popular music selections as part of my weekly assignment.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

2) I would likely practice longer each day if I could be working on popular music selections along with my lesson and band music.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

3) If I knew that we would be playing popular music in class, I would attend my weekly lesson more often than I currently do now.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

4) I will be more interested to continue playing my instrument in junior high and high school if I know that popular music will be included each year.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

5) If I were given the opportunity to actually select the popular music to be played, my motivation to practice would increase.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

Appendix G
Student Survey
Experimental Group

Place a 'X' by the answer that best describes your response to each of the following statements.

1) I was more motivated to pick up my instrument at home and practice because of the popular music selections that were available to me.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

2) My practice sessions this year have been longer because of the popular music selections made available to me.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

3) I was more motivated to attend my weekly lessons more frequently this year because of the time spent in class playing popular music.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

4) I will be more interested to continue playing my instrument in junior high and high school if I know that popular music will be included each year.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

5) Being given the opportunity to select the popular music I wanted to play has increased my interest in the instrumental program and my motivation to practice.

| Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| ------ | ------ | ------ | ------ |

If a typical practice session at home was 30 minutes in duration, how much time would you estimate was spent on each of the following:

Standard of Excellence _____ minutes
Band Music _____ minutes
Selected Pop Solos _____ minutes
TOTAL TIME 30 minutes

Appendix H
Exit Questionnaire

EXIT QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Name_____ Today's Date_____

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1) What was the best and worst part of your musical experience?

2) What is the main reason you are leaving the program?

3) Do you plan on returning to the program at a later date? If so, when?

4) What changes could the director make to improve the program?

5) Do you feel the music played in the program maintained your interest?

6) What type of music would you have liked to play in the program?

7) Is involvement in the music program interfering with your schoolwork?

8) Are you convinced that quitting is the only solution?

9) How do you feel about leaving the group?

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