Creating School Communities through Music

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Abstract:

There are many problems facing educators today. Student retention, standardized test scores, and motivational issues are only a few. It seems that students are dropping out of school at higher rates and having more difficulty finding motivation to do well on their school work and standardized tests. This sought to investigate strategies that schools employ to improve the conditions of their school environment, and increase student academic success. The study specifically addresses how music educators can contribute to their school environment and the community as a whole. Using questionnaire, surveys and interviews, it is clear that school communities are stronger when music activities are incorporated.

Section 1

Introduction:

Creating a community of learners in a school setting is often a difficult task. Student behavior is one of the biggest issues facing educators today, because students do not believe that school is beneficial to them and lack the motivation to succeed on their own. Creating a strong school community can help students feel a sense of belonging and support, encouraging them to be successful learners. As a music teacher, I only see students for a total of one hour each week, but I know how important I can be in each student's life. The question is, "How can I use music to create a school community?"

One of my research concerns involves how music can make children more respectful, well-rounded human beings. I am interested in exploring the effects of serving the community with music, and how music can also bring together the school community. When I began my research I was interested in learning more about developing a positive school environment and other ways I could change the way I teach to benefit my students socially and academically. I believe that issues with student behavior can be dramatically decreased with the implementation of a stronger school community.

1.1 My Story:

When I made the transition from student to teacher I was given the ability to look directly into the eyes of future generations, but perhaps more importantly, I was also handed the opportunity to change what my students saw in the world. Other teachers and I often discussed our frustrations about student interactions and lack of respect for one another. We all agreed that our students did not respect each other, their teachers, or themselves. We had theories on how to gain respect from our students as teachers, but kept coming up short with solutions that addressed the problem of students respecting each other.

During student teaching, I was given valuable advice on classroom management and how to "successfully" facilitate a learning environment. As a music teacher, with such a limited amount of time to spend with students, it is simply easier to tell a student to sit out of an argument than to stop and settle the dispute in the middle of class, which is exactly what I was instructed to do. I began to realize that this was not solving the problem, and instead of discussing why the behavior was inappropriate, I was setting it aside.

This student teaching experience took place in an urban school district in Upstate, NY. It was unlike any other city school because it was based on "expedentiary learning principals," which basically meant that instead of learning one subject at a time, students would learn in units such as Colonial Times and then employ all of the subjects taught in a traditional school system to learn about the unit. This meant that, if the unit was Colonial Times, the students would write and read about the time period, learn songs about Colonial Times, and perform science experiments which would have been conducted in Colonial Times.

I noticed at once how the students all seemed to enjoy being in school. Each Tuesday the entire school would gather in the gymnasium for a morning meeting. It was a time for each grade

to present what they had been working on and to spend time together as a school-wide community, singing songs and sharing with one another. Parents and family members were encouraged to attend these meetings, experiencing first-hand the activities their students were learning in school and participating directly in activities such as drum circles and dances.

My first teaching job was as a general music teacher in a rural public school, and I was naively expecting the same school environment I experienced during student teaching. I kept looking around the school, trying to figure out what was missing. I still employed the same techniques I was taught during my student teaching experience, but this time they were not as successful. I could not figure out why these students were not interacting with one another with the same enthusiasm I had seen during student teaching.

1.2 Forming my Inquiry; Talking to Teachers:

I began my research inquiry by talking to other music teachers in the area and found that many of the teachers I talked to had different views about their roles in their school communities. I engaged in a reflective dialogue with an elementary general music teacher in a low socio-economic rural district, who provided great insight into what would become my research topic. In his classroom, he was struggling with how to actively involve students, especially when they came from difficult home lives and did not have the resources that public schools with students from high socio-economic areas were given.

The teacher informed me that he would go over the same musical concept week after week and could not understand why his students were not motivated to complete their work, or why they could not seem to retain any of the topics he was trying to teach them. He mentioned

that other classroom teachers in his building also shared the concern about students retaining information, and that these students just seemed to be "getting dumber."

When I discussed this issue with other music teachers in the area, several of them lamented that their schools did not notice the benefits of music education to their students. I also noticed that there was a discrepancy in the philosophies or each music teacher. Several felt that music was so important, it should be taught alone as a content specific course, while other music teachers believed that music should supplement other subjects such as history and science. A few teachers discovered a balance between the two, but many did not know how to incorporate other content into music lessons. Many were confused about at what age students learned certain topics such as the water cycle, American history, geography, and multiplication. They were also unsure of how to fit literacy concepts into their classrooms, and engage their students in a meaningful way, molding them into critical thinkers and responsible individuals.

Music education is declining in importance as a subject area as school districts are forced to increase budget cuts. Students are losing valuable programs that allow them to express their creativity and emotions in a safe, controlled outlet. School administrators are refusing to notice the importance of music in the school environment, and I believe that by treating the music educator as an integral part of the school instead of keeping them in a separate part of the building, or calling them a "specialty" teacher, music education will once again receive the recognition it deserves. I believe that by implementing musical activities and programs outside of the music classroom, music educators will be able to create a greater sense of community within their schools.

Section 2

Reviewing Literature that Informed My Research; an Overview:

Many researchers have studied the success rates of different types of elementary schools, but few have looked specifically at the influence of music in the success level of those schools. My research began with a focus on finding strategies to create a respectful classroom. As I began to read various research journals and articles, several themes emerged which discussed strategies for creating successful school communities such as establishing a respectful classroom, being knowledgeable about a student's background and the community around the school, parent and family involvement in the child's education, and collaboration between teachers of different disciplines.

A study conducted by Miller and Pedro (2006), defined a respectful classroom as "a place where all students feel physically and emotionally safe and valued for whom they are." In the study, they found respect to be a critical variable in education. They stated, "Respect is one such habit that exemplifies courtesy and brings out proper behavior and civility towards others" (2006, p. 26). Students should be respectful to their peers, teachers, administrators and staff within the school district. This respect forms the basis of character and personality and will lead to a greater understanding of differences among students.

Miller and Pedro's study concluded with suggestions on how teachers can create a successful classroom environment. Some of their suggestions included an inventory of what you should do in your classroom, what your students should do, and how your classroom should function. "A teacher in a respectful classroom notices the interaction between students and does not tolerate harassment or social exclusion" (2006, p. 26). Ertesvag and Vaaland also agreed with Miller and Pedro's suggestions, and states that "strengthening classroom leadership implies

clarifying the expectations of pupil behavior and permits the teacher to intervene effectively when standards have been breached" (2007, p. 13).

Ertesvag and Vaaland (2007) found that once a respectful classroom has been established, children are "encouraged to get to know each other and about others, share ideas, explore new content and carry this out with the feeling of safety and appreciation" (2006, p. 27). It is believed that this type of environment is the ultimate link to successful student academic achievement.

2.1 The Role of Teacher- An Examination of Influential Factors:

Teachers may have the greatest influence on student achievement over any other factor. Miller & Pedro found that "when teachers understand the community surrounding the school and the demands on the lives of the children they teach, they will be more respectful of the burdens some children face each day" (2006, p. 27).

When a teacher is knowledgeable about their students' lifestyles, they are able to make more accurate conclusions based on student performance. Miller and Pedro stated that "teachers need to be well read, open to new people and cultural experiences, as well as reflective" (2006, p. 27). For example, many students in rural districts have to wake-up early in the morning and help their family complete the daily chores before they go to school. Miller and Pedro also stated that the community should be "nurtured to see schools as centers of teaching, learning and respect for all" (2006, p. 27), however by the time students reach the classroom they might be exhausted from the work they completed before the school day even began.

2.2 The Parent Trap- An Examination of Outside Influences:

Students may also have factors from their family life that are influencing their academic success, such as a sudden family loss or tragic event. Miller and Pedro found that "respect for students' feelings, about their personal experiences and traumatic events are important as well as validation of students' thoughts and feelings in the creation of a respectful emotional climate of the classroom" (2006, p. 26). Kennedy, Linwick and Vercell (2000), found that the most important factor determining student success is how secure the students feel in their classrooms and communities. Kennedy, Linwick and Vercell state that by "promoting a safe, social and emotional environment in the classroom, students' academic achievement will be positively affected" (2000, p. 13).

Kennedy, Linwick and Vercell examined the impact of an intervention to improve students' emotional and social skills (2000). Students from one fifth grade public school class, one fifth grade class from a private school, and one second-grade public school class participated. "The effects of the intervention to improve these emotional and social skills were assessed by means of a teacher tally system and parent, teacher, and student surveys administered on a pre-post basis" (Kennedy et. all, 2000, p. 13). Their intervention program focused on cooperative learning activities, team building, and character education. The results concluded that "instruction of these skills should begin in early grades and be continues throughout high school" (Kennedy et. all, 2000, p. 14).

2.3 Recent Research: Where Music is Leading

Conversations conducted with music educators, reveal that many are interested in the phenomenon that their students seem to be "getting dumber." It seems as though society points

the blame at elementary school teachers, with the belief that if students at the secondary level were given a proper education at the elementary level, than they would have fewer problems, a better retention rate, and more motivated students.

Recent research also discusses the importance of collaboration between special education teachers and music educators, not just music educators at different grade levels. This research shows the increase in student achievement when teachers collaborate with one another and focus on the student individual educational experience. McCord discusses the importance that music educators be "apprised of students who may be entering the music program" and that "in the spring, educators who will have students with disabilities in their classrooms in the upcoming school year should have the opportunity to meet with the IEP team to plan for a successful transition into their classrooms" (2006, p. 27). The collaboration between special education teachers and music educators will prepare students for success in the music room, as well as prepare the teacher for how they should modify their lesson to accommodate the students' needs.

Williamson (2009) inquired how we could offer a well-rounded curriculum integrating the visual and performing arts in every classroom, and verify that this benefits students. To answer this question, each grade level would identify the content areas that would focus their work with the drama teacher to draw upon her vast knowledge of the performing arts and classroom instruction. The drama teacher facilitated the infusion of the arts into the curriculum and guided the teachers in making this enhanced educational experience their own. Williamson states that "teaching is so much more about learning than it is about teaching" (2009, p. 38). He believes that when a teacher is successfully engaged in teaching students, they learn the curriculum more completely, are able to monitor student progress, adapt the lesson to student needs, assess mastery of standards, and monitor personal practice.

Williamson states that his research achieved a panoramic outcome and "the cumulative result of the Old Adobe School functioning as a learning community while infusing the classroom curriculum with the arts is evident throughout the school" (2009, p. 42) He cited examples of increased student learning such as improvements in student writing, student presentations and performances, and students justifying their thinking as a routine part of classroom discussions.

While I found all my research to be interesting and informative, I noticed that there was a lack of information on how music educators, specifically, can help create school communities. I wanted to find strategies that music educators, classroom teachers, and even administrators were implementing in their schools and the effect they were having on the school environment. Therefore, I decided to talk directly with music educators, classroom teachers, and administrators to learn about programs found in different schools, and how music was used in these schools.

Section 3

Methodology

The populations targeted for my study were music educators, elementary classroom teachers, and administrators. There were a total of 16 participants in my study; 10 music educators, four classroom teachers, and three administrators. This was a convenience sample.

Participants were asked to complete a series of interviews, questionnaires and surveys and were contacted through e-mail. Administrators completed a series of open-ended interviews with questions based on how they create positive school environments, and the effect music has on those environments.

I analyzed the transcripts from these interviews to identify important concepts. This research technique was based on a study conducted in 2008 by Holley, who drew data from interview transcripts and broke them down into discrete codes.

Systematic comparison across the various codes focused on similarities and differences within the data (Hatch 2002). This comparison resulted in themes by which I organized my conclusions. Students and faculty provided feedback on the development of emergent themes and categories, which contributed to the trustworthiness of the data" (2008, p. 247).

Music educators completed questionnaires based on musical and non- musical programs implemented to encourage student interaction between grade levels, such as morning meeting, assemblies, interdisciplinary teaching, and so forth. Classroom teachers completed surveys based on the implementation of music in their own classrooms and school buildings, student involvement, and classroom respect issues.

3.1 Music Educator Participants

Ten music educators participated in this study. Their school districts were either private, public, turnaround, or charter. School districts also ranged from rural low socio-economic to high socio-economic city districts. One school was from the Southeast part of Washington, DC, and another was from Wisconsin, but all other participants were from the Upstate and Central New York regions.

The largest K-6 population included in the study had a population of 1100 students, while the smallest had a population of 270 students. The number of staff members did not relate directly to the number of students in each school district, with the largest population containing 50 teachers and the smallest population containing 35. This could be explained by the funding

for each of the schools. For example, the school with the smallest student to teacher ratio is a private Catholic school, while the school with the largest population of students and the greater ratio of students to teachers is a public school.

3.2 Classroom Teacher Participants

The four classroom teachers that participated were all from New York State. The first classroom teacher participant is a 2nd grade teacher in a public school in Upstate New York. The second classroom teacher participant is also a 2nd grade teacher, however this teacher is employed in an expedientary learning school in Rochester, NY. The third participant is a 3rd grade teacher from a public school in Upstate New York. The final classroom teacher is a first grade teacher in a public school in Upstate New York.

3.3 Administrator Participants

Three administrators participated in this study. The first administrator is from a large city school district in Upstate New York. The second administrator that participated in the study is from a large rural school district in Upstate New York. The third and final administrator that participated in the study is from a small rural school district in Upstate New York.

3.4 Instruments

The first instrument used was a questionnaire given to the 10 music educator participants. This five item questionnaire asked specific questions about how music is perceived in their school communities and to describe their school environments. Participants were also asked to

rate how important they felt interdisciplinary teaching was for their profession and to describe their feelings about it.

The second instrument used was a survey. The classroom teacher participants asked to answer a series of questions based on how often they incorporate musical activities in their classrooms (figure 2, what musical activities (if any) they participate in with their students (figure 3), and how they feel about interdisciplinary teaching with an emphasis on musical skills (figure 4).

The third and final instrument used was an interview, or a series of five open-ended questions completed by administrators. Questions asked included:

1. Does your school have any special programs in their classrooms to encourage   student socialization, such as Morning Meeting?

2. Does your school currently hold any weekly, monthly, or yearly school-wide meetings? If yes, does music play a role in these meetings, and how?

3. What type of role does music play in your school?

3.5 Procedure

I compiled a list of 23 potential participants and contacted each one through e-mail. I sent out my consent letters, and was pleased with the quick responses that I received from several of potential participants, most of whom not only responded within the first day that I asked for their participation, but seemed eager to participate as well.

Within a week, I had heard from nine of the 23 participants. I compiled an additional list of 10 potential participants and four responded positively. I decided to make adjustments to my

process and resubmit it to more new participants, as well as to send a reminder to all participants

I previously contacted. I contacted nine new participants, focusing mainly on music educators.

When I contacted the final group of participants, I sent the link to my questionnaire

embedded in the consent letter, stating that, if they agreed to participate, they would complete the

required questions. Of the 22 newly contacted participants, three responded and completed the

required questions. In the end, 64 potential participants were contacted and sixteen participated,

resulting in a 25% participation rate.

Section 4

Research Results and Analysis

4.1 Music Educators: Interdisciplinary Teaching should be used with Care
10 music educators participated in this study. The following is a short description of their school
environments:

School Type	Location	Student Population	Teacher Population
City Public/ Turnaround	Washington, DC	380-400 students K-6 / 99% African-American, 1% Hispanic	40 teaching and non-teaching staff
Private/ Catholic	Buffalo, NY	270-300 students K-6/ Majority Caucasian, less than a quarter African- American and Asian.	32-35 faculty members
City Public Charter	Wisconsin	440 students K-8, no	70 staff members
Private	Rochester, NY	300 students K-5, majority Caucasian	35 staff members
Rural Public	Utica, NY	400-450 students K-6, majority Caucasian, lower middle class – near poverty	60 staff members
Rural Public	Rochester, NY	429 students K-5, majority Caucasian	45 staff members
Suburban Rural Public	Rochester, NY	1100 students K-6, majority Caucasian	50 classroom teachers
Suburban Rural Public	Rochester, NY	500 students 1-5th, majority Caucasian, less than 30% African- American and Asian	18 classroom teachers
Private Preparatory	Syracuse, NY	500 students K-6, majority African- American	85 faculty, 50 support staff

| City Charter | Rochester, NY | 750-800 students K-8, majority African- American, less than 30% Haitian, Asian, and Caucasian | 40 classroom teachers |

Table 1: Music Educator School Environments

A five item questionnaire was completed by each music educator. The first question asked the participants to describe their school, such as its teacher and staff size and student population. The second item asked if the participants school currently held any weekly, monthly, or yearly school-wide meetings. If yes, the participants were asked if music played a role in these meetings, and how. Of the ten participants, only one stated that music did not play a role in any school-wide meetings. The other nine participants had varied responses ranging from "music plays and integral role in School-Wide Monthly Meetings" to "sometimes music is played on the way in."

Question four asked music educators to describe what type of role music plays in their school. Answers were varied, depending on the districts view of the arts. If music was not seen as a "core" subject, it was often neglected; however other music educators stated that their schools had a focus on the arts. One teacher stated:

> Our school is fortunate to have an arts minded principal. His goal for me when I   was hired, aside from building a strong music program, was to bring music more and more into the daily life of our school building. We have done this through school concerts, students performing for teachers, students performing on morning announcements, and at one time a weekly morning program on different musical figures, styles, etc.

Question five asked participants if they were pro-interdisciplinary teaching or interdisciplinary teaching, and to explain their reasoning (Figure 1). One teacher responded:

> Interdisciplinary teaching should be done in every school, at every level.   Teaching in this style helps students make connections between topics and subject areas and deepens their understanding of a given topic. It gives the student a big picture understanding-something they should be striving for in all things they learn about later in life.
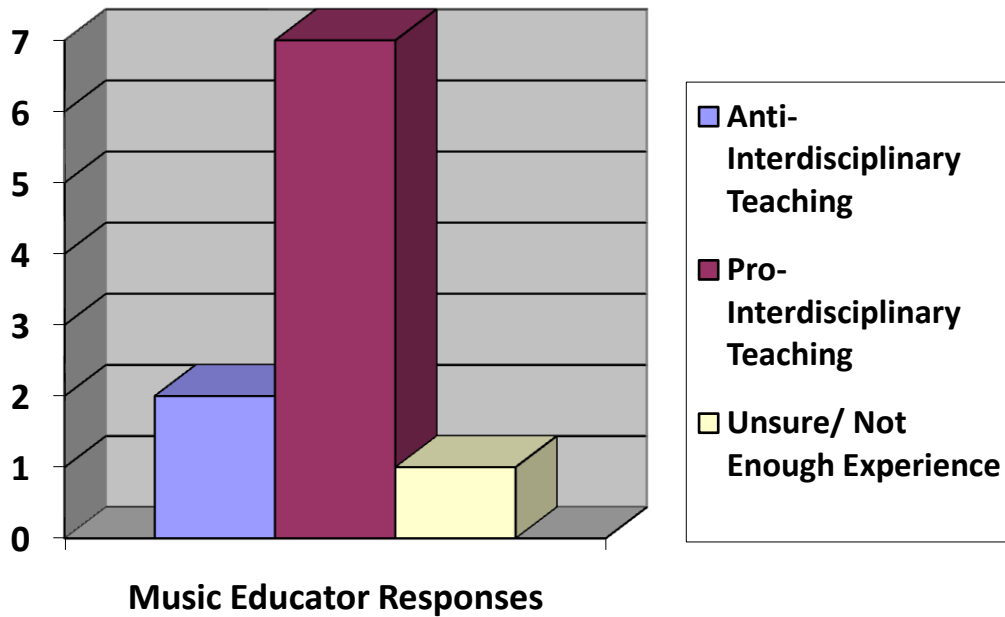
Figure 1: Music Educator Responses to Interdisciplinary Teaching

The final question was more open-ended and asked participants to describe their school

environments. Major themes that emerged from this question were: welcoming and supportive,

progressive, and holistic. One participant stated: "We have an interested and active staff of

"worker bees" who are truly dedicated to the development of each individual child in our care."

4.2 Classroom Teachers: Music Teachers Should Help Classroom Teachers Implement Music in Their Schools.

A five item survey was completed by four classroom teachers. Each question also was

also supplied with a text box where participants could write additional comments. Additional

comments were optional, and each participant made at least one additional comment throughout

the survey. The first question asked the participants what grade they taught. The second question

asked how often they incorporate musical activities in their classrooms (figure 2). One teacher

stated: "All of this varies with what topic we are studying, or how students choose to demonstrate learning & understanding."

The third question asked classroom teachers what musical activities (if any) they participate in with their students (figure 2). Not surprisingly, none of the participants stated that they used instruments in their classrooms. The fourth question asked the participants if they would like to see more music in the classrooms, and all four participants agreed that they would like to include more musical activities.

The final question asked classroom teachers how they feel about interdisciplinary teaching with an emphasis on musical skills (figure 3). One participant responded:

"I think many teachers are afraid of music if they think they don't have any expertise or talent in this area."
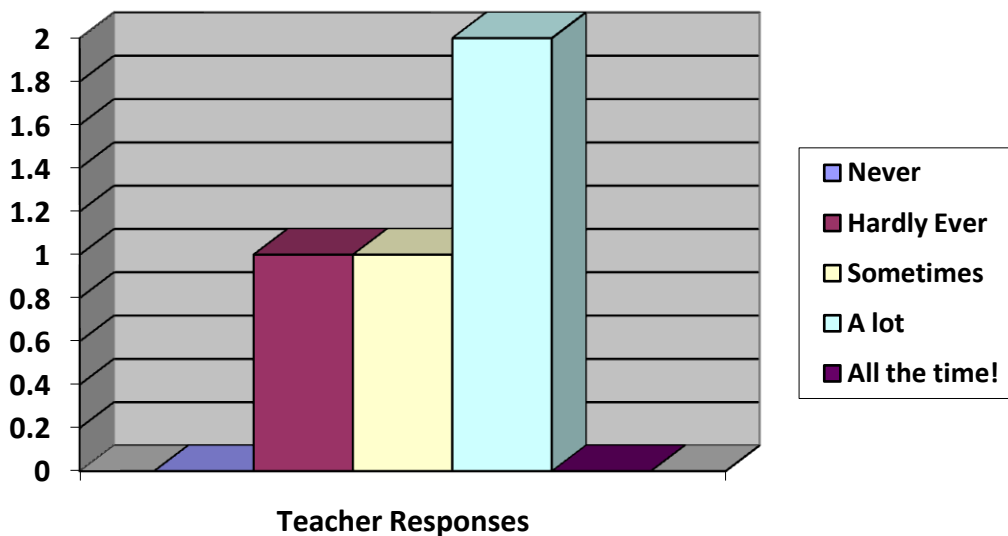

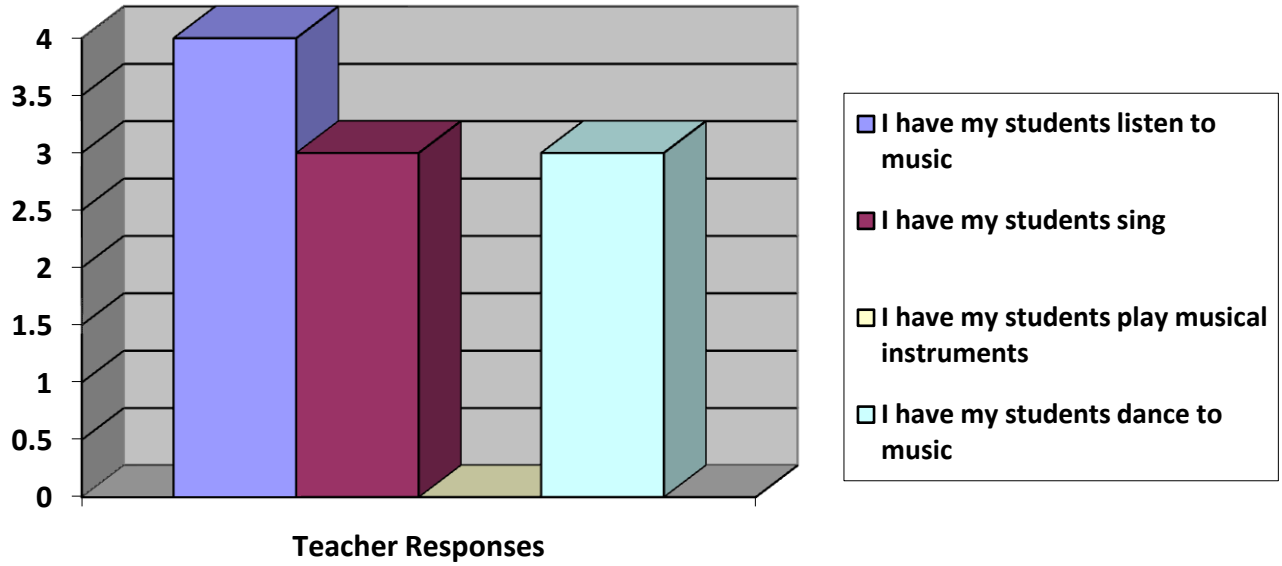*Figure 2: How Often Musical Activities are Included in Classroom*

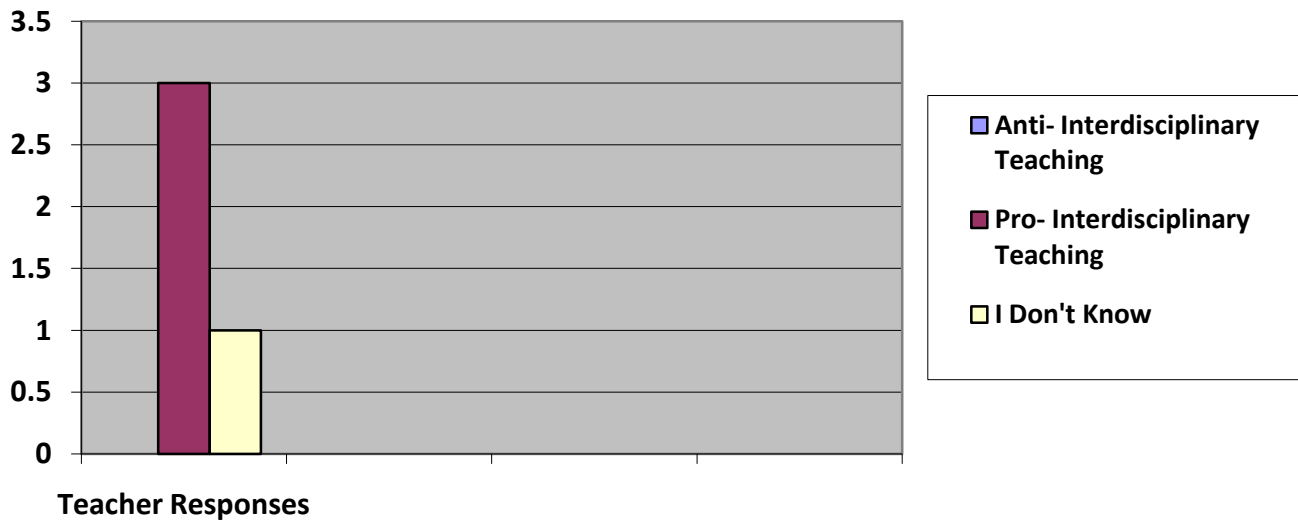*Figure 3: Types of Musical Activities Included in Classroom*

Figure 4: Anti-Interdisciplinary Teaching/ Pro-Interdisciplinary Teaching

4.3 Administrators: Strategies to Create School Communities through Music

Interviews with administrators were also conducted through e-mail. Participants were

asked to complete a series of five open-ended questions. The first question asked the participants

to describe their school, such as its teacher and staff size and student population. The second

question asked the participants if their school has any special programs to encourage student

socialization, such as Morning Meeting, and to describe these programs. Responses included:

> Each class UPK, K and 1st has the following:
> carpet time, show and share, and recess to encourage socialization.
> Teachers also use a lot of 'think, pair, and share' during lessons.
> We also have building club programs that also encourage socialization.
> Every Friday we have Caring Kids club, PE club, Library club, Music club
> and Art club.
>
> There are circle times (morning meetings) in every classroom, during the
> morning work block (3 hours every day). They can be "business", time for
> socialization, practice of affirmations, listening skills etc....
>
> Socialization takes place all day long in the classrooms. Students choose
> work to do, or do a project together and in-between work times can chat
> with a friend, have a snack or make tea together. Communications skills
> are taught, and children practice them throughout the day. Teachers also
> do "social stories" to teach skills.
>
> We use Responsive Classroom's Morning Meeting protocol in all
> classrooms including grades 7 and 8. We hold a school wide morning
> meeting each Wednesday using the same structures that are present in
> the classroom morning meetings.

The third question asked participants if their school currently held any weekly, monthly,

or yearly school-wide meetings. If yes, the participants were asked if music played a role in these

meetings, and how. All participants stated that they held yearly school-wide meetings and music

was involved in these meetings. Question four asked participants what the role of music was in

their school and all participants agreed that music was special to their students and an important

aspect of their school community.

The final question asked participants to describe their school environments. Major themes that emerged from this question were: a) student focused, b) collaborative, and c) caring. One participant stated:

> Our community is inclusive, caring, and collaborative, and we seek to have open and direct communication at all levels. We welcome observation by appointment, and typically have observers in most rooms every day. Come see what we do!

Section 5

Interpretation, Discussion, and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how music can improve a school community through the implementation of musical activities into daily studies. Throughout my research, I discovered that there are several strategies currently used to implement music in the school environment. Programs such as morning meeting, music clubs, and students performing for teachers and their peers, are some of the most popular strategies for including music in a student's daily activities.

The topic of interdisciplinary teaching as a community building tool was also introduced in my research and I was able to draw two conclusions based on my studies. The first conclusion was that classroom teachers are pro-interdisciplinary teaching, but are uncomfortable including music among those disciplines, mainly due to their lack of musical training and knowledge in the subject matter. The second conclusion I reached was that music educator's fall into one of two functional categories; solely teaching students musical concepts and skills, or enriching students learning in other subjects through music. Music teachers are both pro and anti-interdisciplinary teaching. Some believe that music should be taught for the sake of music alone while others view

music as a tool to help students achieve a more comprehensive educational experience. Only a small minority are anti-interdisciplinary teaching.

5.1 Discussion

My research data showed that while classroom teachers, music educators, and administrators are willing to implement musical activities into their school environments, communication between the music educator and other faculty and staff members is essential for success. One of the most influential strategies a music teacher can use is interdisciplinary teaching. By employing interdisciplinary teaching strategies they are able to work with classroom teachers on a variety of subjects the students are learning in their regular classrooms. They are also able to transfer these subjects and their musical components to a larger scale by bringing them to morning meetings or sharing with the student's peers as well as faculty and staff in a larger setting.

Of the four classroom teacher participants, 75% stated they had their students sing in the classroom and 75% stated that they had their students dance in the classroom; however each of the teachers noted that these activities were rare and 100% of participants stated that they never had their students use musical instruments in the classroom. One participant stated, "I think many teachers are afraid of music if they think they don't have any expertise or talent in this area." If music teachers are willing to work with classroom teachers to implement music in a student's regular classroom, classroom teachers are more likely to accept and become comfortable with musical practices throughout the school. Students are more likely to retain the information learned in the music room and apply it to other subject material, creating a more

comprehensive educational experience. Campabello (2002) agrees that music should be used as a tool to enhance learning, memory, and recall in the classroom. "Instead of using it [music] as an alternative method, or enhancement to traditional teaching methods for skill and fact retention, it is used as a reward with little or no educational link at all" (2002, p. 16).

Kennedy, Linwick, and Vercell (2000), found that the most important factor determining student success is how secure the students feel in the classrooms and communities. Their research focused on cooperative learning activities, team building, and character education and their results concluded that "instruction of these skills should begin in early grades and continues throughout high school" (2000, p. 13). This research showed that not only is it essential for students to understand how disciplines connect with each other, but also to understand the relationship between what they are learning in their classrooms and how it transfers to their futures.

5.2 Limitations

Although my study allowed me to accomplish a great deal of reflection, it also had several limitations. One of the greatest limitations I faced was time due to the four week period of data collection. I found four weeks to be far too short, especially because my data collection involved working around the schedules of teachers and administrators. Another limitation to my research was access to participants. I had to conduct the majority of my research using the internet, e-mail, and online survey engines. Although this made it easier for my subjects to participate at their convenience, I believe that future research projects will be considerably easier when I have my own school community to pose possible research problems to.

5.3 Implications

My research implies that if music educators would be willing to spend extra time working with classroom teachers and implementing lessons from other disciplines into the music classroom, classroom teachers would be more likely to implement musical activities into their classrooms and encourage their students to be musically involved. By infusing the school environment with a common thread such as music, educators are able to create a stronger sense of community among their students and the school as a whole.

Unfortunately, while many music educators agree with this conclusion, there are still others who believe that music should solely be taught for the benefits of musical concepts alone. These music educators must realize that an elementary teacher would not teach history or English as two separate subjects in their classroom but instead would combine subjects in order to cover the required material in the short yearly time period. Therefore, why is music often treated as a subject on its own? Students can still appreciate the value of music and be taught musical skills while learning about other subjects and cultures. The benefits of teaching music alone do not outweigh the benefits of teaching music within other subjects. Music teachers have the opportunity to reach the entire school instead of focusing on one grade level, and combined with interdisciplinary teaching, they have the ability to bring the school community together and create a more comprehensive educational experience for their students.

5.4 Conclusion

Music education has always been a powerful voice for students to express themselves creatively and honestly. Music educators are aware of this power, yet still struggle with maintaining their programs among thick budget cuts, and keeping their educational approach fresh and relevant. Some music educators believe that music should be taught for the purpose of music alone, yet others believe that it should be taught with a more holistic approach in mind.

My research shows that if music educators are willing to adapt this holistic approach, then administrators and classroom teachers are willing to fully support them. It shows the benefits of school programs that have established this ideal, and focuses on interdisciplinary teaching. I believe that through interdisciplinary teaching, music educators can function as the core of a school community, instead of a specialty area. I also believe that a strong school community could be the changing factor from a poor school to an excellent one.

Although more research is needed on how music specifically contributes to a school community, it is clear that the current educational system lacks student interest. Behavioral problems and a lack of motivation among students continue to be pertinent issues among all educators. As long as we continue to educate ourselves on the changes occurring in the educational system, we can continue to make progress towards with our students. Through action research and reflecting on conducted research, there is no possible way that we as a society could move backwards with our progress, we could only continue to grow.

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Appendices

<u>Appendix A:</u> Classroom Teacher Survey

<u>Appendix B:</u> Music Educator Questionnaire

<u>Appendix C:</u> Administrator Interview Questions

Appendix A: Classroom Teacher Survey

1. Please circle which grade you currently teach:

     Kindergarten 4th Grade

      1st Grade 5th Grade

      2nd Grade 6th Grade

      3rd Grade   Other:_____

2. Indicate if you include any of the following musical elements in your classroom:

     ___ I have my students listen to music.

     ___ I have my students sing.

     ___ I have my students play musical instruments.

     ___ I have my students dance to music.

     ___ Other: _____

3. How often do you incorporate musical activities in your classroom? (circle one)

     Never   Hardly Ever   Sometimes   A lot   All the time!

4. Please circle your answer for the following questions:

     Would you like to see more musical activity in the general education classroom?

     NO   I don't know   Maybe   YES

     Comments (optional): _____

     _____

     _____

Do you think that there should be more music in your school?

NO   I don't know   Maybe   YES

Comments (optional): _____

_____

_____

Would you consider creating units in your classroom in cooperation with the music faculty?

NO   I don't know   Maybe   YES

Comments (optional): _____

_____

_____

6. Is music a part of your daily classroom activities? If yes, how so? If not, why not?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you so much for your time! ☺

Appendix B: Music Educator Questionnaire

Question 1: Thank you so much for agreeing to answer questions for my research project on school communities! Can you briefly tell me a little about your school, such as its teacher and staff size and student population?

Question 2: Does your school currently hold any weekly, monthly, or yearly school-wide meetings?
        If yes, does music play a role in these meetings, and how?

Question 3: What type of role does music play in your school?

Question 4: How do you feel about interdisciplinary teaching?

Question 5: How would you describe your school environment?

Music Teacher Name: _____

School Name: _____

Appendix C: Administrator Interview Guide

Question 1: Thank you so much for agreeing to answer questions for my research project on school communities! Can you briefly tell me a little about your school, such as its teacher and staff size and student population?

Question 2: Does your school have any special programs in their classrooms to encourage student socialization, such as Morning Meeting?

Question 3: Does your school currently hold any weekly, monthly, or yearly school-wide meetings?

       If yes, does music play a role in these meetings, and how?

Question 4: What type of role does music play in your school?

Question 5: How would you describe your school environment?

Administrator Name:_____

School Name: _____

Signature:_____ **Date:**_____