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## An Examination of Music Education Majors' Perceptions of Lesson Planning

The purpose of this study was to examine music education majors' perceptions of lesson planning in the university curricula. Specifically, the author was interested in which classes the respondents were taught to construct and use lesson plans, their perceptions about the importance of lesson planning, and how prepared they felt to use lesson plans. Using music education professors as gatekeepers, the author distributed an online questionnaire to junior and senior music education students in a Midwest region of the United States. One hundred and seven participants responded to the online survey. Nearly all the respondents (97.2%) indicated that they planned to use lesson planning during their first year of teaching. The most frequently chosen reason to plan was to prepare for ensemble rehearsals. Respondents also indicated that they were taught and used lesson planning more in music education than music method or general education courses. Implications for music teacher educators and future directions for lesson planning design are discussed.

*Keywords: lesson planning, music teacher preparation, preservice teaching, rehearsal preparation*

### Introduction

Lesson planning can be summarized as a logical development of instructional requirements, materials, objectives, and activities that are used to assess teaching and learning (Ferrell, 1992; Panasuk & Todd, 2005; Skowron, 2001). Nevertheless, the manner in which lesson plans are defined and constructed can often be unclear (Hill, Yinger, & Robins, 1983; Jorgensen, 2002). Preservice teachers often write more scripted plans than experienced teachers; however, they seem to find planning to be unnecessary (Brittin, 2005; Schmidt, 2005). In contrast, experienced teachers prefer to plan mentally and include more sequential tasks in their plans than preservice teachers (Clark & Peterson, 1984; Goolsby, 1999).

Although educators sometimes disagree about how to use lessons plans, most inservice teachers do agree that some type of planning is necessary (Bauer & Berg, 2001; Fredrickson, Geringer, & Pope, 2013; Teachout, 1997; Tsui, 2009). Other researchers have found that preservice teachers see the process as a chore that can obstruct the teaching process (Harwood & Wiggins, 2001; Schmidt, 2005). Despite this evidence, many pedagogical textbooks include sections on lesson planning, including components of an effective plan, templates for classroom use, and desired length of lesson plans (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1994; Colwell & Hewitt, 2011; Kearns, 2011; Savage, 2014).

There are differences between how preservice and experienced teachers use lesson plans. Veteran teachers often plan mentally or without traditional written plans, frequently in verbal discussion with colleagues (Clark & Peterson, 1984). In general education settings, researchers have found that preservice teachers' understanding of how to write lesson plans is still in the formative stages of development because their plans seem to be unclear and teacher-centered (Butler, 2001; Leinhardt, 1989). Likewise, there is evidence that novices are less effective when attempting to fix issues that were not specifically found in their scripted plans (Borko, Livingston, & Shavelson, 1990).

Relatedly, in music education there are differences in how beginner and expert teachers plan. Goolsby (1999) had 10 expert and 10 novice teachers prepare an identical score for rehearsal. After analyzing 216 rehearsals, he found that novice teachers spend more time in rehearsals playing repertoire from the beginning to the end, whereas experts had more sequenced rehearsals. Contrary to novices' lesson plans, expert teachers were more specific and used fewer words when writing out lesson plans (Brittin, 2005; Goolsby, 1999). Similarly, some researchers found that expert teachers do not use a written plan when preparing for class (Borko, Livingston, & Shavelson, 1990; Clark & Peterson, 1984; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Perhaps due to expert teachers not using written plans, some undergraduate students desire to not use lesson plans (Schmidt, 2005). Nevertheless, quality lesson planning appears to be related to positive instructional quality (Dorovolomo, Phan, & Maebuta, 2010; Lane, 2010).

It can be difficult for novice teachers to separate planning from teaching (Jorgensen, 2002). Among preservice teachers, learning how to use lesson plans is often embedded within studies of pedagogical content knowledge and field experience (Clift & Brady, 2005; DeLorenzo, 1990; Millican, 2016). However, planning during field experience can lead to dissonance between what students learn in school and how inservice teachers instruct their classes (Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1981). This could be because expert teachers generally write more concise lesson

plans or plan mentally, whereas novice teachers write with more words, explain more concepts, and plan with a target, but not a specific process (Brittin, 2005). Few preservice teachers have the opportunity to observe their instructor write lesson plans (Schmidt, 2005), which could lead to students' misunderstanding of the lesson planning process.

Although lesson planning among experienced teachers occurs in various forms, written lesson plans are the dominant approach used by music teacher educators when instructing how to create a lesson plan during preservice education courses (Clark & Peterson, 1984; Mutton, Hagger, & Bum, 2011; Panasuk & Todd, 2005; Shorner-Johnson & Moret, 2015; Skowron, 2001). Schmidt (2005) noticed a divide between conceptual understanding and practice in lesson planning. Her findings indicated that 10 preservice string teachers rarely engaged in written lesson planning and preferred to teach "on the fly" (p. 11), leading her to conclude that "early and extensive supervised field experiences may be even more crucial than the profession assumes them to be" (p. 19). It is still unclear to what degree learning about and incorporating written lesson plans may improve the teaching process for preservice music teachers.

Extant research findings indicate that there may be differences between elementary and secondary music planning structures (Scott, 2011; Shorner-Johnson, 2015b; Standerfer, 2011). For example, Shorner-Johnson and Moret (2015) interviewed four music teacher educators who claimed that secondary level rehearsal planning was problem/solution focused and suggested that a scripted sequential plan is not crucial. Practitioners in music have agreed that lesson plans should focus on objectives and assessments (de Frece, 2010; Kearns, 2011; Scott, 2011). Music teacher educators who instruct general music classes may require a template that helps make teaching more meaningful and documents teacher thought processes (Shorner-Johnson, 2015b). Due to the differences in approaches, there is still a need to investigate lesson planning in music education courses.

Music education practitioners have written articles on how to construct lesson plans at both the elementary and secondary levels (Boshkoff, 1991; Branscome, 2014; Scott, 2011; Wacker, 2016). However, far less is known about how lesson plans are taught and used by undergraduate music education majors in teacher preparation programs. Nevertheless, some researchers have explored the effects of lesson plan training on novices' pacing and sequencing during instruction (Lane, 2010; Maclin, 1993).

Lane (2010) had 22 participants divided into two groups, which taught three lessons each. Group A participants were allowed to plan for the first lesson using any method or technique they preferred. After the first lesson, they were given a

class on how to write a lesson plan. They then taught two more lessons using the method in which they were taught. Similarly, Group B taught three lessons. In the first two, participants were allowed to use whatever lesson planning method they prefer. After the second lesson they went through an identical lesson planning course as Group A and taught the third lesson with the prescribed lesson method. The results indicated that each lesson tended to improve on pacing and the participants provided more opportunity for student performance. The lesson planning training, however, did seem to accelerate the process.

Another aspect researchers have explored is how undergraduate music majors write lesson plans (Lane & Talbert, 2015; Schmidt, 2005). In Lane and Talbert's (2015) study, 18 undergraduate instrumental music education majors taught a series of 5-minute lessons. The authors compared the written lesson plans with activities during teaching and calculated episodes for teaching and student performance as well as pacing. Even though written plans tended to be vague, participants relied on their plans during their lesson. The dependence on the lesson plan does contradict previous investigations (Lane, 2010).

In a related study, Brittin (2005) found that novices' and experts' use of lesson planning differed. In her study, 58 preservice and experienced teachers wrote lesson plans for a hypothetical rehearsal. The participants used one page from a method book. Lesson were analyzed by word count, detail, and frequency of strategies used. On average, experienced teachers used less words but specified the same number of strategies and level of detail as undergraduate participants.

When early music teachers reflected on their preservice preparation, they generally feel that undergraduate music education programs are preparing them to use plans during the teaching career. Legette (2013) surveyed 101 early career music teachers on their perceptions of their preparation to be in the music classroom, what aspect of their work they find challenging and rewarding, and what aspects of their preservice training they feel was most important. Most participants indicated that they would like more hands-on training and discussion on pedagogy but the preparation programs were "just about right" on instruction of lesson planning (p. 14). These findings remained consistent in a related study on early career teacher preparation (Legette & McCord, 2014). These studies give attention to how lesson planning is used and the perception of how well programs instruct these concepts. Still, more attention to the perception of preservice teachers use and instruction of planning while in their undergraduate program is warranted.

Although researchers have recently investigated how music teacher educators instruct lesson planning in music education, elementary music, and ensemble courses (Shorner-Johnson, 2015a, 2015b; Shorner-Johnson & Moret, 2015), few

investigators have explored music majors' perceptions of lesson planning processes during their time spent in university curricula. Due to the lack of research concerning the training and implementation of lesson planning in multiple courses, an investigation into the current perceptions of music education majors would be beneficial for teacher educators to better understand preservice teachers' lesson planning thoughts and knowledge.

The purpose of this study was to examine music education majors' perceptions of lesson planning in the university curricula. I surveyed respondents regarding: (a) in which classes they were taught to construct lesson plans; (b) in which classes they were asked to use lesson plans; (c) their perceptions about the importance of lesson planning; and (d) how prepared they felt to use lesson plans while student teaching, and during their first year of teaching.

## Method

### *Respondents*

Students enrolled in colleges and universities accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) were chosen as participants because of the institutions' similarities in teaching standards, learning goals, and curricula. Participants were limited to Missouri and its contiguous states (Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Tennessee). Using the NASM online database (<https://nasm.arts-accredit.org/directory-lists/accredited-institutions>), I searched for degree-granting accredited institutions that were: (a) listed as public or private and (b) located in each of the aforementioned nine states (NASM, 2015). Only institutions offering undergraduate degrees in music education were included ( $N = 126$ ). Search results indicated the name of the institution, contact information for the school/department chair, and the internet address for each accredited school of music. Music education coordinators' email addresses were retrieved from either the institution's website or via email from the school/department of music chair.

The target population was junior- and senior-level music education majors in the Midwest region of the United States. This group was chosen because they had completed most of their educational coursework and could represent how lesson plans were taught and used at the bachelor's level. I sent recruitment messages to the music education coordinators via email. Acting as survey "gatekeepers," faculty members forwarded a recruitment message with a hyperlink to the survey to music education majors at their institution. A request was added to the email that the "gatekeepers" respond if they were willing to forward the recruitment letter.

One week later, an additional request went out to participating professors asking them to provide the number of students to whom they forwarded the information. Data collection remained open for three weeks, at which time I sent a follow-up email to the coordinators asking them to send another request to their students indicating that the survey remained open for an additional week.

From the total number of music education coordinators contacted ( $N = 126$ ), 43 (34.1%) responded and agreed to forward the online survey to approximately 465 students. An approximation was needed as several coordinators could only give an estimate of students, not a specific number. A total of 114 complete surveys were returned. Seven respondents were removed due to being outside the desired population, leaving 107 usable surveys out of approximately 465, with a response rate of 23.01%. Due to the difficulty of recording the exact number of preservice music teachers participating in the study, this response rate can only be considered an approximation. Respondents included junior ( $n = 29$ , 27.1%) and senior ( $n = 78$ , 72.9%) music education majors from accredited NASM institutions in the Midwest region. Female ( $n = 63$ , 58.9%) and male ( $n = 44$ , 41.1%) students were represented. Instrumental music education majors, 57.9% ( $n = 62$ ), vocal music education majors, 26.2% ( $n = 28$ ), dual certification 14.9% ( $n = 16$ ) students, and an elementary music education major ( $n = 1$ ; 0.9%) were represented.

### *Materials*

An IRB-approved survey (see Appendix) was created using Qualtrics, an online survey tool. I designed the survey by adopting and incorporating reports of teachers' lesson planning perception and strategies that were found in research studies and pedagogical literature (Branscome, 2014; de Frece, 2010; Kearns, 2011; Shorner-Johnson, 2015a, 2015b; Shorner-Johnson & Moret, 2015). The four-section survey was designed to gather information about music education majors' perceptions of: (a) the classes in which the respondents were taught to construct lesson plans; (b) classes in which respondents were asked to use lesson plans; (c) perceptions about the importance of lesson planning; and (d) how prepared respondents felt using lesson plans. Each section of the survey featured yes/no, multiple choice, Likert-type scale, and/or open-ended response questions. At the start of the survey, respondents provided demographic information (e.g., gender, location, year in school, age, major emphasis, and public or private institution). The courses were defined as music education (courses with specific instruction on pedagogy in music education), music method (technique courses designed to instruct preservice teachers about instruments and voice techniques), and general education (courses on general pedagogy techniques, such as education philosophy and reading in the content area).

To help with the validity of the survey, five music education faculty members first reviewed the survey to determine the appropriateness, content, clarity, and approximate length of time to complete the survey. These experts (who were not involved in the administration of the survey) gave feedback that helped to establish the content validity of the survey instrument. Feedback from the professors indicated that I should: (a) add additional demographic information; (b) make answers to questions more general in sections 1 and 2; (c) use different vocabulary for ease of reading in section 3; (d) add a few additional questions in section 3; and (e) clarify perception questions in section 4.

## Results

### *Section One: Lesson Planning in Undergraduate Coursework*

Respondents were asked to identify in which specific general education, music education, and music method courses instructors taught them how to construct a lesson plan. The most selected course in general education was “special education” ( $n = 33$ , 30.8%). “General music K-5” ( $n = 74$ , 69.2%) was the most frequently chosen response in music education courses, and “advanced conducting” ( $n = 36$ , 33.6%) was selected the most for music method courses. Overall, music education courses ( $n = 325$ ) were more often selected by respondents than general education ( $n = 245$ ) or music method ( $n = 207$ ) courses. (See Table 1 for a complete list of courses.)

### *Section Two: Use of Lesson Planning in Undergraduate Coursework*

In the second section, participants were asked in which courses they used lesson plans. In general education courses, “elementary methods field experience” ( $n = 39$ , 36.4%) was selected the most often. “General music K-5” ( $n = 71$ , 66.4%) was the most frequently chosen answer for courses in music education. Similar to section one, “advanced conducting” ( $n = 33$ , 30.8%) was selected most often for music method courses (see Table 2 for complete list of responses).

When comparing respondents’ selections for the first three questions in each section, the frequency of selection was similar. General education courses were selected less, with “special education” ( $n = 33$ ) being selected the most often in the first section, and “elementary field experience” ( $n = 39$ ) being selected more often in the second section. For the next two questions in both sections 1 (taught) and 2 (used), “general music K-5” was selected the most frequently ( $n = 74$  and  $n = 71$ , respectively), and “advanced conducting” was chosen the most often ( $n = 36$  and  $n = 33$ , respectively). Similar to section 1, which asked in which classes

**Table 1**  
*Responses to Courses in Which General Education, Music Education, and Music Methods Respondents Were Taught How to Construct Lesson Plans*

	<i>n</i>	%	Music Education	<i>n</i>	%	Music Methods	<i>n</i>	%
General Education	33	30.8%	General Music K-5	74	69.2%	Advanced Conducting	36	33.6%
Middle School/High School Methods	31	29.0%	Secondary Teaching Music	57	53.3%	I did not use lesson plans	27	25.2%
Middle School/High School Field Experience	30	28.0%	Instrumental Material and Methods	53	49.5%	Basic Conducting	25	23.4%
Elementary Field Experience	29	27.1%	Introduction to Music Education	52	48.6%	Rehearsal Clinic	24	22.4%
Elementary Methods	29	27.1%	General Music 6-12	42	39.3%	Woodwinds Methods	21	19.6%
I was not taught	25	23.4%	Vocal Material and Methods	37	34.6%	Brass Methods	19	17.8%
Foundation of Education	24	22.4%	I did not use lesson plans	5	46.7%	Percussion Methods	13	12.1%
Reading and Writing in the Content Area	22	20.6%	Other	5	4.7%	String Methods	12	11.2%
Education Psychology	16	15.0%			String Technique	10	9.3%	
Other	4	3.7%			Marching Band Techniques	9	8.4%	
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages	2	1.9%			Other	7	6.5%	
					Jazz Methods	4	3.7%	
	Total	245		325			207	

*Note.* Participants were able to select multiple answers.



were students taught how to construct lesson plans, more respondents indicated that they used lesson plans in music education courses than general education or music method courses (see Table 2).

Question 4 asked, “To what extent do your instructors address specific lesson planning in your courses?” Twenty answers were provided and participants were asked to choose if they used the procedure “not at all,” “very little,” “somewhat,” or “a lot.” Seventy respondents selected “a lot” (66.0%) for “Evaluation/assessments,” followed by “objectives” ( $n = 66$ , 62.9%), “rehearsal techniques” ( $n = 60$ , 56.6%), “score study” ( $n = 59$ , 55.7%), and “lesson sequencing/procedures” ( $n = 59$ , 55.7%).

For question 5, respondents were asked “In these courses, were you asked to write using a specific style/template?” Ninety-four (87.6%) students responded to this question with “yes,” whereas 13 (12.5%) answered “no.” The respondents who answered “yes” were then asked this follow-up question: “To what extent were you asked to write in the following specific style/template?” Ten options were given. The most commonly-used template was “detailed lesson plans,” with 63 respondents indicating that they used these “a lot” (67.0%). The next most used template was “course specific lesson plans” with the most students selecting “a lot” ( $n = 35$ , 37.2%).

When asked, “To what extent were you taught the following rehearsal strategies in your education courses?,” respondents indicated that “modeling” was the most frequently used strategy (“a lot,”  $n = 75$ , 70.6%). The second most selected strategy was “appropriate feedback” ( $n = 68$ , 64.2%). The least used strategy reported was “use of technology” ( $n = 30$ , 28.6%).

### *Section Three: Beliefs About the Importance of Lesson Planning*

Participants were asked “Please rank the following reasons to use lesson plans from most important to least important” and were given eight choices. Respondents positioned all eight responses from most important (1) to least important (8) by using their mouse to drag the choices into the boxes provided. The highest ranked response was “prepare for ensemble rehearsal” ( $n = 45$ , 43.3%). This was followed by “document mental planning process” ( $n = 25$ , 24.0%), “making teaching more purposeful” ( $n = 13$ , 12.5%), “anticipate problems” ( $n = 8$ , 7.7%), and “develop transitional flow” ( $n = 4$ , 3.8%). “Organize necessary resources,” “develop instructional pacing,” and “used during teaching as a paper copy” were selected three times each (2.9%).

Question 2 asked, “When creating lesson plans, how many verbal statements do you believe should be written out?” Fifty-two responded that “some” should

**Table 2**  
*Responses to Courses in Which General Education, Music Education, and Music Methods Respondents Used Lesson Plans*

General Education	n	%	Music Education	n	%	Music Methods	n	%
Elementary Field Experience	39	36.4%	General Music K-5	71	66.4%	Advanced Conducting	33	30.8%
Middle School/High School Field Experience	37	34.6%	Secondary Teaching Music	53	49.5%	I did not use lesson plans	26	24.3%
I did not use lesson plans	25	23.4%	Instrumental Material and Methods	50	46.7%	Rehearsal Clinic	22	20.6%
Elementary Methods	21	19.6%	Introduction to Music Education	45	42.1%	Basic Conducting	20	18.7%
Special Education Methods	20	18.7%	General Music 6-12	43	40.2%	Woodwinds Methods	20	18.7%
Foundation of Education	20	18.7%	Vocal Material and Methods	37	34.6%	Brass Methods	17	15.9%
Middle School/High School Methods	19	17.8%	I did not use lesson plans	7	6.5%	Strings Methods	15	14.0%
Reading and Writing in the Content Area	16	15.0%	Other	5	4.7%	String Techniques	13	12.1%
Education Psychology	9	8.4%			Percussion Methods	8	7.5%	
Other	6	5.6%			Other	6	5.6%	
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages	2	1.9%			Marching Band Techniques	4	3.7%	
					Jazz Methods	4	3.7%	
	Total	214		311			188	

Note. Participants were able to select multiple answers.

be written out (48.6%), whereas 29 (27.1%) selected “a few,” 17 (15.9%) chose “most,” five (4.7%) selected “all,” and four (3.7%) chose “none.” Question 3 asked, “When creating lesson plans, how many procedural steps do you believe should be written out?” The most chosen response was “most” ( $n = 51$ , 47.7%). Finally, participants were asked, “On average, how many hours per week should you spend working on lesson plans?” Respondents’ answers ranged from 0 to 20 hours, with an average of 6.76 hours ( $SD = 4.25$ ) spent in lesson planning per week.

#### *Section Four: How Prepared Do You Feel Using Lesson Plans?*

For the first statement, “I am prepared to use lesson plans when I teach in public school,” forty-eight respondents (44.6%) “strongly agreed,” followed closely by “agree” ( $n = 46$ , 43.0%). “Disagree” ( $n = 10$ , 9.3%) was third, and fourth was “strongly disagree” ( $n = 3$ , 2.8%). In response to the second statement, “The use of lesson plans is important for secondary courses,” 55 respondents (51.4%) marked “strongly agree,” 45 (42.0%) marked “agree,” six (5.6%) marked “disagree,” and one respondent (0.9%) marked “strongly disagree.” Seventy-five respondents (70%) marked “strongly agree” to the third statement, “The use of lesson plans is important for elementary courses,” while 31 (29%) marked “agree,” and one (0.9%) marked “disagree.”

When asked, “How often do you believe secondary music teachers should create lesson plans for rehearsal?” (Question 4), the majority of respondents chose “weekly” ( $n = 48$ , 45.3%). Followed, in order, by “daily” ( $n = 35$ , 33%) and “unit” ( $n = 23$ , 21.7%). When responding to question 5, “How often do you believe elementary teachers should create lesson plans?” participants ranked “daily” as the most selected ( $n = 58$ , 54.2%). A distant second was “weekly” ( $n = 34$ , 31.8%), followed “by unit” ( $n = 15$ , 14.0%).

For Question 6, “Which of the following is the most important aspect of rehearsal preparation for middle school/high school music teaching?”, most participants selected a combination of score study and lesson planning as the most important ( $n = 85$ , 79.4%). Although selected less often than a “combination of both,” “score study” did have more responses than “lesson planning” ( $n = 18$ , 16.8%;  $n = 4$ , 3.7%, respectively). When asked, “Do you plan on using written lesson plans during your student teaching semester?” (Question 7), 104 (97.2%) selected “yes” and three (2.8%) selected “no.”

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine music education majors' perceptions of lesson planning in the university curricula. Although much has been reported about teacher educators' perceptions of lesson planning recently—primarily through interviews and surveys (Shorner-Johnson & Moret, 2015)—there is little information about preservice teachers' perceptions. Through the administration of this survey, I gathered respondents' thoughts about their lesson planning instruction during their undergraduate coursework and their perceptions about the use of lesson planning at the elementary and secondary levels.

### *Limitations and Generalizability*

One limitation of this study was how the survey was distributed to potential respondents (i.e., music education coordinators who chose to forward the survey to their students). This could help explain the low response rate (23.01%). Still, I attempted to maximize the responses by (a) designing the survey to be completed in 10 minutes or less, (b) reminding faculty members to forward the survey link to their students, and (c) leaving the survey open for an additional week. While the “gatekeepers” were asked to respond with the number of music education students to whom they forwarded the survey request, some coordinators responded with only approximate numbers. Another limitation is that juniors were surveyed along with senior music education students. This was done in an attempt to increase the number of responses. Juniors, however, may not have taken some of their required education or method courses and therefore may not have had enough information to fully answer all the questions. Therefore, it was difficult to ascertain the response rate for each school. Since the numbers of respondents in each state was unequal, these findings may not be indicative of this entire Midwest region. Caution is warranted regarding the generalizability of the results from this study.

### *Discussion and Implications*

When I asked the respondents about the purpose of lesson planning (i.e., rank why lesson plans are needed from most important to least), I modeled my questions after those by Shorner-Johnson (2015a, 2015b), who surveyed music teacher educators. The results of the present study indicated that respondents most frequently selected the reason for teachers to use lesson plans was to prepare for ensemble rehearsals. This differs from results found by Shorner-Johnson (2015a), who reported that secondary music teacher educators selected “making teaching more purposeful,” and from respondents' answers in Shorner-Johnson (2015b)

that indicated elementary music teachers should use paper copies for reference during teaching. While “making teaching more purposeful” was marked as the third most selected response in the present study, music education majors selected “using lesson plans as a paper copy” the least. It is interesting that professors and students differ in their perception of why lesson plans are used. Undergraduate music education students’ lack of teaching experience may be the source of this difference. Inservice teachers and music education professors may have different values when planning their courses. Future researchers could interview expert teachers on these aforementioned disparities to see why there are differences in perception of lesson planning.

I also surveyed preservice music teachers about the courses in which professors required the use of lesson plans. Results of this study indicate that respondents were taught about and used lesson planning more frequently in music education courses than in either music method (e.g. brass, woodwind, or voice techniques) or general education courses (e.g. reading in the content area, education philosophy). Respondents were taught lesson planning and used plans most frequently in general music K–5. This may be because elementary teacher educators recommend using paper copies of lesson plans during teaching, whereas secondary teacher educators reported thinking of planning as a way to make teaching more meaningful (Shorner-Johnson & Moret, 2015). Perhaps there is a perception that a template for the planning process in secondary ensemble courses in addition to score study is unnecessary because a preconceived aural image of the music cannot be written down. University music education faculty members might consider being more explicit in their explanations of lesson plans as they relate to ensemble rehearsals so that preservice music teachers have a clearer understanding of why lesson plans are used for rehearsals. Another aspect of planning that would be beneficial for researchers seeking to understand best practices of preparation of secondary ensembles would be webbed planning where a lesson is devolved outward from a main concept.

Fewer respondents reported that instructors of music method courses (i.e. brass or woodwind techniques) taught or asked students to use lesson plans than in music education courses (i.e. music in the secondary schools or elementary music). Of these courses, advanced conducting was selected the most frequently for both learning to lesson plans (30.8%) and requiring written plans (33.6%). This is not surprising as advanced conducting course instructors often require preservice teachers to prepare to conduct or rehearse an ensemble. In contrast, instrumental method courses often focus on fundamentals of the specific instrument, and not necessarily how to teach a lesson.

The respondents in this study indicated that they anticipate using lesson plans during their student teaching internship and first year of teaching. They also believe that elementary music teachers should plan daily, whereas secondary music teachers should plan weekly, with no respondent selecting the option “do not plan.” This appears to contradict previous findings by Schmidt (2005) who suggested that undergraduate music majors perceived lesson planning to be unnecessary. These results could be due to the students in the present study being surveyed about lesson planning, instead of being asked to produce lesson plans within an experimental teaching scenario, as was the case in her study. Future researchers might investigate the use of lesson planning during student teaching placements and the first year of teaching to see if similar results are found in where and how lesson plans are taught in the university curricula.

Consistent with previous investigations (Shorner-Johnson & Moret, 2015), respondents ( $n = 94$ , 87.6%) indicated they were asked to write lesson plans using specific templates in their music education classes. The most frequently selected lesson template used was “detailed lesson planning,” followed by “course specific plans,” and “state specific” plans. Shorner-Johnson and Moret (2015) found that music teacher educators adopted detailed templates from general education courses and used those in their own music courses. This seems contrary to advice from inservice music teachers who have suggested that lesson planning should be more of a process of thinking through the lesson rather than using a specific written template (Branscome, 2014; Thomson, 2005). Teacher educators may teach specific plans, such as detailed planning, out of the convenience of standardized grading, or they may also teach how to use lesson plans that have worked best for them in their own classes.

Respondents indicated that “evaluation and assessments” were the most frequently addressed component of lesson plans, followed by “objectives,” “rehearsal techniques,” “score study,” and “lesson sequencing/procedures.” Shorner-Johnson and Moret (2015) found similar results with “objectives” being selected as the most frequently used component of lesson planning. The focus of lesson planning in undergraduate music courses seems to be on objectives, with an emphasis on the *why* of lesson planning rather than the *how*. Future researchers might compare preservice teachers and teacher educators’ perceptions about what specific lesson planning components both groups use and find important.

## Conclusion

Based on my findings, I propose a few recommendations for teacher educators. The results of this study indicated that junior and senior music education majors perceived that they learned how to lesson plan in music education courses more so than in general education (e.g. education philosophy or education law) or music method courses (e.g. voice or percussion techniques). Because music education specialists often have had more experience teaching public school music classes—as well as teaching undergraduate music education courses—than other instructors who may not have a music education background, these professors might be able to more adequately address concepts specific to secondary and elementary music teaching. Further guidance in teaching how to plan for common method courses could help improve the instruction of lesson planning.

When comparing this investigation with previous lesson planning surveys (Shorner-Johnson, 2015a, 2015b), the results seem similar for many responses (e.g., questions about what specific templates are used, what components of lesson plans are taught, and students' perceptions). These results are encouraging because preservice teachers are indicating that objectives are the most commonly used component of lesson plans, suggesting that plans should be about why the lesson is needed, not necessarily how the procedures will be taught. Many inservice teachers agree that some kind of lesson planning is needed (Bauer & Berg, 2001; Fredrickson, Geringer, & Pope, 2013; Teachout, 1997; Tsui, 2009). With the implementation of state and national educational teacher assessment programs, such as the edTPA, it may be worthwhile for teacher educators to standardize the lesson plans they use to most closely resemble these newly-mandated national and state templates. What inservice teachers learn by using these types of lesson plans and how they choose to implement those strategies warrants future investigation.

Because nearly all respondents said they would use lesson planning during their student teaching internship and first year of teaching (97.2%), I suggest that instructors of undergraduate music education courses (i.e. music teacher pedagogy courses) might consider requiring their students to provide evidence of lesson planning during each of their classes, similar to the recommendation made by Silvey, Springer, and Eubanks (2016) about incorporating evidence of score study in undergraduate conducting and rehearsal technique courses. Although many respondents indicated they will use lesson plans in the future, fewer indicated that lesson planning was taught, or even used, in many of their courses. The contrast between this study and previous studies could be due to this investigation surveying preservice music teachers as opposed to undergraduate music major (Schmidt, 2005). Music teacher educators might need to go further than teaching the procedures of

lesson planning by helping to improve preservice teachers' understanding of why a lesson is being taught. Continued research involving the perception of lesson planning with preservice, inservice, and teacher educators will provide insights that may help music teacher educators better develop novice teachers' skills in the classroom.

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## Appendix – Survey

### An Examination of Music Education Majors’ Perceptions of Lesson Planning

**Purpose of this research project:** To understand music education majors’ beliefs about the use of lesson/rehearsal plans and planning templates in their courses.

**Survey Procedure:** The survey contains questions about your use of lesson plan templates, other forms of curricular planning, and beliefs about lesson/rehearsal planning. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. This survey is voluntary to complete.

**Risks, Benefits, and Compensation:** This study poses minimal risks to participants. The study will benefit an increased understanding of preservice lesson and rehearsal planning. Understandings gained will be used to inform the professional field of practice. You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:** You will not be required to disclose your identity to complete this survey. No identifying information will be collected during this survey. Only the primary researcher (Aaron T. Wacker) will have access to data and statements gained from this survey.

**Investigator:** If you have any questions concerning the research project, you may contact Aaron T. Wacker \_\_\_\_\_. Should you have any questions about your participants’ rights involved in this research you may contact the University of \_\_\_\_\_ Institutional Review Board at \_\_\_\_\_.

If you agree to participate, please click the “next” button to enter the survey.

### DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What is your year in school?

- Junior
- Senior
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your Gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

## Contributions to Music Education

- What is your emphasis?
- Instrumental Music Education
- Vocal Music Education
- Dual Certification
- Elementary/General Music Education

In which state is your institution located?

- Arkansas
- Illinois
- Iowa
- Kansas
- Kentucky
- Missouri
- Nebraska
- Oklahoma
- Tennessee

Is your university Public or Private?

- Public
- Private

### SECTION 1: LESSON PLANNING IN UNDERGRADUATE COURSEWORK

1. In which general education courses were you taught how to construct lesson/rehearsal plans? (Check all that apply.)

- Special Education
- Middle School/High School Field Experience
- Middle School/High School Methods
- Elementary Methods/Field Experience
- Elementary Methods
- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
- Reading and Writing in the Content Area
- Educational Psychology
- Foundation of Education
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- I was not taught how to design lesson/rehearsal plans in general education courses

2. In which music education courses were you taught how to construct lesson/rehearsal plans? (Check all that apply.)

- Introduction to Music Education
- General Music Methods 6–12
- General Music Kindergarten–5
- Middle School/High School Music Teaching Methods
- Instrumental Material and Methods
- Vocal Material and Methods
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- I was not taught how to design lesson/rehearsal plans in music education courses

3. In which music method courses were you taught how to construct lesson/rehearsal plans? (Check all that apply.)

- Basic Conducting
- Advanced Conducting
- Rehearsal Clinic
- Percussion Methods
- Strings Methods
- Guitar Methods
- Woodwinds Methods
- Brass Methods
- String Techniques
- Marching Band Techniques
- Jazz Methods
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- I was not taught how to design lesson/rehearsal plans in music method courses

## SECTION 2: USE OF LESSON PLANNING IN UNDERGRADUATE COURSEWORK

1. In which general education courses were you asked to USE lesson/rehearsal plans? (Check all that apply.)

- Special Education Methods
- Middle School/High School Field Experience
- Middle School/High School methods
- Elementary Methods/field experience
- Elementary methods

## Contributions to Music Education

- Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
- Reading and Writing in the Content Area
- Education Psychology
- Foundation of Education
- I did not use lesson/rehearsal plans in general education courses
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

2. In which music education courses were you asked to use lesson/rehearsal plans?

(Check all that apply.)

- Introduction to Music Education
- General Music Methods 6–12
- General Music Kindergarten–5
- Middle School/High School Teaching Music
- Instrumental Material and Methods
- Vocal Material and Methods
- I did not use lesson plan/rehearsal plans in my music education courses
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

3. In which music method courses were you asked to use lesson/rehearsal plans?

(Check all that apply.)

- Basic Conducting
- Advanced Conducting
- Rehearsal Clinic
- Percussion Methods
- Strings Methods
- Guitar Methods
- Woodwinds Methods
- Brass Methods
- String Techniques
- Marching Band Techniques
- Jazz Methods
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_
- I Did Not Use Lesson/Rehearsal Plans

4. To what extent do your instructors address specific lesson planning in your courses?

	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	A Lot
Objectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unit Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesson Development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Closures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluation/Assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Objective Summary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having Alternative Strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enduring Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Essential Questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Differentiation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Score Study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rehearsal Techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lesson sequencing/procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pacing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipated Problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anticipated Solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Standards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



5. In these courses, were you asked to write using a specific style/template?

No

Yes

If No Is Selected, Then Skip to “Which rehearsal strategies were you...”

5.1. To what extent were you asked to write in the following specific style/template?

	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	A Lot
Detailed Lesson Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Semi-Detailed Lesson Plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Procedural	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activity Based	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bloom’s Taxonomy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding by Design Unit Plan-Backwards Design Process	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
State Specific Lesson Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Course Specific Lesson Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No specific template was used	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. To what extent were you taught the following rehearsal strategies in your education courses?

	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	A Lot
Organization and efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of effective reinforcement techniques	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use of effective questioning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relating content to prior and future learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provides for individual rates of learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reducing teacher talk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improving ensemble performance time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appropriate feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual practice strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Modeling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contextualizing performances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breathing exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scaffolding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No rehearsal strategies given	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### SECTION 3: BELIEFS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF LESSON/REHEARSAL PLANNING

1. Please rank the following reasons to use lesson/rehearsal plans from most important to least important. (Drag and place in order.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Prepare for ensemble rehearsal
- \_\_\_\_\_ Document mental planning process
- \_\_\_\_\_ Making teaching more purposeful
- \_\_\_\_\_ Anticipate problems
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop transitional flow
- \_\_\_\_\_ Organize necessary resources
- \_\_\_\_\_ Develop instructional pacing
- \_\_\_\_\_ Are used during teaching or rehearsal (as a paper copy)

2. When creating lesson/rehearsal plans, how many verbal statements do you believe should be written out?

- All
- Most
- Some
- A few
- None

3. When creating lesson/rehearsal plans, how many procedural steps do you believe should be written out?

- All
- Most
- Some
- A Few
- None

4. On average, how many hours per week should you spend working on lesson plans?

### SECTION 4: HOW PREPARED DO YOU FEEL USING LESSON/REHEARSAL PLANS?

1. I am prepared to use lesson/rehearsal plans when I teach public/private school.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. The use of lesson/rehearsal plans is important for secondary courses.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
3. The use of lesson/rehearsal plans is important for elementary courses.
  - Strongly Agree
  - Agree
  - Disagree
  - Strongly Disagree
4. How often do you believe secondary music teachers should create lesson/rehearsal plans for rehearsal/lessons?
  - Daily
  - Weekly
  - By Unit
  - Do not plan
5. How often do you believe elementary teachers should create lesson/rehearsal plans?
  - Daily
  - Weekly
  - By Unit
  - Do not plan
6. Which of the following is the most important aspect of rehearsal preparation for middle school/high school music teachers?
  - Score study
  - Lesson planning
  - Combination of both
7. Do you plan on using written lesson/rehearsal plans during your student teaching semester?
  - Yes
  - No
8. Do you plan on using written lesson/rehearsal plans during your first year of teaching?
  - Yes
  - No
9. Is there anything further you would like to say about lesson/rehearsal planning?