Promoting Engagement in School Through Tailored Music Programs

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Abstract

Music and arts programs have increasingly been utilized to promote school engagement. Despite the fact that school engagement and music programs can be understood in myriad ways, little attention has been paid to potential distinctions between the types of music programs that underpin engagement. This article describes an investigation of how and when different types of school engagement were promoted through participation in a range of tailored music programs in four diverse school contexts. Four types of engagement were identified, including individuals' engagement in learning, peer engagement, connections with different members of the community, and community engagement. The characteristics of each type of program

differed according to leadership approach, expectation of students, degree of student engagement, and structure. The benefits of tailoring each music program to meet the unique needs and interests of each school community are illustrated through these findings. Understandings of the relationship between music and school engagement are articulated.

Background

The value of music in schools has traditionally been associated with aesthetic and cultural outcomes for students, but has increasingly been connected to psychosocial and health benefits. As arts and education policies around the world begin to endorse this connection to additional benefits, programs have begun to proliferate in schools. Researchers are beginning to investigate the value of such programs, but what remains unclear is the key mechanisms leading to benefits. This article explores the role of school engagement within music programs tailored to promote wellbeing and connectedness in schools in order to explore how engagement is understood and whether it can be more consistently achieved through clear guidelines about the facilitation of programs.

School Engagement

The phrase 'school engagement' gained traction in academic and educational literature in the 1980s and was conceptualized as a way to understand and mitigate the perceived alienation, boredom and drop-out of students in mainstream education (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). Early definitions focused on a/the "student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning, understanding, or mastering the knowledge, skills, or crafts that academic work is intended to promote" (Newmann, 1992, p. 12). However, thirty years of development and research has led to an increasingly multidimensional understanding (Reschly & Christenson, 2012) including academic, social, cognitive, and affective (Finn & Zimmer, 2012), as well as behavioral and emotional domains (Li & Lerner, 2013). Interchangeably termed student engagement, school engagement, and student engagement in school (Fredricks & McColskey, 2012), this broader conceptualization comprises several diverse elements. These include subjective notions of bonding (Maddox & Prinz, 2003), attachment (Jimerson, Campos, & Greif, 2003), and commitment to school (Smerdon, 2002). Also included are students' sense of psychological membership, belonging (Goodenow, 1993), connectedness (Libbey, 2004), identification with school communities (Voelkl, 1997), and sense of acceptance within them (Osterman, 2000).

Given the complexity of the concept, a myriad of markers of school engagement have been proposed, including classroom participation (Morrison, Robertson, Laurie, & Kelly, 2002), classroom behavior, academic performance, extracurricular involvement, interpersonal

(Jimerson, et al., 2003) and peer relationships (Libbey, 2004). Authors also stress the importance of healthy connections to people in the wider school community, including staff members and parents (Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001), thus emphasizing the "powerful peer, family, and community influences outside of school" (Lawson & Lawson, 2013, p. 465).

Importance of School Engagement

Commonly cited arguments for investigating and supporting school engagement relate to its impact on academic achievement, school completion (Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001), and connected downstream effects such as transitions to work and tertiary education (Finn & Zimmer, 2012). However, it has also and increasingly been linked to health outcomes since the World Health Organisation found negative correlations between students' self-perceived connection to school and a range of unhealthy behaviors across several countries (Nutbeam, Smith, Moore, & Bauman, 1993). Further studies suggested that fostering positive school experiences, including relationships with teachers, is as important in promoting student health as health-related teaching materials (Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold, & Kannas, 1998). Subsequent studies have been used to argue that school engagement serves as a protective factor against antisocial (Morrison, et al., 2002) and risk behaviors, including suicide ideation, physical fighting, binge drinking (Springer, Parcel, Baumler, & Ross, 2006), substance abuse (Bond, et al., 2007; Gonzales, et al., 2014) and delinquency (Li & Lerner, 2011). Taking a wider approach, Allen and Bowles cite direct links between belonging and "life satisfaction, general wellbeing, clinical depression, cognitive performance […] and physical health" (2012, p. 108). They propose that schools therefore provide an important site for fostering belonging in order to address primary health and wellbeing factors.

Researchers also stress the importance of school engagement in negotiating the rapidly changing social and economic realities encountered by young people in the face of globalization (Bardsley, 2007; Wyn, 2009b). This includes increased pressure to perform academically, and the need to maintain longer and deeper engagement in learning throughout the lifespan (Lawson & Lawson, 2013). It also refers to the needs and issues faced by increasingly diverse student populations related to social inclusion, integration, group identity (Wyn, 2009a), as well as resettlement, stigma, and cultural understanding (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Theorists stress the integral role that educational institutions have in addressing social equity through supporting the engagement of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Bardsley, 2007). Some particularly note the possibility that increased engagement could help teachers to cope with the increased number of vulnerable students because of the improvements in classroom behavior that would result (Lawson & Lawson, 2013).

The Arts and School Engagement

Reference to the potential for arts participation to facilitate increased school engagement abounds in educational, arts, and policy literature. Internationally, school-based arts programs have been reported as particularly effective for both preventing disengagement, and re-engaging students in learning (Kinder & Harland, 2004). This includes reports of increasing a sense of belonging to one's class-group, as well as participation in and feelings of belonging to schools and wider communities (Haynes & Chalk, 2004). Others report arts participation as particularly effective for addressing school engagement in at-risk student populations (Gibson & Anderson, 2008), including students from indigenous communities, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Bryce, Mendelovits, Beavis, McQueen, & Adams, 2004). Recognition that the arts can foster student engagement in learning and school communities is also stated within education policy documents (Donelan, Irvine, Imms, Jeanneret, & O'Toole, 2009).

Music and School Engagement

Within and alongside the above literature, there is significant recognition of the specific role of music in bolstering school engagement (Ewing, 2010). Programs delivering this artistic medium are often exalted for their ability not only to engage highly disaffected learners in academic activities, but also to foster a sense of belonging to school communities in which they once felt significantly isolated (Rusinek, 2008). Reports also suggest highly disengaged populations, such as young offenders (Anderson & Overy, 2010), not only become re-engaged with school through music programs, but that this engagement is sustained over time, leading to lasting civic engagement (Jones, 2010). Some also suggest the potential of music programs for fostering meaningful engagement with the world more generally (Smith, 2004).

West (2009) suggests this is because the communal act of sharing and making music forges both intergenerational and peer-to-peer social engagement within school contexts. Taking an evolutionary stance, Kirschner and Tomasello claim that satisfaction of "the intrinsic human desire to share emotions, experiences and activities with others" (2010, p. 354) during joint music making facilitates social bonding and cohesion between classmates.

Challenges in Achieving School Engagement Through Musical Participation

While the potential for music to foster school engagement is widely reported, several authors note this potential is conditional. This is based largely on the belief that for the benefits of musical participation to occur, students first need to be meaningfully engaged in musical activities. Researchers assume that this requires activities to be sufficiently enjoyable, rewarding (Hallam, 2010), culturally relevant (Doyle, 2014), and as some suggest, to align

with students' musical preferences (De Vries, 2010), rather than students being interested in the outcomes themselves and willing to engage in music to achieve them.

Saunders (2010) also suggests that fostering engagement through classroom-based musical activities requires risk-taking, and necessitates support from both peers and facilitators. Further, where this support is lacking, students are likely to either avoid musical participation, or not fully involve themselves in musical processes. As a result, they suggest music programs need to occur on students' terms, and may need to be delivered outside of classrooms. These claims support findings that attributes of musical instruction or classroom-based programs— such as a focus on education and skill acquisition, didactic delivery, and a lack of common or cohesive purpose—often misalign with the elements of participation necessary to promote the sought-after positive outcomes (Crooke & McFerran, 2014). Our investigations also corroborate the need for music programs to be tailored to the needs of specific student groups and school communities in order to facilitate positive engagement-related outcomes for students and school communities (Crooke & McFerran, 2015b). In addition, principals have described the importance of incorporating the existing physical and cultural resources that are available in the school as part of the particular design of a tailored program (Crooke & McFerran, 2015a).

The Role of Music Therapy

Theoretical and empirical contributions from the field of music therapy afford deeper understandings of how and why tailoring music programs can enhance school engagement. Contemporary practice models are based on the premise that in order to meet participant needs, programs should draw on participants' pre-existing resources (Rolvsjord, 2010), including the use of preferred musical styles and materials (McFerran, 2010a). Facilitation strategies emphasise the creation of supportive environments in which young people are encouraged to participate in a way that is comfortable for them (McFerran, 2010b). This often involves a collaborative process in which a shared goal or purpose for participation is established in consultation with key players in early stages (Bolger, 2015), and these frequently require ongoing renegotiation across the life of a program (McFerran & Hunt, 2008). These resource-oriented approaches are particularly suitable in school contexts, where participants are not presenting with acute illness (as they would in clinical music therapy contexts) and the focus of programs is to promote healthy interactions with, and outcomes from, musical activity, rather than to address individual's problems. Empowering facilitation approaches aim to maximize the psychosocial potential of musical participation, including the explicit appropriation of music to foster social engagement, connectedness, and belonging, as well as life affirming behaviors (Ruud, 2008).
Research supports the benefits of tailoring programs to the unique context in schools rather than rolling out predetermined models. Music therapy programs have been reported as

effective for promoting increased school engagement in numerous forms, such as increased interaction in school activities (Twyford & Rickson, 2013), interpersonal peer engagement (Kim, et al., 2006), channeling experiences of frustration into creativity and self-mastery (Montello & Coons, 1998), and navigating challenges of difference and reciprocal respect in multicultural student populations (Nöcker-Ribaupierre & Wölfl, 2010). School-based music therapy programs are also reported to be particularly beneficial for fostering engagement for at-risk populations. These include newly arrived refugees students (Baker & Jones, 2006; Cheong-Clinch, 2009), those with social deficits (Gooding, 2011), emotional and behavioural disorders (Sausser & Waller, 2006), and those experiencing loss and grief (McFerran & Teggelove, 2011; McFerran & Crooke, 2016).

While the potential for tailored music programs to achieve greater school engagement seems evident, a comprehensive understanding of the types of engagement that can be facilitated is lacking. Further, some studies suggest that outcomes cannot be assumed. For example, Rickson and Watkins (2003) found a class-based program led to high engagement but also some increase in disruptive behaviors, and links between music and violent behavior also need to be considered in some contexts (McFerran & Wölfl, 2015). In the study reported here, we investigated how and when different types of school engagement were promoted through participation in a range of tailored music programs in diverse school contexts. In doing so, we were conscious that thinking of "music as a stimulus leading to predictable responses in the person" is problematic as it ignores the impact of personal, contextual or situational factors (Ruud, 2008, p. 49) and instead chose to report on these diverse schools as interesting in their own right, rather than suggesting that their diversity affords generalizations about all school contexts. Our aim was not to provide evidence, but to deepen understanding.

Method

Aims and Research Questions

This study explored experiences of participation in tailored music programs across several school sites to answer the primary research question: "How can music be used to promote engagement in four different Australian schools?" To do this, we sought to classify the types of school engagement that staff members' described when reporting on student involvement in the music programs we provided. We then aimed to identify program characteristics that emerged as connected to these types of engagement. As such, data analysis was guided by two sub questions: "What types of engagement are apparent in the data?" and "What program characteristics are connected to different types of engagement?"

The MusicMatters Project

We established the MusicMatters[1] project in Australia with the investigative purpose of exploring the ways in which music programs tailored to meet wellbeing and connectedness goals were perceived to increase school engagement. The program facilitators were all music therapists who are trained in the design of tailored music programs and who adopted a resource-oriented and participatory approach by actively collaborating with school leaders, teachers and students to build flourishing and sustainable music cultures that involved and included all willing participants. Each music therapist spent between one and three days each week working actively in partnership with staff and students in the four schools for the first year, reducing their hours to play a consultative role in the second year. The investigative structure of each program broadly followed a multi-cycle, action research process that involved: getting a feel for the system (Cycle 1); providing examples of how music could be used (Cycle 2); experimenting with programs designed for identified school needs (Cycle 3); and selecting programs to be developed and sustained beyond the end of facilitator involvement (Cycle 4). The approach that informed program development has been refined and integrated with other examples of school based, tailored music programs and is detailed in a text on building flourishing music cultures in schools (Rickson & McFerran, 2014).

Members of each of the school communities collaborated in identifying the focus for programs in their school, and the music therapists conceived novel strategies and activities that directly reflected the needs and interests identified by school leaders, teachers and students. This meant that while delivery of the MusicMatters project followed the aforementioned four-cycle process, program content for each school was tailored both to their unique needs and also utilised distinct music activities. The MusicMatters facilitators particularly focused on how schools could strengthen existing programs by building on existing musical interests and capacities in the schools and integrating music therapy theory and practices as suitable in each context. To promote sustainability of the programs beyond the presence of the music therapists, facilitators worked intensively in schools during the first year and then reduced contact hours in the second (final) year to encourage staff members and students to take increasing responsibility for leading programs, with informed and ongoing support.

Participants

All four schools (see Table 1) were located within Greater Metropolitan Melbourne, yet were diverse in nature. They included: 1) an all-ages special school for children on the Autistic Spectrum; 2) a private Catholic girls secondary school; 3) an Anglo-centric primary school in

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[1] Please note that MusicMatters was used as a program name without intentional reference to the Music Matters program from the UK

peri-urban Melbourne; 4) a culturally-diverse inner-suburban school that included primary and younger secondary school students. Diversity between (and within) the schools meant program participants varied significantly. Expressions of this diversity were reflected in students' musical interests, existing school music programs, the degree of wellbeing coordinator involvement, and available resources.

Table 1.

Participating schools with student, music program, and interview participant details

School	School Type	Age of Students	Number of Students	Music Therapists days in school	Interview Participants
1	Specialist School for Autism	4-18 years	70	2	1 Vice principal 2 Leadership team members 6 Teachers 2 Teachers' Aides 1 Occupational Therapist
2	Catholic Girls Secondary College	12-18 years	244	1.5	1 Principal 2 Music Teachers
3	Government funded Primary School	4-12 years	210	2.5	1 Principal 4 Teachers
4	Government funded P-9 College	4-15 years	171	1	1 Principal 5 Teachers 1 Wellbeing coordinator
			Total interview participants:	26	

Data Collection

School staff members involved in the project were invited to participate in interviews towards the conclusion of the first year. Interviews were guided by a loose set of questions aimed at soliciting descriptions of participants' own program experiences, and anything they had noticed about students participating in musical activities. School engagement was not targeted explicitly in the open-ended interviews, but interviewers actively explored descriptions that seemed related to engagement. The interviews were conducted by the authors and lasted between 15-60 minutes and occurred at times reasonably convenient to school professionals

within the context of a busy school day. As school leaders were the ones who had initially invested in programs, and often had more time available, their interviews were typically longer. Interviews were either transcribed in real-time, or recorded digitally and transcribed later.

Data Analysis

All transcribed statements that described school engagement in connection with MusicMatters programs were identified and extracted for further analysis. Decision-making was guided by a loose conceptualization of school engagement to allow a varied range of descriptions to emerge.

An inductive analysis was then undertaken of all extracted data to answer the first sub-question: "What types of engagement are apparent in the data?" Significant statements were coded using phrases that captured the topic being described, and then different ways of categorizing topics were explored. This process was iterative, taking place in stages over 12 months, which allowed us to work with the data when close to the experience, and then return to our initial analysis and consider it afresh. Ultimately, four types of engagement emerged, and all statements were attributed to one or more of these engagement types.

A second wave of inductive analysis was then undertaken to answer the second sub-question, "What program characteristics are connected to different types of engagement?" This was also an iterative process that went back and forth between data attributed to each of the four types of engagement. Music program characteristics that appeared connected to one type of engagement were then looked for in data attributed to the remaining three types. This enabled us to identify when a program characteristic was particular to one type of engagement. It emerged that all identified characteristics related to four key categories of program "facilitation" that were consistent across all four engagement types. For example, program leadership was connected to all types of engagement, yet particular leadership characteristics, or approaches, uniquely varied between engagement types.

Finally, the main research question: "How can music be used to promote engagement in four different Australian schools?" was answered by exploring how each of the four "types of engagement" related to the "programs characteristics" that underpinned or were connected to them. This allowed us to describe the various ways engagement was promoted through MusicMatters programs.

While both waves of analysis (and subsequent findings) were driven by interview data, the interpretation and observations of the authors were also influential in constructing the reported findings. Each author collected data and was heavily engaged in the project, spending considerable time in schools during facilitation. We believe this gave us unique and important

insight into how and when engagement occurred throughout the project, and placed us in a position to contribute an additional layer of interpretation. This is consistent with a participatory approach to research in which "practical [or] living knowledge" (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 106) is given primacy, and the "experiential grounding in the situation within which the action occurs" is prioritized (Heron & Reason, 1997, p. 281).

While acknowledging these programs were unique, and that descriptions emerged from distinct contexts, these findings may also be helpful for conceptualizing how tailored music programs might be used to promote engagement in other schools, and we hope they will inspire school leaders to incorporate music for this purpose.

Results

Types of Engagement

Descriptions of the MusicMatters programs offered by 26 participants, coupled with our own reflections, revealed four distinct types of engagement. These related to different facets of school life including the classroom, schoolyard, and connections to home and community. Although our ways of categorizing descriptions into particular types of engagement emerged inductively from the data, in retrospect they were also somewhat predictable, since MusicMatters facilitators had agreed to adopt an intentionally systemic and sustainable approach to designing these particular programs. Our construction of types of engagement also emerged as broadly systemic, moving from: an individual's engagement in learning, through to peer engagement, to increased connections with different members of the community, and to community engagement. However, not all types of engagement promoted by facilitators emerged in descriptions from all schools: for example, increased musical engagement (an intended outcome in each school) was not consistently described. This reflects the tailoring of programs to the different resources and interests in each of the schools, since not all school leaders were as interested in music as an art-form as they were in what music afforded in terms of community engagement, or classroom engagement. Our assumption that this would occur via musical engagement was not confirmed in the data provided by staff members reflecting on the programs, which may reflect a difference between their areas of interest and our own, or that the conditions afforded by music are distinct from the effect of music.

Engagement in Learning

In some programs, MusicMatters facilitators worked as consultants to teachers, suggesting musical strategies to supplement classroom practices and achieve learning outcomes. One class in School 4 was learning sonnet writing, and music was used to generate and perform a group sonnet. The style of music was guided by the interests of the class in general, but

particularly reflected the musical preferences of the more difficult-to-engage students. Consequently, the sonnet was rapped and accompanied by a Pacific-flavored guitar style consistent with the Maori heritage of some students. This approach was described by the teacher as effective for engaging many of the students in the learning activity. The same facilitator was also invited to help deliver the content of an existing life-skills curriculum project using musical activities. Teachers described how the songwriting activities provided an effective medium for engaging students in learning goals: "it highlighted what the program was about in a musical way, so that [students] could see that there are actually other ways that you could do this kind of thing, other than just working from a book or you know, me yapping at them" (Teacher, School 4).

In School 3, the facilitator employed a series of in-class songwriting sessions to explore curriculum-relevant themes. For example, a football-themed lyric substitution activity was undertaken for a popular Australian Rules football song that was appropriate for the students' age and the wider school community culture. Students were described as participating dynamically in these activities, expressing enthusiasm and increased interest: "Seeing the children making up their own songs and that that wasn't such a scary process. Seeing the children run with that, they were quite confident to do that" (School 3 teacher).

Year 8 music students in School 2 were undertaking a core curriculum project to explore music listening and musical identity. Collaborating with the school music coordinator, the MusicMatters facilitator developed a 'Mixed-Tape' activity for the project, which evolved into an assessment tool for learning outcomes. One teacher reported this as an engaging way to interact with subject content and assessment, "turning it from something that I suppose was reasonably shallow to something that now had a lot more depth and a lot more understanding for the students."

In School 1 the facilitator used structured class music sessions to address curriculum goals relevant for Autistic students, such as social interaction, instruction following and concept development. Again, teachers reported music as appropriate for engaging students in these learning tasks: "We used music as a tool to introduce social skills. Like to help them learn emotions [...] we help students to be aware of themselves and their feelings and help them to express themselves and their concern to others when they have different feelings as well" (Teacher, School 1).

Peer Engagement

Links between participation in the music programs and increased peer engagement emerged strongly from the data. This included many descriptions of students coming to know and trust one another better through participation in musical activities. These activities were often

driven by the music therapist's presence, with school leaders and wellbeing coordinators taking advantage of having therapeutically trained professionals to work with marginalized groups.

In School 4, the wellbeing coordinator invited the music therapist to co-facilitate a bereavement support group, while in School 2, the music therapist was asked by one of the school leaders to run a term-long therapy group for young women identified as at risk of depression. In both cases, the teachers described students being more connected to one another following participation. Similarly, in School 1, the therapist ran small music therapy groups for children with significant communication and socialization challenges due to Autism. Within this context, staff reported that students began to physically and emotionally express themselves to one another with an authenticity that they found moving: "He always has a smile on his face and he would sometimes shake his hands in happiness and say something and then he will look to the other kids" (Teacher, School 1). This level of awareness of others is particularly powerful for children at the severe end of the Autistic Spectrum.

Other programs that fostered peer engagement emerged more from students' interests and needs, and were often strongly influenced in their design by students' musical interests. These included music sharing programs, as well as body percussion, songwriting, drumming, and dance groups. Student participation in these programs was often voluntary, occurring either at lunchtime or, when the goals of the group were considered to be a priority by school leadership, during carefully negotiated class times. For example, in School 3 a voluntary group of students from different classes and year levels came together during lunchtimes to play music, write songs, and eventually established a radio show that was played on local community radio. For School 4, this was seen in informal drumming groups in the yard at lunchtime where an identified group of older girls were encouraged to take responsibility for leading drumming interactions with younger members. These older girls came from cultures with strong traditions of group music making and drumming (African and Arabic), and this activity allowed them to share their cultural identity. Staff reported that these kinds of activities created a sense of connection between students from different year levels: "High school students devised the body percussion and then they came to the primary school and taught them and became their mentors for the body percussion […] it was great, and the kids still do it, I don't know if it's that they are older and they look up to them, [but] every week they looked forward to it" (Teacher, School 4).

Increased Connection between Different Members of the School Community

One of the more surprising categories to emerge from staff interviews was a sense of engagement between different levels of the hierarchy that exists within school communities

(i.e. students, teachers, and other school staff) and that transcended traditional authority-based relationships. Some described this in terms of surpassing hierarchical boundaries, and others as increased connection between different members or levels of the school community.

In School 1, several teachers described moving beyond expert-led student encounters—where music had been used to motivate behavior—to shared musical experiences in which they heard students' voices, and became co-participants in musical activities. In School 4, 15 year-old boys, for whom discipline from school leaders was a common part of their school experience, taught 6 and 7 year-old students body percussion. Within this encounter the older boys revealed a gentle capacity to support the younger children, and a playfulness that engaged them in learning the musical activities. Not only did this facilitate connection between these students (described above), but teachers reported that it changed perceptions of the older students by the teachers because they were able to adopt alternative roles within the school community: "the grade 2-3 teacher, she had three young guys come in and they were fabulous, they were really good with little kids, whereas they can be quite disruptive in their other classes but they were really good teachers" (Teacher, School 4).

This type of engagement was also described in terms of increased staff connection to a wider student cohort. The Wellbeing Coordinator in School 4 described how the MusicMatters program helped expand her network beyond the students she normally supported, and engage with the needs of a wider range of young people who came to trust her:

> "I'm targeting a bigger audience […] instead of spending an enormous amount of time with a few young people who are going through a tough time, I'm now targeting a bigger group through music that may not feel comfortable approaching me because they keep it to themselves, but if we give them a music therapy group they feel that they can come out and say things."

The opportunity to participate in the MusicMatters program led to more students accessing the benefits of wellbeing services through a model that went beyond traditional needs-based referral system.

Community Engagement

In some schools, programs involved activities with an outward-facing focus. For School 3 this was driven by the school's existing community connections, and the desire from school leadership to build further on these, while in School 4, such activities resulted from students' own requests for public forums for musical expression. However, this type of engagement was not evident in all schools, nor described as frequently as other engagement types. School 2 already had established channels for outwards-facing musical activities that did not require input from the MusicMatters facilitator (i.e. School Music Concerts), while in School 1 such activities were not considered a priority for the students with Autism.

Where schools did invite community engagement, MusicMatters facilitators developed activities adopting an intentionally inclusive ethos. These were designed as an alternative to existing music programs for those students who were already competent, interested and engaged in music. The MusicMatters programs aimed to accommodate the diverse backgrounds and capacities of all students and specifically aimed to build wellbeing and connectedness by focusing on building musical capacity where it was necessary to embed sustainability. One example was a "Talent" show in School 4 that prioritized the engagement of disconnected students. This program developed unique performance pieces where students with mild learning disabilities could express their creativity to the whole school community, including parents, in a way that did not lead to further exclusion. Similarly, in School 3, several student groups worked towards recording their own musical content, and created podcasts that were broadcast both throughout the school and local community. As their Principal described, this allowed those with little musical experience to be seen and heard differently by school peers, and experience a positive connection to their wider community: "some of our children had never ever written any music before themselves, and to be able to have their own sound studio, and to transfer the result of that work into a podcast through the local FM radio station, is just a monumental leap for these children."

In other cases community engagement brought the community to the students. In School 3, MusicMatters supported a music educator to bring her structured early-years music program to the school, and contributed to the development of the choir program by accommodating an additional choir facilitator from the local Music Council. Similarly, in School 4, the MusicMatters facilitator brought in community musicians (including percussionists and hip-hop artists) to work with students. This also included a string ensemble that provided opportunities to play with classical violinists during sessions, and members also taught students to set up amplifiers and other sound equipment. This technical encounter developed into a mentoring role that was actively supported by the School Principal and resulted in ongoing engagement with school assembly, as well as the production of the Talent show. A teacher from School 1 described another form of community engagement in which the MusicMatters facilitator prepared a student for engaging with members of an external mainstream school community: "One student has difficulty with self regulation, she [the MusicMatters facilitator] came in and introduced a fantastic inside voice song for him and he would be willing to slowly regulate and reduce his voice volume […] He is integrated two days [into a mainstream school] and he can apply this skill to this setting as well. The other teacher has realized he can use his inside voice there, too."

Program Characteristics that Connected to Types of Engagement

Our analysis identified that each type of school engagement described above was underpinned by or connected to particular music program characteristics. Further, it emerged that these characteristics were consistently grouped according to four elements of program facilitation: leadership approach, expectation of students, degree of student engagement, and structure. These elements have been used to organize the following discussion.

However, it is important to note that it was the characteristics within a program that linked to certain types of engagement, not necessarily the programs themselves. This is because characteristics were not always exclusive to a certain musical activity or program, and because programs sometimes addressed multiple types of engagement. For example, some programs began with one intention (i.e. engagement in learning) and then grew to another (i.e. increased connection between different members of the school community); and others addressed two types of engagement simultaneously (i.e. peer and community engagement). Nevertheless, the characteristics identified here serve to highlight ideas that readers might wish to consider when tailoring music programs to foster engagement.

Program Characteristics Related to 'Engagement in Learning'

Leadership approach
Engagement in learning was often described in relation to programs that occurred in classrooms and involved high levels of input and leadership from classroom teachers. MusicMatters facilitators typically focused on developing teachers' skills so musical activities could be used in subsequent classes. This aimed towards sustainability, by building teachers' understandings of how a process worked so it could be applied again. Emphasizing the teacher's role in leading these activities promoted the possibility for further opportunities for engaged learning that could occur beyond the duration of the initial program.

Expectation of students
In these programs, all students were expected to engage as active participants in activities. As one teacher in School 4 described: "I think with the music, everyone's involved, everyone's engaged, everyone's motivated to do some work to have some have some input in this work." Degree of student engagement. Despite this expectation of universal involvement, the nature of student engagement varied across a continuum from active to passive in each class, often in relation to the particular musical activity, and/or a student's typical level of class engagement. One teacher in School 4 noted that for some students even marginal engagement had significant implications: "[one girl] was really isolated, but I noticed […] she became involved, and actually she took a part in the acting video. So that was, in my opinion, that was a good success itself."

Structure
While MusicMatters facilitators considered these classroom-based programs to be highly structured compared to other programs, teachers often found them chaotic. Sessions could be loud and active, with the volume of participation alone signifying departure from the usual tone of the classroom. Other aspects such as group work, brainstorming, and experimentation added additional layers of novelty. This was sometimes challenging for teachers: "Because it's so open, and you're running with the children's ideas, and there are 25 of them there and they are all shouting ideas, I felt sometimes I really needed to bring the class down" (Teacher, School 3).

Program Characteristics Related to 'Peer Engagement'
Leadership approach
Students often took leadership responsibilities in the groups where peer engagement was a focus, with support from MusicMatters facilitators. Alternately, students nominated particular music skills they wanted, and facilitators sourced external service providers to provide them (such as choir, hip-hop, or percussion group facilitators). Importantly, teachers led none of these programs: "[it's] led by the students. Sometimes [the MusicMatters facilitator] will come in with an idea and then she will change because the students suggest something else" (Teacher, School 3).

Expectation of students
Although school staff might have initially nominated them, student participation in these programs was predominantly voluntary and students could cease participation if they lost interest. Further, the focus of these programs sometimes changed or evolved based on student feedback. Therefore descriptions of engagement focused less on expectations of students being active (or passive), and more on how much and in what ways students contributed to the process.

Degree of student engagement
These characteristics of student autonomy and leadership meant the degree of student engagement was self-determined. This was perceived as crucial for peer engagement: "When they're doing music with [the facilitator], it's more about the sharing and being together. A child can come and intervene on another piece of equipment or song and then move away as the child feels they need to…they come in and out at will" (Teacher, School 1).

Structure
The structure of these groups was largely emergent and responsive to the presenting needs of group members. While leaders would guide a group, details were most often negotiated on a daily basis. This less-structured, more self-determined form of participation was described by

a teacher in School 3 as being particularly effective for fostering peer connection among less musically inclined students: "I've also been in [the recording studio] Thursday afternoons with a small group of boys doing some looping and sequencing songs and they're not really musical kids, they're the ones who don't do choir, so they've enjoyed being involved and feeling like a band."

Program Characteristics Connected to 'Increased Connection between Different Members of the School Community'

Leadership approach
Some programs crossed the boundaries between structured curricular activities and the more emergent, creatively driven ones. These often created a sense of connection between staff, students and MusicMatters facilitators by engaging them in activities that required each to take some level of responsibility: "[The facilitator] was letting the children decide the song and [then] putting background to it" (Teacher, School 3).

Expectation of students
While students were not required to engage in these programs, those that did were expected to be active in negotiating their participation, which in turn sometimes facilitated conscious self-evaluation. Staff, who had not necessarily had opportunities to experience students expressing these parts of themselves, noted this often led to mature engagement: "For them to actually evaluate what they listen to and what that music actually does for them I think that was a really great insight for them" (Teacher, School 2).

Degree of student engagement
Since engagement was usually negotiated between different school members, the degree of student engagement in these programs was mutually determined by those involved. This led to levels of engagement that varied according to the program, activity, and/or participants. Structure. These programs often had some form of structure that facilitated shared engagement between members. However, rather than being determined by experts, this was mutually determined by all involved:

> We had a discussion about that as a group and how some children were ruining it for the others, and they actually responded quite well as a group to that kind of thing...At first they saw we're in this open space and there's music and we can be silly, they now realize that you can do all of those things but you've got to maintain some sensible behavior at the same time (Teacher, School 3).

Program Characteristics Related to 'Community Engagement'

Leadership approach

Community engagement was linked to programs involving public-facing productions, or community members visiting schools. Because of this intersection with the wider community, it was important that schools leaders were involved in decisions about these programs, and that music therapists took responsibility for incorporating leaders' aspirations. While such community engagement does not necessarily require a music therapist, having someone with recognized music production capabilities and experience collaborating with musicians was helpful. Further, when led by MusicMatters facilitators, these programs actively sought to include disengaged students, which sometimes contrasted with usual community-facing school performances or collaborations that privileged high-performing students.

Expectation of students

While music-based community interaction (particularly performance) frequently highlighted the most "talented" students, MusicMatters programs engaged those most eager to participate. Therefore, rather than being musically skilled, students were expected to be dedicated and willing to commit their time and effort: "I thought they were a bit stuck doing the same thing, but then they worked towards a performance and it gained a bit of momentum" (Teacher, School 4). Subsequently, students of different abilities were included which meant the nature of the performances or participation changed. In one performance (School 4), some audience members were not aware of this inclusive focus and were critical of the experience because it did not achieve the same standards as performances of the most talented students. We learned that such programs require layers of preparation, not just for the event, but also for audiences. Degree of student engagement. The degree of engagement varied between the different roles taken by students. Some took organizational roles, some performed, while others hosted events. However, all took on a sense of ownership, and there was a distinct sense of inclusion among members.

Structure

For many school leaders, student community engagement embodied a public presentation of school image. Therefore these programs respectfully maintained a notable level of structure in order to cultivate this image. Furthermore, visiting musicians often delivered programs or workshops using predetermined models. However, it was when a certain amount of freedom was afforded within these structures that students were observed to engage in a way that demonstrated the collaboration, inclusivity and creativity described above.

However, the often inclusive and expressive nature of these programs meant the level of structure usually involved in school-based community interaction was not always upheld. In School 4, one performance engaged the audience of students in singing and dancing, which led to people standing up from their seats and calling out in response to the performers. School leadership had not been adequately prepared for this enthusiastic response, and

implemented disciplinary strategies that were contrary to the facilitators' intentions – again highlighting the need to prepare audiences for such interactions.

Table 2

Types and Characteristics of Engagement in the MusicMatters Programs

Program Characteristics	Types of Engagement			
	Engagement in Learning	Peer Engagement	Increased connection between different members of the school community	Community Engagement
Leadership Approach	Teacher led with music therapist as consultant	Student led	Shared responsibility	Music therapists with guidance from school leaders
Expectation of Students	Active participation	Individualized contribution	Negotiation of own engagement	Committed
Degree of Student Engagement	On continuum from Passive to Active	Self-determined	Mutually determined	Inclusive
Structure	Tightly structured, with allowance for chaotic activities/ processes	Emergent	Fluid, mutually determined	Freedom within negotiated boundaries

Discussion

Our analysis of descriptions offered by adult participants in this study has helped to identify both the types of engagement that tailored music programs have the potential to foster, and program characteristics that seem to underpin them. Interestingly, the types of engagement identified here touched on many of the domains of school engagement previously described in the literature. For example, participant descriptions of *engagement in learning*, which include enthusiasm, commitment and self-efficacy when engaging in learning tasks, are largely consistent with the more traditional conceptualizations of school engagement, such as: "student's psychological investment in and effort directed toward learning" (Newmann, 1992, p. 12). Likewise, the authentic mutual expression and increased connection described in *peer engagement* fits with more contemporary notions of school engagement which advocate the importance of connectedness and relationships between peers (Libbey, 2004). Recognition that some music programs nurtured relationships between students and staff, and between

students from different year levels – described in the *increased connection between different members of the school community* category – also link with calls for increased engagement between diverse people within the school community (Marcus & Sanders-Reio, 2001). Since schools are traditionally hierarchical by nature, it is not surprising that this kind of engagement was less frequently described, which perhaps makes it more remarkable. Finally, participant descriptions informing the *community engagement* category describe connections to the wider community emphasized in more recent community building literature (Lawson & Lawson, 2013).

While the exploratory nature of this study precludes making definitive links between the engagement reported here and the full range of downstream effects stated in the literature (such as academic achievement, transition to work, and protection against risk behaviours and mental health disorders), the ability for musical participation to promote school engagement as identified in these four categories provides a new way of understanding how such engagement can be framed. It is interesting that the potential for programs to engage students was observed across four diverse school settings, and with students that varied notably across spectrums of age, culture, ability, and prior levels of engagement in their school community. To our knowledge, this is the first study to examine this potential, and presents an important first step in enabling schools to capitalize upon it.

The importance of the reported findings is further demonstrated by the identification of program characteristics that underpin different types of school engagement. Discussion of what is specifically required to foster engagement has been largely missing in the literature and provides valuable insight into the particular ways musical participation can be employed in schools to achieve engagement outcomes. For example, the finding that different characteristics could be categorized under the headings of *leadership approach*, *expectations of students*, *degree of engagement*, and *structure*, provides a useful overview of program elements that need to be considered by facilitators when tailoring programs to promote engagement. Yet, the observation that variation within these four elements can lead to different engagement outcomes also illuminates the need to recognize the nuances within musical participation, and resist one-size-fits-all approaches to program delivery. Therefore, these findings provide a model that is usable, but which also recognizes and values the "impact of personal, contextual or situational factors" (Ruud, 2008, p. 49).

Importantly, our analysis has also highlighted the unique contribution that music can make in schools, partly by noticing where this kind of engagement made people uncomfortable and surprised. Across all settings, teachers reported at times feeling a sense of chaos or disorder in some music programs that was uncharacteristic of standard classroom activities. Teachers described discomfort or a desire to step in and re-establish order at these moments. The

facilitators managed this degree of discomfort by drawing on their training as therapists and this additional layer of interpersonal encounter is important to note for school leaders and facilitators alike. While it is critical to maintain safety and organization in classroom settings, the music projects in this study indicate that some space for creativity and spontaneity in music participation was useful in promoting the engagement outcomes described above. It is important to balance necessary school structures and this need for strategic flexibility in music programs in schools. This requires skill on the part of facilitators, and, critically, willingness and trust on the part of school teachers and leaders. This reflects findings from music projects with other types of community, where the buy-in of key participants has been identified as essential to effective collaboration and positive outcomes (Bolger, 2015) and lack of it has led to failed sustainability of the program (Murphy, Rickard, Gill & Grimmett, 2011).

The role of teachers as engaged advocates and participants cannot be understated. In music projects from this study, the level of teacher involvement and interest and the subsequent engagement of students in music activities were clearly related. In classrooms where teachers modeled enthusiasm and interest in music participation, this was commonly reflected in the level and nature of student engagement. The reverse was also observed. This is in keeping with Hattie's (2012) meta-analysis that identifies the teacher-student relationship as a critical mechanism for student achievement. While we cannot conclusively report a causal link from teacher and student engagement in music participation from this study, this is an area worthy of further research.

One of the more touching outcomes from our involvement in this project was the ways that carefully tailored music programs could foster new forms of relationships between different members of the school community. From school leaders seeing troubled students differently, to peers being more inclusive, to teachers discovering new talents in students they had known for some time, these moments of connection were often moving, highlighting the fact that music particularly affords emotional and interpersonal encounters because of its very nature. The following quotes capture something of the sense of discovery that was often shared by many of the contributors to our project and seems a fitting way to conclude.

> "Probably the thing that I've noticed is that I've been able to see some of the kids in a different light because you don't go to one of the music lessons, but you go to this one and are part of it, so we get to see a side of some of the children that you don't see in the classroom." (School 3 teacher)

> "I underestimated the talents of the students and what they could do." (School 4 teacher)

"I'm always known as a very strict person in the classroom, and I don't smile too much, I don't laugh too much, I shouldn't say that no, but that's my personality. But after that, when I stood there, singing with them, laughing, smiling, it was a beautiful environment, I think, that was good." (School 4 teacher)

"We also have to be conscious that we had some other way (to support them) because we're opening that door. If we're not comfortable to respond to them, then how do we care for them?" (School 2 teacher)

"What I did see, and the growth that I'm most proud of, is the way that staff talk to, and interact with children is far different for me right across my sub-school. They are starting to gain that balance between the external controls and fostering relationships and exploration and I didn't think it was there all along." (School 1 Leadership Team)

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