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Breaking the Sound Barrier: Strategies for Reducing the Educational Debt in Underserved School Bands

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by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this multiple explanatory case study was to investigate the preparation of underserved school band programs for a Music Performance Assessment (MPA). Specifically, I examined racial, economic, and social inequalities, which are well documented in the research literature, and the related achievement gaps of underserved public school bands. Using Ladson-Billings' four pillars of educational debt, a replication approach highlighted four cases as a small sample of the success rate of Title I school bands scoring a Superior at an MPA contest. I compared how contextual issues impacted the four band directors at these schools in preparations for their bands' Music Performance Assessments. I used a critical realism paradigm to examine the disparities of secondary school bands within the context of financial means and hidden cultural expectations. Through this, I identified the academic, economic, moral, and sociological debts that high school band directors may encounter while teaching in an underserved school.

These topics highlighted the band director perception on the MPA process, culturally relevant rehearsal strategies and musical selections, student-teacher relationships, and the preservice curriculum that prepares band directors to teach in a Title I school. Findings showed that each director's instructional design was heavily predicated on the socioemotional needs of their students while addressing financial challenges in promoting a positive rehearsal culture. Finally, I collected written and interview data that pointed to several themes and subsequent implications for future band director, university professors, administrators, and policymakers. My goal was to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies

employed to prepare an MPA concert program for low-income schools, while addressing the longstanding inequalities in music education.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Extensive research in music education has uncovered a widening achievement gap for underserved schools and their ratings at Music Performance Assessments (MPAs) throughout the United States (Henry, 2019; McGonigal, 2020). However, few studies have examined the ensemble teaching strategies that lead to this discrepancy, further contextualizing the impact of low-socio-economic schools and districts on music student learning (Pollard, 2021; Seipp, 2021; Watson, 2018). Another consideration may be the disconnect between ensemble directors in low socioeconomic environments and their students, with whom they may not identify on a cultural level, or for whom they may need to draw on specialized training techniques in their work with underprivileged students. Through my study, I address these discrepancies to close the opportunity gap for all school-level bands, especially as they relate to creating equitable opportunities to succeed in MPAs.

Rationale for the Study

A major educational hurdle in US public schools, including secondary music programs, remains the idea of attempting to solve the achievement gap between students of Color, who make up the majority of students in lower SES schools, and their White counterparts (Shaw & Auletto, 2022; Henry et al., 2020; Hanushek et al., 2019). The Brown vs. The Board of Education (1953) case set a landmark ruling that stated that all students, regardless of race, gender, or religion, must be given equal educational opportunity. However, over 70 years later, graduation rates, scores on multiple standardized tests, and discipline records in schools, which are often cited in the justification for the "pipeline to prison" theory, disenfranchise low-income

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students at an alarming rate (Moore, 2022; Quinn & Desruisseaux, 2022). Further, the poverty rates for Black and Brown students remain considerably higher than the national average, making the task of closing achievement gaps in music education more challenging (Irwin et al., 2023). The research literature also shows the consensus that many underserved schools in the US struggle with recruiting and retaining high-quality band directors to lead urban secondary ensembles to success at MPAs.

The first explanation is that many pre-service teachers may lack understanding of the environments of underserved schools. For example, an increasing number of minority students enrolled in predominantly White state-run universities find their cultural identity lacking within their major studies (Edgar, 2019). Furthermore, it should not be surprising that college BIPOC students show much lower graduation rates than their White counterparts (Gustafson, 2020; Underwood et al., 2019) because, for example, participation in larger university music ensembles is often challenging due to the lack of resources to mentor incoming BIPOC students to succeed on a collegiate level (Powell et al., 2020). While school districts undertook massive recruitment campaigns throughout the early 2000s to attract minority teachers and the educator workforce, current employment data show almost no significant expansion in diversity (Nguyen & Gold, 2020; Carver-Thomas, 2018). Based on the latest national figures, White Americans still held most of available teaching positions in public schools (Philip & Brown, 2020; US Department of Education, 2016). As a result, music education majors, regardless of ethnicity, struggle with the reality that their degree programs do not always match the type of preparation need to effectively teach BIPOC students or students in educational settings that differ considerably from their teacher's experience.

Secondly, pre-service music teachers are under constant pressure to perform, practice an instrument, and observe teaching while pursuing a degree along with a teaching license or certification. As such, diversity, social-emotional needs, and cultural awareness may be seldom discussed throughout their undergraduate music education programs (Howard, 2020; Powell et al., 2020). Furthermore, the music teacher's pre-service experience may be limited by the need for knowledge and acceptance of culturally relevant pedagogy from tradition-minded professors (Hawkins-Jones & Reeves, 2020). Once established in their professional careers at secondary schools throughout the country, many new teachers struggle to reach marginalized populations in their school communities (Isbell, 2023). Teachers with more experience and who obtain advanced degrees are often overrepresented in higher SES schools, giving an extra advantage in quality instruction over lower SES students. Additionally, many schools with low SES populations employ band directors with under five years of experience (Miller, 2023). These considerations may cause inexperienced teachers to incorrectly believe that children in underserved school districts, primarily Black and Brown students, choose not to value education, thereby seeking opportunities in more affluent areas (Harrison, 2020).

Third, a factor to consider may be the disadvantages of underserved schools, which lead to higher turnover rates among teachers in lower-income schools compared to those in higher income schools. Shaw (2017) found that schools with higher property tax revenue, for example, may offer considerably more options for secondary music. Additionally, principals at higher income level schools demonstrated the ability to provide a dedicated room with special equipment for music instruction. In contrast, lower SES schools' likelihood to provide these spaces is much lower (Winglicki, 2020). Often, school-level funding is used to lower student-teacher ratios and provide interventions to prevent support student growth, which in low-SES

schools can lead to music ensemble instruction receiving fewer resources. Higher student enrollment, most often found in more affluent public schools, has shown an increase in ensemble offerings and an abundance of music teaching positions (Miller, 2023). Finally, the increased popularity of nationwide school choice initiatives has also caused a resegregation of students and resources, whereby more affluent families can opt out of attending schools with lower-SES peers (Hedgecock, 2019).

Theoretical Framework: Achievement Gap or Educational Debt

Ladson-Billings's (2006) *culturally relevant pedagogy* offers a unique view of the educational debt that marginalized students endure because of past transgressions in the US. This serves as the theoretical framework for my study. Culturally responsive teaching recognizes the influence that culture has in educating all students and how they may view society in terms of their experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Over the past several decades, the conversation of equality has revolved around closing the achievement gap between the privileged and underprivileged, including music education (Ladson-Billing, 2021a). Despite the recent state and national interventions, the underlying causes of academic disparity between low and high SES students have yet to be addressed (Ladson-Billing, 2006). Further, systemic racism dating back to the Reconstruction has created a two-tiered society of poverty versus wealth, as evident in our current education system. Ladson-Billings (2021a) suggests that educators applying more culturally relevant pedagogy in their curriculum will enable them to incorporate high academic standards without destroying their students' identities and beliefs. One application in the ensemble classroom is that band directors who program music that brings awareness to silenced voices while respecting other cultures and traditions may help build trust among marginalized students and increase engagement in their ensemble.

A major focus of culturally relevant pedagogy is that students can "affirm their cultural identity while developing perspectives that challenge school inequalities" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469). Unfortunately, external voices with influence within school districts across the country view this approach as injecting Critical Race Theory into curricula, such as music, rather than giving marginalized students an equal voice (Ladson-Billings, 2021b). The long-standing discussion of whose histories should be considered the definitive standard in a high-quality education continues to minimize BIPOC student voices.

Secondary school bands are a prime example of this tension, demonstrated by the vast majority of performance literature, method books, teacher instruction, instrumentation, and concert attire that is based upon White Eurocentric traditions (Gellerstein, 2021). At the collegiate level, many conducting, instrumental methods, secondary methods, and introduction to education courses continue to lack adequate training to foster cultural competencies, identify instances of appropriation, and encourage curricular design that more accurately reflects the growing number of minority pre-service music majors (Culp & Salvador, 2021).

McCoy and Lind (2022) described culturally relevant pedagogy in the music classroom as directors learning about others through the pieces they program with their ensembles. Educators learned about themselves and confronted their bias toward marginalized cultures from a “deficit perspective,” comparing to the traditional, Eurocentric origins of our standard wind band literature (McCoy, 2021, p. 1). Palmer et al. (2021) explored how some schools incorporated several examples of multicultural music incorporated into the curriculum without establishing their authentic meanings to diverse student populations. They found that music teachers could better encourage inclusivity in their ensembles by fusing genres, such as Mariachi and West African drumming, into the classical music curriculum. Cronenberg et al. (2023) also

noted how many teachers could connect genres of their local communities to traditional school bands and orchestras by suggesting music publishers of beginning method books arrange a supplemental book of diverse cultural folk tunes. In Chicago, a school-based jazz philharmonic program partnered with a university in Cuba to form a revolutionary curriculum that infuses Eurocentric classical music with Afro-Cuban jazz, all while incorporating traditional African and Middle Eastern Instruments (Doig-Skaff, 2022).These serve as examples of how contemporary curricula have been creative in addressing the lack of cultural resources in traditional music classrooms.

Prime examples of the educational debt that we encounter as music educators are evident in the struggles of low-income public-school music ensembles to achieve success, especially so when students participate in traditional large-ensemble assessments, referred to in some regions of the US as Music Performance Assessments (MPAs). Figure 1.1 depicts the typical needs of a secondary school band to excel in MPAs.

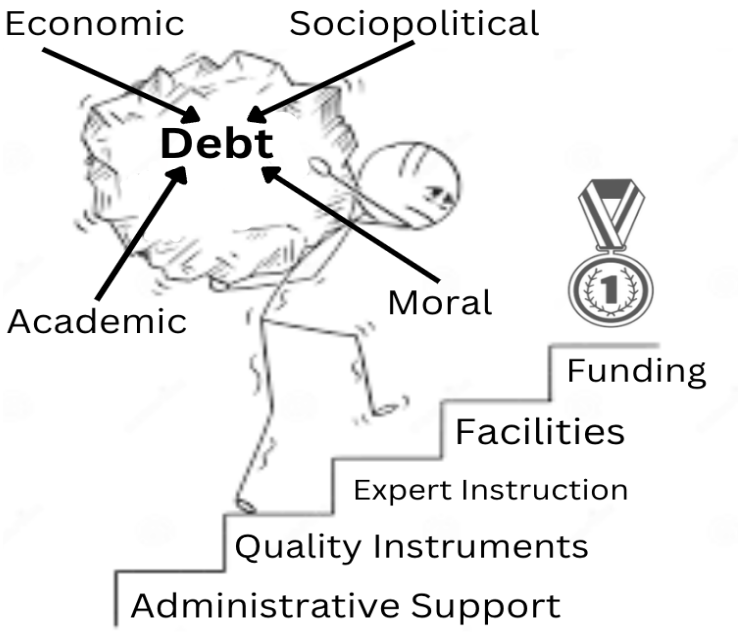


Figure 1.1. Types of Educational Debt and Their Impact on Music Education

Successful groups tend to (a) have building-level and district-level administrative support; (b) have the ability to invest in quality musical instruments, including electronic equipment, such as keyboards and MIDI software, allowing students with little finances or credit scores to participate in an ensemble; (c) be able to recruit and retain highly qualified band directors, along with access to instrumental instructional staff, whether in-person or through online platforms for small sectional tutoring; (d) have dedicated facilities that are conducive to band rehearsal with proper equipment storage and internet access; and (e) have regular and reliable funding from the school-level or district-level curriculum departments.

Using Ladson-Billing's theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, Figure 1.1 includes marginalized students' specific academic, economic, sociopolitical, and moral debts that have been accumulating for decades among Title I secondary school bands. Educational policies and decision-making (e.g., administrative, budgeting, and scheduling) have failed to address the overall concern of lower SES students who cannot catch up academically with their more affluent peers without making substantial changes in funding allotment and curriculum decisions (Ladson-Billings, 2021a). In Georgia, for example, low SES middle school bands offer a rare glimpse at success performing in MPA-style events despite the disadvantages of parental support for individual private lessons along with the need for a fundraising capability for clinicians and supplies (Grogan III, 2022). In California, band directors needed help keeping Latinx students engaged with school bands, because the students did not see themselves or their culture represented in the music literature that they were studying (Finlayson, 2019). In North Carolina, a high school band had to rehearse in the lobby of their school gymnasium because the local county refused to provide equal funding for new buildings for its lower SES schools (Cyna,

2021). Circumstances such as these highlight the educational debts facing students of Color to feel disenchanted about formalized music education.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act and School Bands

In 1965, the federal government sought to create a funding mechanism known as Title I, which would provide supplemental resources to failing schools in the US. President Lyndon B. Johnson passed his signature Elementary and Secondary Education Act as an initiative in his War on Poverty (Hartshorn, 1965; United States, 1965). One of its most significant provisions, Title I, sought to address the educational gaps in reading, writing, and mathematics among low-income families, along with the development of music programs in low-income schools (Hartshorn, 1965). A low-income school is identified when family income attending a public school must not exceed 130% of the federal poverty line to be eligible for these services, including free breakfast and lunch. If more than 40% of the school qualifies for free/reduced lunch (FRL), they can receive funds for *schoolwide initiatives*, whereas *targeted assistance* is available for schools with up to 39% FRL. Next, a school's percentage of *formula children*, which indicates the number of students living in their zoning boundary and the state's per-pupil expenditure (SPPE) for each child, is factored into what type of assistance grant they receive. From there, a combination of four distinct grants, as shown in Table 1.1, determines the estimated amount per child each school receives for the academic year.

Table 1.1. Overview of Title I School Grants

Grant Type	Description	Min. Formula Children	% School-aged Poverty rate
Basic Grant	Allocation of up to 40% of a school's SPPE.	10 per school	< 2
Concentration Grant	Additional allocation specifically targeting poverty schools.	6500 per district	< 15
Targeted Grant	Weighted allocation is based on district size and the number of formula children at a school.	10 per school	< 39
Education Finance Incentive Grant	Allocation rewards states that invest more in school improvement plans in low-income areas.	10 per school	> 40

Note. Information taken from A Guide to Federal Assistance Programs for Local School Systems (Fairley & Krumbein, 1969).

From its beginnings, Title I funding was controversial in balancing federal, state, and local control over educational funding, and integration issues (Kaestle & Smith, 1982). Over time, it became clear that more progress was needed in reducing the achievement gaps in low-income schools. As a result, several parent activist groups argued over the most effective use of these resources to service underprivileged students (Michael, 2021). Meanwhile, President Ronald Reagan revamped Title I in 1981 with the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act to reduce the federal oversight of funding allocation, while granting more control to state-level boards of education (GovTrack, 2023a). Later, the passing of the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act forced Title I required schools to show an increase in achievement scores or provide a school improvement plan, now known as a school

report card (GovTrack, 2023b). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 further added requirements for schools to meet *adequate yearly progress* (AYP) and hire only teachers who were considered highly qualified (NCLB, 2001). Recently, the CARES Act also helped to address the remediation of students who lost in-person instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic (GovTrack, 2023c).

President Obama's Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) focused on students having a well-rounded education (Tuttle, 2020). This revised plan called for music education to be a central pillar to the student's curriculum. Specifically, ESSA funds allow low-income school bands to supplement traditional state allocations with Title I money to purchase vital resources like instruments and sheet music. States also implemented professional development to advance music curricula in poorer neighborhoods, allowing band directors who lead ensembles in low-income schools to hire instructional assistants for small group sectionals and tutoring. Additionally, ESSA requires states to include multiple progress measures, such as Music Performance Assessments, to showcase student engagement and school culture. Finally, state education boards that accept this allocation are discouraged from pulling students out of a music classroom, such as a band rehearsal for additional tutoring in another academic subject. These measures were designed to promote music in the classroom as a critical part of a comprehensive education.

Significance of the Study

The widening musical achievement gap between Title I and non-Title I school ensembles throughout the country is well documented. In secondary school ensembles throughout the United States that compete or perform for a district rating, the success rate for schools with highly marginalized populations is considerably lagging behind those with a majority White

population (Groulx, 2023). Chipman (2004) discovered that 83% of the middle school band directors in Florida were aware of the at-risk population in their programs. However, perhaps due to lack of severity of the problem, only 38.8% of teachers attended district-funded training to assist with this population. Furthermore, Chipman discovered that 91.54% of band directors chose not to attend supplemental training opportunities designed to help them teach their vulnerable student population or implement/design special programs in their district. 76.15% felt their teacher education courses did not prepare them to teach inner-city/urban students. Unsurprisingly, there was a 40.77% retention rate of at-risk students in band programs throughout Florida

In modern schooling, beyond providing a child with knowledge of playing an instrument, involvement in a secondary ensemble class instills confidence and gives students a positive self-identity in their school (Barrett, 2023; Sun, 2022). However, despite the progress made toward the equality of secondary school bands, cultural and economic backgrounds may continue to influence the success rate for Title I band programs at Music Performance Assessments (MPA) across the United States. In New Jersey, for example, temporary funding, rather than long-term legislative budgets on a state level, has disproportionately left music programs in poverty-stricken school districts at a disadvantage in educating students (Stoumbos, 2023). In New Orleans, the formation of an all-school choice district after Hurricane Katrina eliminated most of the established secondary school bands with a high concentration of BIPOC students (Sakakeeny, 2020). In response, Roots for Music, a non-profit organization, had to organize rehearsals in local nightclubs and fight for grants to purchase instruments in schools with developing ensemble programs. As a results of these obstacles to maintain band programs in underserved neighborhoods, teenage music students are more aware of these policy initiatives,

which may make them feel culture shock and alienation in ensembles based on their social barriers (Armstrong, 2023).

Lack of Cultural Relevance in Secondary Music Ensembles

Cultural Appropriation

Ladson-Billings (2021) addressed some concerns about how teachers may interpret cultural appropriation, congruency, and synchronization to BIPOC students in underserved schools. Cultural appropriation in music education could be defined as the "unjustifiable offense" to adopting art from one culture to another without full understanding of its meaning (Young, 2021 pg.17). There have been renewed calls to become more inclusive in music education, on a secondary and collegiate level. However, some educators may not realize that their attempt to incorporate culture in their teaching may lead to marginalized students being othered in a dominantly White-oriented pre-service teacher curriculum (Hess, 2021). In upstate New York, a choral teacher, Charlie, often struggled to teach indigenous students until he realized that his becoming a successful educator first required his acceptance of White consciousness (Scarletto, 2022). Many band directors may inadvertently misappropriate diversity by programming works without fully understanding the significance and representation of their students' cultures. Additionally, for many school districts, the MPA fails to produce rubrics that are "fair and accessible for all students" (Wesolowski & Wind, 2019, p. 437).

Cultural Congruence

A second consideration for cultural relevance is the need for congruence in post-civil rights movement educational settings. Cultural congruence in music education refers to a teacher who believes that students learn best in the environment that best aligns with their personal values, along with cultural perceptions (Brown, 2022). As early as preschool, evidence shows

that racial congruence may play a role in teacher-child conflicts when the educator exhibits uncommon behaviors within their culture (Gardner et al., 2021). Further, Black students had less of a connection to Black teachers when acting more Eurocentric, whereas White students tend to show resistance towards teachers of other backgrounds. In Maryland, students in lower-income schools, based on the Safe and Supportive Schools Climate survey, rated equity favorably and connectedness to academics considerably lower than their teachers in several districts (Debman et al., 2021). In high school band classes in California, BIPOC students described rehearsal rooms where the content remained traditionally Eurocentric, without acknowledgement from the director of the needs for a culturally diverse community (Smith, 2023). Further, Young & Goldstein (2023) found that ensembles such as marching bands, indoor winter guard, and percussion may breed an environment of harmful contact between minority stress and overall belonging in the ensemble.

Cultural Synchronization

A final consideration that contributes to lower-income students' educational debt is the misuse of cultural synchronization, which is the attempt to create uniformity in a curriculum, thereby ignoring the backgrounds of students (Monroe & Obidah, 2004). In many Title I high school bands, there is a constant need to guard against cultural assimilation, increase representation of underserved composers in concert programs, desynchronize high BIPOC ensembles by exposing them to more than just traditional band standards. Typically, the required reading lists of an MPA event feature band pieces that are predominantly Eurocentric, with few options to showcase the vast diversity in band music. In a rehearsal setting, this concept may include the attempt to create uniformity within the music curriculum, thereby forcing each student to learn similarly (Martin, 2021). Cedin (2020) felt that having teachers in classrooms of

similar demographics to their students would help increase academic achievement. A byproduct of uniformity in the music classroom, such as integrating American schools, was the decline of high-quality, BIPOC-based school band programs throughout the South. In Mississippi, for example, three prominent all-Black high school bands were decimated as its students transferred to more White affluent schools in the suburbs, taking with them incredible talent and financial resources (Lidell, 2022).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple explanatory case study is to investigate the preparation of underserved school band programs for Music Performance Assessments and how their directors are prepared to handle the challenges of teaching band in Title I schools. Cultural relevance (i.e., academic, economic, moral, and socioeconomic concerns) serves as the theoretical lens for the study, through which the study was planned, implemented, and reported.

Research Questions

In this study, I address the following research questions:

1. How well do Title I bands prepare for a Music Performance Assessment?
    A. What are band director perceptions on the MPA process and the steps to achieve success?
    B. To what extent are rehearsal strategies and music selections culturally relevant to an MPA performance?
    C. To what extent do student-teacher relationships within Title I school bands contribute to the MPA Performance?
    D. To what extent do undergraduate music education courses prepare future band directors to teach in Title I schools?

2. What recommendations can be made for assessing Title I school band achievements?

Concepts in Ladson-Billing's (2006) culturally responsive pedagogy were adapted to examine the educational debt in Title I school bands (Patton, 2015). Specifically, I investigated whether the need for acknowledgment of obtaining resources such as instructional coaching, private lessons, quality instruments, or increased rehearsal opportunities factored into achieving higher scores on MPA events. From there, I uncovered how these social and economic factors contributed to the MPA results by Title I ensembles. A replication approach to this multiple case study (Yin, 2017) was selected to examine how Title I school bands have successfully achieved high ratings at an MPA contest. The goal was to investigate how a band director's previous undergraduate pre-service training prepared them to succeed at an MPA event with a Title I ensemble. Furthermore, I examined whether the expectations of achieving a Superior rating, based upon the MPA rubric, considered the unique circumstances that Title I schools face in maintaining a comprehensive secondary band program.

Definitions

- **Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC):** A term used to collectively refer to individuals and communities who identify as non-white, recognizing the marginalization faced by members of these groups.
- **Music Performance Assessment (MPA):** An evaluation process that assesses the musical abilities and achievements of an ensemble in a live performance setting. This evaluation features many musical elements, including technical proficiency, interpretive skills, and artistic expression. It served as a valuable tool for music educators as a formalized platform to enhance student growth.

- **Socioeconomic Status (SES):** A term used to reflect a person or families' position in the social hierarchy based on their economic well-being and social standing. SES standing is usually determined by income, career path, education, resource access, and social capital.
- **Student Per Pupil Expenditure (SPPE):** A fundamental metric in educational spending that measures the amount of money allocated to support each student within a school or district. SPPE usually includes spending for instructional and administrative salaries, support services, facilities, transportation, and capital expenditures.
- **Title I:** Designation to address the educational needs of underserved students. This is part of a US government policy to ensure all students have equal access to a high-quality public school education. This program provides federal funding to schools based on a formula of lower income families living within their boundary.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Expanding on what I introduced in Chapter One, this chapter presents a review of related literature. Specifically, using Ladson-Billings's (2006) pillars of culturally relevant pedagogy, I contextualize the literature with regard to challenges facing high school band directors who teach in underserved schools. Such considerations include how closely pedagogical approaches match educational settings, in what ways instructional materials are inclusive and reflective of the diversity of pre-service teachers and the students they serve, and how systemic issues interact with matters of representation and equality in high school band programs.

First, in the section on *academic debt*, I review the literature regarding the ways in which participation in school-based ensembles reinforces formal language over casual language as the preferred communication between conductor and musician. This practice can exclude students from cultural backgrounds of limited vocabulary, such as newcomers, from understanding the concert rehearsal process. Second, regarding *economic debt*, I explain how social and racial classes often influence access to instructional resources (e.g., private lessons, school instruments, facilities) and have detrimental impact on an ensemble's success at Music Performance Assessments (MPAs). Finally, I explore the literature regarding *sociopolitical and moral debts*, including how the importance of relationships, ownership of people, negative orientations, and living for the moment become substantial obstacles for underserved school musicians to succeed in instrumental ensembles.

Academic Debt: Are Ensemble Directors Speaking Their Language?

In this section, I describe how high school band directors' language can impact the learning environment. Specifically, I discuss (a) the barriers related to formal language in the rehearsal hall, (b) the struggles of casual language in the rehearsal hall, and (c) how language affects performance in the band rehearsal.

Barriers Related to Formal Language in the Rehearsal Hall

A central pillar of Ladson-Billings's (2006) theory of culturally relevant pedagogy stems from the academic debt that Title I students have accumulated over generations. A major concern with children in underserved backgrounds falling further behind in education, including those enrolled in school bands, concerns the struggle of internalizing formal language versus casual language (Anderson, 2020). Formal language is more professional, less personal, and generally used in education for instruction delivery or standardization of assessments (Elo & Porn, 2018). The intention behind using formal language is to explain something in a dialect taught by each person in a conversation, such as a classroom or rehearsal hall (Koptelova, 2021). Often, higher student reading comprehension can be attributed to increased performance on school tasks in preschool through kindergarten (Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2017). Many first-generation immigrant families possess language barriers or lack formalized education, such as a high school diploma, which can make advanced music terminology confusing. Adding to the opportunity gap for these students is that every standardized test, including auditions for honor ensembles and evaluation forms for MPA events, is written using this method of feedback (McPherson et al., 2022).

The Struggles of Casual Language in the Rehearsal Hall

Casual language, on the other hand, is much less formal, and is the preferred form of communication for students in low income neighborhoods (Lahrl et al., 2020; Martinez, 2015). As a byproduct, the casual language used outside of school often includes terms of endearment, where a slang or code name is given to express a type of emphasis towards a person or object (Febrianti et al., 2021). Clemons & Toribio (2021) found that found that monolingual regimentation of formalized English in US schools can lead low SES students to develop overgeneralizing, distorting information, and using vague, non-descriptive vocabulary. Overall, the majority of families living in poverty may informally learn the English language through television, radio, or social media apps such as Facebook (Barrot, 2018). Furthermore, casual language, used extensively on social media apps, may motivate underserved students to learn formalized education (Johannes, 2021). Students who struggle to navigate between formal and casual language, combined with other socio-cultural differences, may also struggle with ensemble participation and eventually disengage with advanced music learning (Alegrado & Winsler, 2020).

How Language Affects Performance in the Band Rehearsal

Students of Color, comprising the majority of these underserved schools, are severely disadvantaged when understanding formal language versus casual language (Baker-Bell, 2020). Because of the *academic debt*, or the generations of neglect in providing an equitable education, Black and Brown students will often fail, even when provided with resources for remediation (Ladson-Billings, 2021). It is argued that formal language is inherently discriminatory towards non-Western European cultures, which causes people of other races to seem less intelligent (Liaqat, 2021; Sung & Handy, 2019). As a result, one may not consider Black Chants (i.e., songs

or poetry with stark political messaging towards anti-Black progress) or Black language traditions, for example, as formalized language, despite their role in resolving political injustices (Richardson & Ragland, 2018). Though not usually done intentionally, school districts may favor and defend a Eurocentric curriculum (e.g., as seen in the attempts to ban what some believe is critical race theory) as the primary language of value, especially in music (Hess, 2022). One can observe this particularly in music evaluation at MPA events, where ensemble directors often contribute to the rejection, silencing, and disrespect of the method of communication in marginalized communities (Groulx, 2016).

Economic Debt: The Hidden Rules of Secondary Ensembles

In this section, I describe how expectations of a successful high school band go against the values of low-income students. Specifically, I discuss (a) the cost of a quality music education, (b) whether Title I students could achieve if they believe, and (c) the system that sets the expectations of a high quality band program.

What is the Cost of a Quality Music Education?

A second pillar of culturally relevant pedagogy is acknowledging the *economic debt* that underserved families suffer in receiving a substandard education due to lack of resources (Ladson-Billings, 2006). For example, the cornerstones of establishing a quality music ensemble program at an underserved school are parental involvement, financial support, and administrator ownership in their students' education (Escalante, 2020; Stehle & Peters-Burton, 2019). However, within these pillars of success are embedded hidden rules of education, which aim to socialize students into assimilating with the norms and expectations of non-impoverished societies (Flynn et al., 2017). Middle class and wealthy students consider education the key to moving up in society and maintaining connections (Carnevale et al., 2020), while students in

low-income neighborhoods sometimes think of education as an abstract concept that does not apply to their everyday lives (Hammel & Hourigan, 2023). High school bands tend to attract students from more middle-class environments, which are more accustomed to these hidden rules of academic rigor (Elpus & Abril, 2019; Richmond, 2018). Additionally, Western classical music, which dominates school ensemble curricular, may seem like a natural genre of comfort only for musicians who have already been taught the norms of what is considered proper behavior by cultural majorities (Bennett, 2020).

Several studies have documented the struggle between student ethnicity and conformity to traditional Eurocentric values to be recognized as an exceptional learner or, in the case of music, an outstanding performer on an instrument (Veerbeek, 2020). Further exacerbating this disconnect is the realization that students in lower economic schools, often of Color, bring with them a poverty mentality, where student success is often considered a rarity as opposed to the norm (Collins, 2022). Unfortunately, many band, choir, and orchestra rooms in US underserved schools risk indirectly understanding musical success as the assimilation and eventual elimination of Black and Brown poverty culture (Kajikawa, 2021; Kelly, 2018). Sargeant (2022) uncovered examples of Black student progress, including music traditions in Florida that almost thoroughly washed away through school integration in the Southern US, because once the schools were integrated, the music of the cultural minority was muted. Gellerstein (2021) further exposed how White supremacy, through social class rules, are interjected into the perceived success of low-SES ensembles.

Can They Really Achieve If They Believe?

Another fundamental hidden rule in schooling with regards to race and social class is the concept of destiny within a student's life. Many teachers who were raised in middle- to high-

class societies struggle to remove the *racial noticing* of societal failures to underprivileged students (Robinson & Hendricks, 2017; Shah & Coles, 2020). Music students from a poverty background tend to think their destiny is pre-ordained and that nothing can change their eventual outcome as an adult (Campbell, 2017). However, those in the middle class believe that making good choices in their childhood education will set them up for successful adulthood (Sattin-Bajaj & Roda, 2020). The wealthy class may come from a background of *noblesse oblige* (i.e., wealthy with an obligation to give to the less fortunate), in which they are expected to act with nobility and privilege towards artistic music (Jorgensen, 2020).

In the middle to wealthy homes, parents believe in long-term human capital and hyper-competition in schooling, meaning that their early investment into their children's education will allow them greater advantages once they reach adulthood (Daly et al., 2021). Additionally, these social classes provided a more structured and long-ranged approach to participation, such as music ensembles at school, compared to lower-class parents (Kong, 2023). Parents often have a clear objective in poverty-level households for their children to succeed in activities such as music performance, but due to a lack of resources, they may rely mainly on personal judgment (as opposed to independent research) in educational choices (Pleasanton, 2023). Lower socioeconomic parents choose to place their children in extracurricular activities such as band and orchestra primarily as a way for them to be safe after school, for future opportunities to go to college, and for motivation to keep up their core academic subjects (Bennet et al., 2012; Conkling & Conkling, 2018). As such, musical ensembles often fight low-SES student beliefs that they cannot learn an instrument or learn how to read music like other kids in their class (Zdzinski, 2021).

Who Sets These Expectations?

Finally, a student's expected behaviors in the rehearsal hall are among the secondary ensemble's most critical hidden rules. For students in poor communities, individual personality is crucial for constant entertainment or a sense of humor when dealing with tough times (Sandelson, 2019). Their conversations are often explicit, with violent or sexual references, which would seem disrespectful to school leadership (Gross, 2023; Henderson, 2019). Students of the middle and wealthy classes, however, tend to develop their personalities for stability and achievement, seen by some as an ideal child for accelerated growth within a secondary band or orchestra program (Howard, 2019; Calarco, 2018). By design, the public education curriculum and behavioral standards reflect a more proper and refined learning outcome (Avcioglu, 2017). Some studies have referred to this phenomenon as the feminization of formalized learning (Verniers et al., 2016). Others say this approach fosters bullying and victimization of impoverished male students participating in arts-based school organizations (Lehman & Dumais, 2017; Schmutz et al., 2016).

In practice, students gain positive praise from their teacher or band director for behavioral conformity in class, such as raising their hand before speaking, not playing their instrument out of turn, and neatly putting their percussion equipment away (Montemayor & Silvey, 2019). These tasks may be more difficult for low-SES students, as their home environment teaches them to talk loudly, fight for attention amongst loved ones, and live through inorganization (Henninger, 2018). In a rehearsal situation, these behaviors from poor kids may come across as defiance and insubordination, leading to dismissal from class, a trip to the discipline office, or removal from the ensemble (Darrow & Adamek, 2016). Also, lower-income students tend to think of a time in the present or living for the moment, whereas middle- and wealthy-class

students may think more about the future (Lister, 2021). This may offer, for example, an explanation if a student needs more time to practice at home for an upcoming assessment (Prichard, 2021).

Sociopolitical and Moral Debt: Coming From Where They Are From

Finally, in this section, I highlight the sociopolitical and moral debt US school systems have placed on marginalized communities (Ladson-Billing, 2006). Specifically, I discuss how (a) people in the society think Title I students are lazy and do not care about school, (b) Title I students do not want to learn (c) assumptions are made that schools should just fundraise more for supplies, and (d) assuming that Title I students want to be failures in the classroom.

They Are Too Lazy and Don't Care About School

Low-SES students tend to constantly seek someone to care for and love them. Establishing relationships is vital for children of lower socioeconomics (Gorski et.al, 2023). It is also well documented that the differences between students from the traditional nuclear family structure, found more often in middle- to high-class homes (versus poverty class to a more blended/single-parent model) has a resounding impact on students' academic success (Schnieder & Coleman, 2018). The traditional middle-class and wealthy family life is considered complete with two adults, who are usually the biological parents of their child (Guetto & Panichella, 2019). In poverty families, however, it is not uncommon to have single-parent households, grandparents, or foster parents raising children (Treanor, 2018; Ruggles, 1994). Instability, both in the family structure with teacher turnover at school, can lead to student disconnect by not having consistent role models (Collins, 2022).

Adolescents in poverty may find this love and acceptance in gangs, leading to a life of drugs or crime (Short Jr, 2018). For others, they look to the school rehearsal hall, for example, as

a place of sanctuary. In these classrooms, great band directors can become their mentors, showing them a way to middle-class prosperity (Hutton, 2022). Students in the lower social classes seek to forge connections with their conductor, sometimes blurring the strict lines of personal versus professional conduct (Grey et al., 2018). To many of these children, a teacher represents emotional stability, positive influence, and genuine care (Masko, 2018). As such, ensemble directors in underserved schools are unofficially expected to offer much more guidance on personal growth, relationships, and spirituality than those working in a more affluent situation (Bond & Russell, 2019).

They Just Don't Want to Learn

A possible reason for the decline of male students of Color participating in school bands is the need to see and hear success stories by people in their community which, when not present, can create doubts about excelling in events such as Music Performance Assessments (Givens & Nasir, 2019). For example, Black male students in the lower class are typically disregarded as troublemakers without examining the root causes behind their behaviors (Brooms, 2019). In turn, they may grow up believing that success in music is limited to what they see in popular music streams, where they find a musical representation that more closely aligns with their expectations (Dankoor et al., 2023). Conductors, while essential in developing the musical talents of their students, need to recognize that holistic growth and cultural awareness are as important as technical proficiency in ensembles with marginalized students (McKoy et al., 2017). Through culturally responsive teaching, instructors can help students cultivate trust, navigate the complexities of adolescence, and instill a sense of hope that their lives can change for the better (Bonner et al., 2018).

Students in generational poverty also face internal socio-cultural disadvantages, constraining their abilities to excel in the music classroom. These obstacles include social stigmas and racism, often originating from past transgression in our communities (Poolpol, 2021). The largest stigma for urban students is the fear of failure, individually and as an ensemble, at events such as Music Performance Assessments (MPAs). These performances, in which ensemble directors spend a considerable amount of time and resources perfecting a concert program, bring constant pressures of superior judgment in the process of music-making (Marcuse, 2023). This directly conflicts with the poverty mindset of living by the day or just doing enough to meet the bare minimum in academics (Parrett & Budge, 2020). As a result of these competing goals (i.e., advanced preparation to meet the pressures of judgement versus living in the moment), urban students may feel intense stress, making it difficult to overcome and excel at their full potential as musicians.

Schools Just Need to Fundraise More

Compounding the situation, generational poverty brings unique challenges to community-public partnerships in music education across the US (Jones, 2020). In many inner-city schools, the quest to compete academically with suburban counterparts is almost impossible due to the additional expenses of remediation, special needs, and campus-based social services (Noguera & Syeed, 2020). Schools needing help providing quality educational resources, such as adequately working musical instruments, reinforce the idea that urban students are substandard to their wealthy peers (Hess, 2017). Adding to the disparity is the need for more community resources to fundraise for equipment and organize robust non-profit organizations (Lee & Shon, 2018). The absence of these essential resources for ensemble training may create a rehearsal environment

where underprivileged musicians surrender to failure of expectations for a superior in their concert program.

Schools that serve poor kids introduce middle-class teachers to unique uncertainties that can hinder educational achievement. For example, music educators need to be made aware that many of their students have limited access to nutritious food, stable places to sleep, reliable transportation beyond a school bus, and adequate healthcare (Drotos & Cilesiz, 2016). Without some dedicated school district funding for positions such as music coordinators and paraprofessionals, lower SES students are less likely to consider private lessons or instrument rentals due to the costs associated with these items to participate in a band (Brookey, 2017). On the building level, school bands in more affluent areas may have multiple levels of ability-based ensembles, like Wind Ensembles and Symphonic Band. In contrast, schools with higher percentages of free/reduced lunch students may only afford to offer one heterogeneous section of an overcrowded music course (Elpus, 2022). The absence of these critical resources for music education contributes to the fostering of self-doubt and the reinforcement of the cycle of failure.

These Students Want to be Failures

Students in lower economic schools are often confronted with those who stereotype the criminalization of poverty, which may distort their emotional well-being and educational outlook (Edelman, 2019). In many lower-income neighborhoods, limited opportunities for academic success due to generational poverty, in particular, reinforce the notion of Title I students falling behind in formalized education (Jackson & Addison, 2018). The ghettos, as they are sometimes called, can create a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which young adults are indoctrinated that failure is inevitable, leading to reduced self-efficacy and academic motivation (Breger, 2017). Ensemble directors teaching in these situations should understand that equitable access to modern and

innovative rehearsal techniques and high-quality equipment will allow for a supportive learning environment (Grogan, 2022). They should also create a rehearsal culture that combats a young musician's self-confidence due to poverty by implementing targeted interventions (Harrison, 2020).

Alternatively, once a positive climate and culture are developed in an inner-city band program, a poverty-level student may start to develop a fear of success. Especially in music ensembles, success may bring about increased responsibilities, such as promotion to section leader or drum major (Posey, 2023). For marginalized students, mental health concerns like depression and anxiety may arise, when failing to meet the demands of higher expectations, such as in a rehearsal, stemming from their economic situation (Coley et al., 2018). Achieving this level of student-centered learning may also elevate students' visibility, which can be intimidating to these musicians (Goff, 2016). Rather than fearing their work, these students may worry about the name-calling and judgment of others in the neighborhood who question their ability (Dell'Angelo, 2016). Furthermore, academic success may entail the most challenging decision for a student in poverty: whether to leave their current neighborhood situation for the prosperity of a quality education (Ilari et al., 2016). Academic progression may mean disruption to their heavily relied-upon support structure. Jealousy is sometimes masked as the perception that success means rejecting their existing relationships for personal growth, a feat generally frowned upon in marginalized communities.

Rationale and Potential Implications

Table 2.1 provides a summary of the literature related to the rationale for my study. Specifically, they represent various examples of potential abuses and misuses by educators in the areas of cultural appropriation, congruence, and synchronization.

Table 2.1. Summary of Studies Examining Cultural Relevance in Music Education

Study	Cultural Framework	*N*	Data Type	Prominent Themes	Implication
Alegrado & Winsler (2020)	Synchronization	31,332	Quantitative	Retention in school ensembles	Cognitive skills equal band enrollment
Bell & Bell (2018)	Synchronization	n/a	Qualitative	Sequencing music with STEAM	Computational thinking in music classrooms
Bennett (2020)	Appropriation	4,228	Quantitative	Appropriation in music selection	More band repertoire of diverse composers
Bond & Russell (2019)	Congruence	228	Quantitative	Culturally responsive teaching in music education	More teacher comfortability in CRE concepts
Bonner et al. (2018)	Appropriation	430	Quantitative	Perceptions of culturally responsive teaching	Teachers should adopt CRT for positive outcomes in diverse students
Breger (2017)	Appropriation	495	Quantitative	Income linked to student achievement	School administrators should consider economic hardships when developing academic policies
Brooms (2019)	Appropriation	20	Qualitative	Promoting school culture and relationships	Promote positive school culture
Campbell (2017)	Synchronization	n/a	Philosophy	Culturally responsive teaching	Multicultural music for social justice
Carnevale et al. (2020)	Synchronization	n/a	Policy Review	Cultural merit for education	Reducing standardized entrance testing
Clemons & Toribio (2021)	Appropriation	88	Quantitative	Monolingual language in education	standard language linked to ethnicity
Coley et.al (2018)	Congruence	13,179	Quantitative	Poverty associated with depression and anxiety in adolescents	Need more school-based programs to focus on the mental health of youth

Table 2.1. (Continued)

Study	Cultural Framework	*N*	Data Type	Prominent Themes	Implication
Collins (2022)	Appropriation	4	Qualitative	Teaching experience in underserved schools	Longevity & student-centered content vital to teacher success in low SES schools
Conkling & Conkling (2018)	Synchronization	1	Qualitative	Income segregation & teacher retention	Require field experiences in low income schools
Daly et al. (2021)	Congruence	2,204	Quantitative	Teacher collaboration and social capital	Human capital increase student achievement
Dankoor et al. (2023)	Appropriation	16	Qualitative	Perceptions of males who listen to rap music	Rap listeners can have positive self-evaluations
Davila & Linares (2020)	Congruence	4	Qualitative	ESL teaching strategies	Empathy for diverse learning communities
Dell' Angelo (2016)	Synchronization	1,019	Quantitative	Poverty may impact student achievement	Principals should support teachers with self-efficacy
Drotos & Cilesiz (2016)	Synchronization	76	Qualitative	Theory of social capital in education	Understand social and economic barriers getting into college
Edelman (2019)	Appropriation	n/a	Policy Review	Criminalization of poverty	Advocacy programs to address social needs of people in poverty.
Elo & Porn (2018)	Synchronization	n/a	Quantitative	Language barriers	Authentic learning
Elpus (2022)	Congruence	940	Policy Review	Availability of arts programs in schools	High free-reduced lunch students may equal lower arts availability in schools

Table 2.1. (Continued)

Study	Cultural Framework	*N*	Data Type	Prominent Themes	Implication
Elpus & Abril (2019)	Congruence	25,210	Quantitative	Music enrollment based on class	Poverty may reduce participation in music
Escalante (2020)	Congruence	63	Qualitative	Equity vs. equality in music education	Social justice content in music teaching
Febrianti et al. (2021)	Appropriation	70	Qualitative	digital communication across cultures	Endearment within language for expression
Flynn et al. (2017)	Appropriation	n/a	Historical	Racial rules of society	Structural racism as barrier to wealth
Gellerstein (2021)	Appropriation	13	Qualitative	White supremacy in music education	Gatekeeping practices within K-12 music
Givens & Nasir (2019)	Synchronization	n/a	Philosophy	Schools show Black males are inferior	Showcase more Black male student achievement
Gorski et.al (2023)	Appropriation	n/a	Philosophy	Social justice in school to overcome oppression	Develop programs for social justice education in teacher training
Grey et al. (2018)	Appropriation	n/a	Lit. Review	Student-teacher relationship with Black students	Avoid color blindness in social emotional training in schools
Grogan (2022)	Synchronization	1	Qualitative	Competency, autonomy and relatedness in lower SES band programs	Long tenure, positive classroom environment may lead to success teaching low-income students
Guetto & Panichella (2019)	Synchronization	123,045	Quantitative	Family patterns and educational opportunities	Single parent households have worse educational opportunities
Hammel & Hourigan (2023)	Synchronization	1	Policy Review	Poverty and arts education	Support equity in school music

Table 2.1. (Continued)

Study	Cultural Framework	*N*	Data Type	Prominent Themes	Implication
Harrison (2020)	Cultural Synchronization	n/a	Philosophy	Human rights for poverty and music	Intervention plans should be implemented for poor youth
Hess (2017)	Appropriation	n/a	Policy Review	Social justice and music education	Value each student's unique contributions to music making
Hutton (2022)	Appropriation	4	Qualitative	Student teacher relationships in school	Develop opportunities to establishing relationships in classrooms
Jackson & Addison (2018)	Synchronization	12,900	Quantitative	Poverty creates achievement gaps	Student SES status may closely correlate with academic outcomes
Johannes (2021)	Congruence	21	Quantitative	Educational motivation	Social media apps for teenage learning
Jones (2020)	Synchronization	1	Qualitative	Community partnerships for inner city school music	Better support for non-profit programs to help inner city music programs.
Jorgensen (2020)	Appropriation	n/a	Philosophy	Classism in music education	Humanity towards music education
Kajikawa (2021)	Appropriation	1	Qualitative	Hip hop in musicology & theory	Integration of hip hop in collegiate music curriculum
Kelly (2018)	Appropriation	n/a	Policy Review	Social issues in music teaching	Social awareness of teaching music
Kong (2023)	Appropriation	n/a	Philosophy	Parental influence in music participation	Student participation depends on parent background
Lahrl et al. (2020)	Congruence	229	Quantitative	Home learning environment	Verbal interactions increase achievement

Table 2.1. (Continued)

Study	Cultural Framework	*N*	Data Type	Prominent Themes	Implication
Lee & Shon (2018)	Synchronization	n/a	Policy Review	Fundraising strategies during economic hardships	Societal economic changes affect fundraising outcomes
Lister (2021)	Congruence	n/a	Philosophy	Concepts of generational	Work to recognize the human
Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux (2017)	Congruence	148	Quantitative	Language barriers	Word-based skills equal higher reading comprehension
Marcuse (2023)	Synchronization	n/a	Philosophy	Music leads to high judgment in schools	Stop using competition as a measure of ensemble quality
Masko (2018)	Appropriation	20	Qualitative	Student-teacher relationships in urban schools	Establish high expectations by forging relationships
McKoy et al. (2017)	Congruence	18	Quantitative	Culturally responsive teaching for learning environments	Increase cultural awareness of more than just race in music teaching
Noguera & Syeed (2020)	Congruence	n/a	Policy Review	Failure in school reform policies	Reimagining the one size fits all approach to public school
Parrett & Budge (2020)	Appropriation	n/a	Policy Review	Low SES students in poverty and school culture	Understanding barriers for low SES kids to learn in school
Pleasanton (2023)	Congruence	3	Qualitative	Urban music education to Black students	Cultural barriers hinder student success
Poolpol (2021)	Appropriation	n/a	Historical	Classical music rotted in racism	Address accessibility of BIPOC musicians in classical music
Posey (2023)	Congruence	10	Qualitative	Student leadership in marching band	Develop student leadership training unique to the culture of the ensemble
Prichard (2021)	Congruence	105	Quantitative	Strategies for instrument practice	Guided practice produces more independent music students

Table 2.1. (Continued)

Study	Cultural Framework	*N*	Data Type	Prominent Themes	Implication
Richmond (2018)	Synchronization	n/a	Policy Review	Sociology of school ensembles	Student identity within school ensembles
Robinson & Hendricks (2017)	Congruence	1	Qualitative	Double consciousness within K-12 music	Lack of minorities in music education
Sargeant (2022)	Synchronization	14	Qualitative	Effects of integration on school bands	Integration forced declining band enrollment for Blacks
Sattin-Bajaj & Roda	Appropriation	18	Qualitative	School choice & middle class	School choice affects lower class
Schnieder & Coleman (2018)	Synchronization	n/a	Philosophy	Parental support for educational involvement	Develop resources to help low SES parents with educational choices
Shah & Coles (2020)	Congruence	3	Qualitative	Race noticing in K-12 education	Antiracist strategies in pre-service teaching
Stehle & Peters-Burton (2019)	Synchronization	96	Quantitative	Components of STEAM education	Self-regulation key to 21st Century curriculum
Treanor (2018)	Synchronization	n/a	Quantitative	Disadvantages of single mother homes in child development	Low income & high material deprivation equals low unemployment.
Veerbeek (2020)	Synchronization	1	Qualitative	Integration of Native American Bands	Using music to uplift culture
Zdzinski (2013)	Congruence	523	Quantitative	Family home life and music education	Home environment may affect music teaching practices

By studying the educational practices of secondary school bands in Title I schools, I hope to contribute to the discussion of best practices regarding cultural awareness when working with underserved students. Specifically, my study has potential implications for music teacher education, culturally relevant pedagogy, and music program priorities.

Music Teacher Education

Additional training exposing the challenges of teaching in Title I schools is needed to help music educators transition from pre-service teacher programs to employment in lower-income schools. A typical response from directors with low ratings on Music Performance Assessments is that the student's ability was hindered by their home environment. However, many new music educators may enter the profession with little to no training in poverty situations with their students. As such, teachers presume that marginalized students will comprehend the course material, including knowing how to play their instruments correctly to make beautiful music. Assumptions can also be made that their students will inherently understand basic musical terminology and fundamental theory, as sequenced in typical methodology books with minimal deviation. However, students in lower economic schools need proper instructional techniques to improve with sophisticated musical concepts, such as modeling and reteaching on an instrument. Moreover, it may be a consideration to recognize that students from poverty need a slower pace of instruction to grasp the mechanics of musicianship and that reading complex words, such as those on a performance scoresheet, is easier to learn with guidance.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy requires more of a focus on education, and less on assimilating underserved students in the ensemble classroom. Children, especially music

students, who can connect with a social group such as a band, choir, or orchestra in their schools that represent their identity have a far greater chance of graduating and succeeding academically and in performance (Sareth, 2018). This begins with the ensemble director's willingness to expand their pedagogical knowledge by learning about, and programming works from diverse backgrounds into their music assessment concert. Using works by underrepresented cultures provides a platform for students of poverty to connect theoretical understanding with cultural heritage. Nonetheless, progression in secondary ensembles does not necessitate replacing the traditions and terminology of performance-based assessment. Achievement versus empowerment in music performance should not be found in secondary level groups as much achievement *through* empowerment. A director can and should simultaneously teach marginalized students how to read an adjudication sheet to maximize their group rating through work written by diverse composers.

Music Program Priorities

Educators must determine the priority for teaching marginalized students, resulting in the right balance of academic or social-emotional growth. Secondary ensemble directors are constantly pressured to produce superior ratings at Music Performance Assessments. Results and ratings from events such as this, along with competitive marching bands, have justified the quantification of artistry in US public-school systems (Alverez-Diaz et al., 2021). A byproduct of this philosophy is the possible transition from an aesthetic appreciation for the art form into technical mastery of a concert program to achieve musical effect. Ensemble conductors may need to decide if the demonstration of achievement on their students' instruments at an advanced level outweighs several students not enrolling in their programs due to unattainable goals based upon outside influences. Alternatively, music educators could consider the lifelong impact of

music participation on their students, from building teamwork and dedication to developing their analytical and psychological cognitive learning processes. In short, secondary ensembles can choose to focus on difficulty and program beyond the ability level of the developing members of the group, or they can recognize that surviving music on a concert stage is not making music. Not every student in their program seeks to be a professional musician but finds playing an instrument a tremendous leisurely activity.

Conclusion

Music teacher education programs should consider providing music education majors with training and coursework that specifically addresses the needs of marginalized students in their ensembles. Additionally, continuous professional development opportunities can stockpile these teachers with progressive techniques to support their students from low-income situations while creating inclusive rehearsal spaces. Through these methods, music teachers can encourage poor students that their musical aspirations of superior performance are attainable while overcoming external obstacles. Collectively as a music community of professors, educators, and clinicians, we should recognize the increasing needs of marginalized students and adjust adjudication methods to reflect a nurturing and empowering performance environment. With an innovative curriculum that values underrepresented communities, directors create an environment where all students feel their contributions are recognized, thereby removing the middle-class teacher/poverty kid disconnect. Through this commitment to teacher training, while acknowledging the impact of poverty on their students, ensemble conductors could ensure that all students, regardless of background, realize their musical potential at assessment-based events.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this multiple explanatory case study (Yin, 2017) was to investigate the preparation of underserved school band programs for a Music Performance Assessment. Specifically, four cases demonstrated how band directors draw on culturally relevant pedagogy to prepare a Title I school band for an MPA event. I identified themes that formed recommendations from the school band directors and their university professors regarding rehearsal strategies, curriculum ideas, and program operations to invest in the long-term stability of a high-quality school band in low-income environments. Through "replication logic" (Yin, 2017, p. 108), I uncovered within each case how practical applications of cultural relevance (i.e., academic, economic, moral, and socioeconomic factors) may influence the achievement at an MPA event. Finally, a cross-case analysis was used to connect each case in developing teaching strategies for success in a low-income school band program. I aimed to investigate how rehearsal strategies learned in each director's undergraduate training were successful at their schools and whether rehearsal strategies at one Title I school could be replicated at another school with similar results.

Research Questions

In this study, I explored the following research questions:

1. How well do Title I bands prepare for a Music Performance Assessment?
    A. What are band director perceptions on the MPA process and the steps to achieve success?

B. To what extent are rehearsal strategies and music selections culturally relevant to an MPA performance?

C. To what extent do student-teacher relationships within Title I school bands contribute to the MPA Performance?

D. To what extent do undergraduate music education courses prepare future band directors to teach in Title I schools?

2. What recommendations can be made for assessing Title I school band achievements?

Research Paradigm

I used a critical realism paradigm to examine the disparities of secondary school bands within the context of financial means and hidden cultural expectations (Lawana, 2021). I used Bhaskar's philosophy of realism throughout my study to “elaborate necessary conditions of certain human activities,” which involved investigating low-income students and their preparation for an MPA (Archer et al., 2013 p. 4; Bhaskar, 2010). A key component, ontological realism, uncovered that the reality of unequal access to resources may have altered the perception of Title I bands that demonstrated signs of intonation, balance, tonality, and articulation deficiencies during their MPA concert (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2020). The three domains of ontology (i.e., the real, the actual, and the empirical) were showcased through Title I bands who scored lower on MPAs, lacked trust based on student-teacher connections, and "observed perceptions" that lower SES students do not value music education (Lawana, 2021, p. 4).

The epistemological objective of my paradigm focused on the live rehearsal experiences of the four band directors at Title I schools (Archer et al., 2013). In my study, I examined each

director's cultural background, values, and beliefs, along with their music education professors, while incorporating them into my rationale for increased awareness of appropriation at MPA events (Lawana, 2021). Specifically, I highlighted how performance traditions in school bands may create an assessment system, thereby creating an assessment system in which diverse musical expressions were not valued. I then analyzed the cultural meanings embedded in each band director's concert programming, exploring narratives regarding school-based ensembles and student culture.

My study explored a replication approach (Yin, 2017), each case highlighting the entire study regarding the success rate of Title I school bands scoring a Superior at an MPA contest. Each Title I school's strategy for success at MPA converged as a possible method for future concert bands to use to work toward superior ratings. Through decades of accumulating sociopolitical, moral, economic, and academic debt among BIPOC students in low-income schools, a reality of failure may have existed based on their communal, societal, and cultural beliefs behind performing in a school concert band (Ladson-Billing, 2006). Specifically, limited resources, large class sizes, and the pressures of standardized testing were considerable obstacles to creating an active, student-centered rehearsal environment. Additionally, "diverse understanding and multiple realities" captured perspectives on the lack of Title I school bands who were mastering concert literature at an MPA event (Patton, 2015, p. 122). The lack of cultural appropriation at MPA events reflected the interactions and disconnections with student musicians of color, noted by the lower achievement rates of high BIPOC ensembles.

Context of the Study: Music Performance Assessment

My experiences as a Black band director in Title I schools led to my interest in studying this topic. I am a product of the many lower-income neighborhoods in the US. I also possess the

emotional scars of desegregated bussing, affirmative action, and portraying the student whom many teachers thought would not achieve academic success. Throughout my schooling, I had only two BIPOC teachers to look to as mentors. Participation in my school band, however, kept me from being on the streets, in gangs, and away from the temptations of violence and law-breaking, which is often reported in the news. Though I could not afford private lessons or a professional model instrument, I used my talent, with the help of an exceptional high school band director, to escape the inner city and attend college as a music major. The lessons I learned about hard work and dedication guided me through an intensive undergraduate program where I was the only student of Color in most of my classes.

Like most band directors, my professional career involved preparing an ensemble to perform at the annual district-wide Music Performance Assessment. A consistency I noticed was that most low-income schools had failing scores at these events. Perhaps it was a coincidence, but most groups that scored lower at MPA events were primarily comprised of BIPOC students. Many of these ensembles were not dressed in standard concert attire, did not actively engage in their selected concert program, and displayed several musical errors in performance. Further, due to constant low ratings, I would see frequent openings for music teachers at these schools. At the same time, many directors jumped at the first opportunity to transfer to a more affluent school with bigger budgets, instructional coaching staff, and the ability to program more challenging works for concerts. As such, my methodology focused on the possible misuse of cultural relevance in the MPA scoring system. Specifically, I focused on the unique rubric and classification system and how it affected Title I schools' chances of success at these events.

School Classifications in MPA Events

Secondary school bands throughout several states are evaluated using a standardized Music Performance Assessment rubric. Each school, determined by its overall enrollment, is placed into one of five categories. For example, high school bands with 9th through 12th-grade enrollment of over 2,500 students are placed into class "A," while smaller schools are placed into other classifications (see Figure 3.1). Once a school is classified, they must perform band literature at an established difficulty level between I and VI, referred to as grade levels. For example, a concert band in class A must perform one piece at Level V and one at Level IV for evaluation, whereas a class C band would only be required to perform one Level II and one Level III piece. Each grade level has a list of required pieces approved by the state's Music Education Association. To receive a rating, the school ensemble must choose from these lists of approved pieces.

Table 3.1 shows the complete breakdown of school enrollment and the required difficulty level of music to receive a rating for an MPA event. Table 3.2 shows the breakdown of pieces in the MPA required performance list based on composer ethnicity. Using a Google search of each work selected by the state band committee, one can see that students are required to perform pieces from composers who are overwhelmingly White males.

Table 3.1. Classification Chart for High School Band for MPA

High School Enrollment 9-12	Classification	Required Music Selection for MPA
2501 or more	A	min (1) Grade IV, (1) Grade (V)
1876-2500	BB	min. (2) Grade IV
1251-1875	B	min. (1) Grade III, (1) Grade IV
626-1250	CC	min. (2) Grade III
1-625	C	min. (1) Grade II, (1) Grade III

Table 3.2. Ethnic Breakdown of Composers from 2022-23 MPA Required Selection List

Ethnicity of Composer	Number of Band Composers	Approved Number of Band Works on Required MPA List
White Male	527	1,627
Asian Male	4	4
Black Male	3	3
All Female	3	30
Total Composers	537	1,664

Rating and Scoring System

Each ensemble is critiqued in subcategories such as Performance Fundamentals, Technical Preparation, and Musical Effect (Document A, 2023). Each subcategory is further divided into sections that give the adjudicator several considerations when giving an ensemble an overall rating. The Performance Fundamentals category, for example, includes "Tone Quality, Intonation, Balance, Blend, and Physical Articulation." A rating of Superior is considered an “A” level grade and the highest score possible. An Excellent rating would be comparable to a “B”

level grade, a Good rating is similar to a “C” grade, and a Fair rating would be on par with a “D” level grade.

Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 show a numerical conversion of an MPA rating system (Groulx, 2010) for all schools in four counties. Specifically, a “Superior” rating is defined by the number 4, “Excellent” by the number 3, “Good” by the number 2, and “Fair” by the number 1. The number 0 was assigned to Concert Bands who went to MPA for “Comments Only” or were disqualified for a particular reason. An MPA rating was not assigned for the 2021 assessment due to cancellation because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

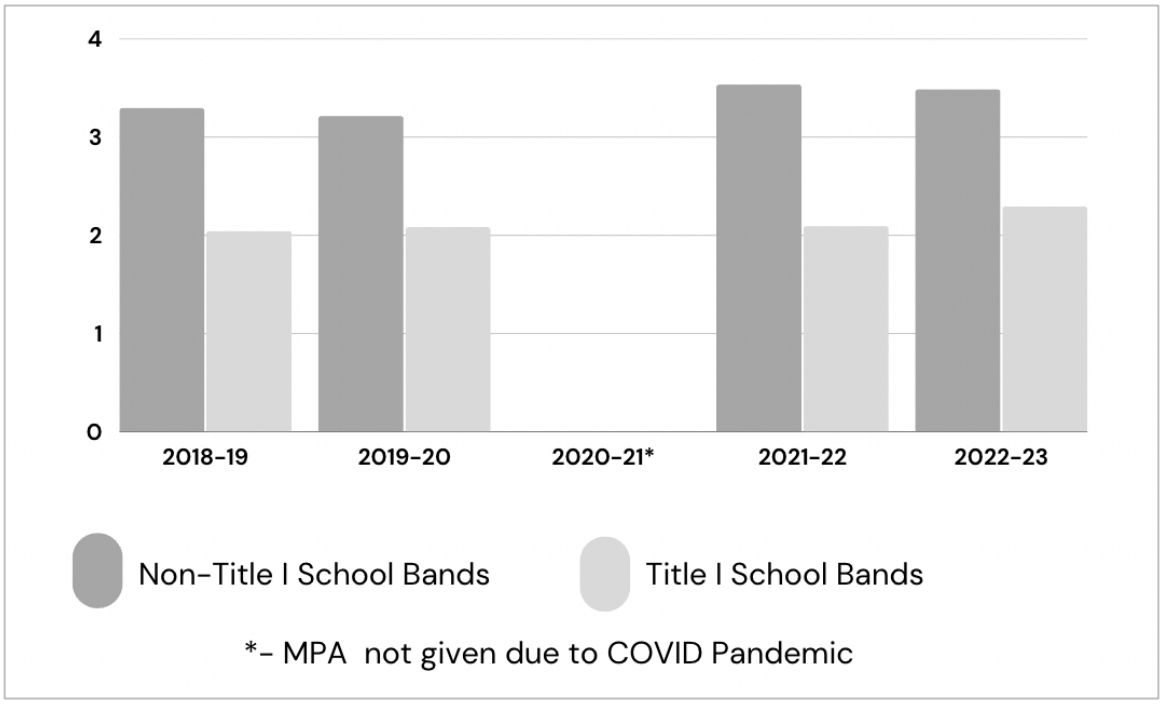


Figure 3.1. Average MPA Ratings for Charlie County 2018-2023

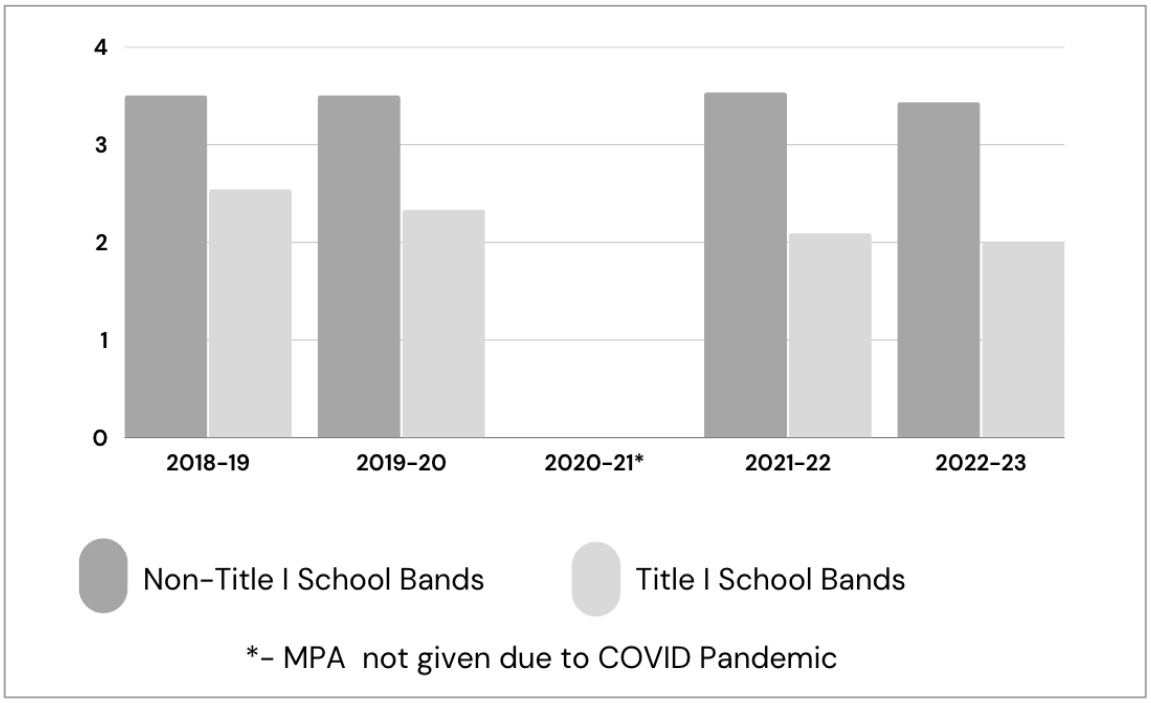


Figure 3.2. Average MPA Ratings for Paradise County 2018-2023

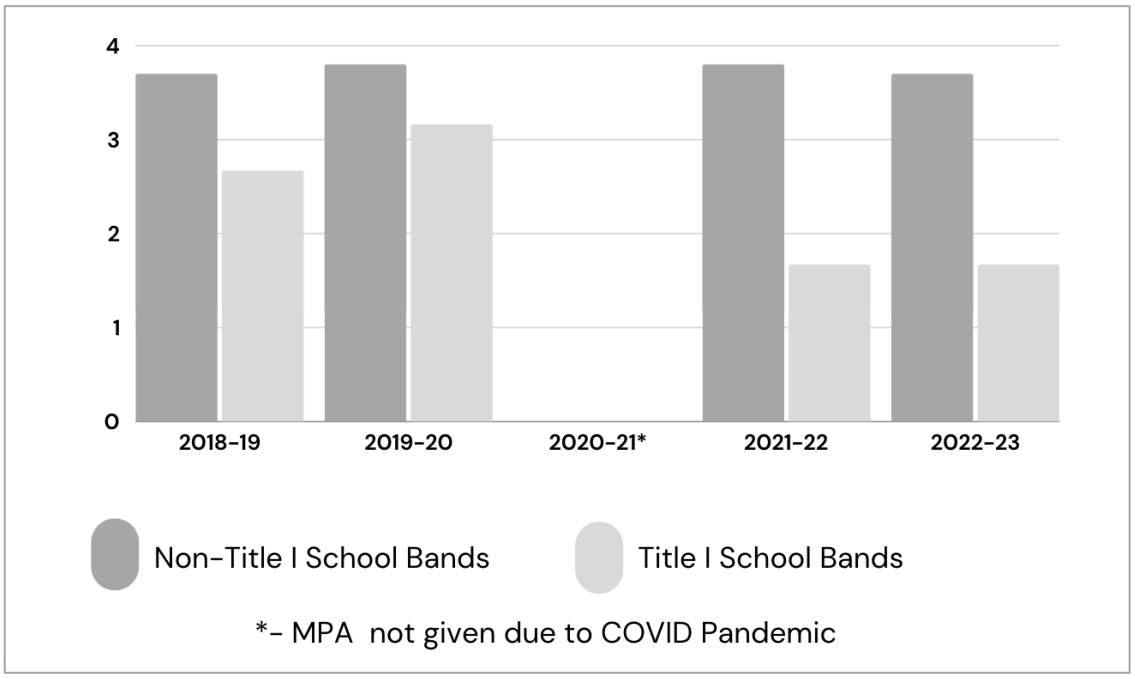


Figure 3.3. Average MPA Ratings for Luther County 2018-2023

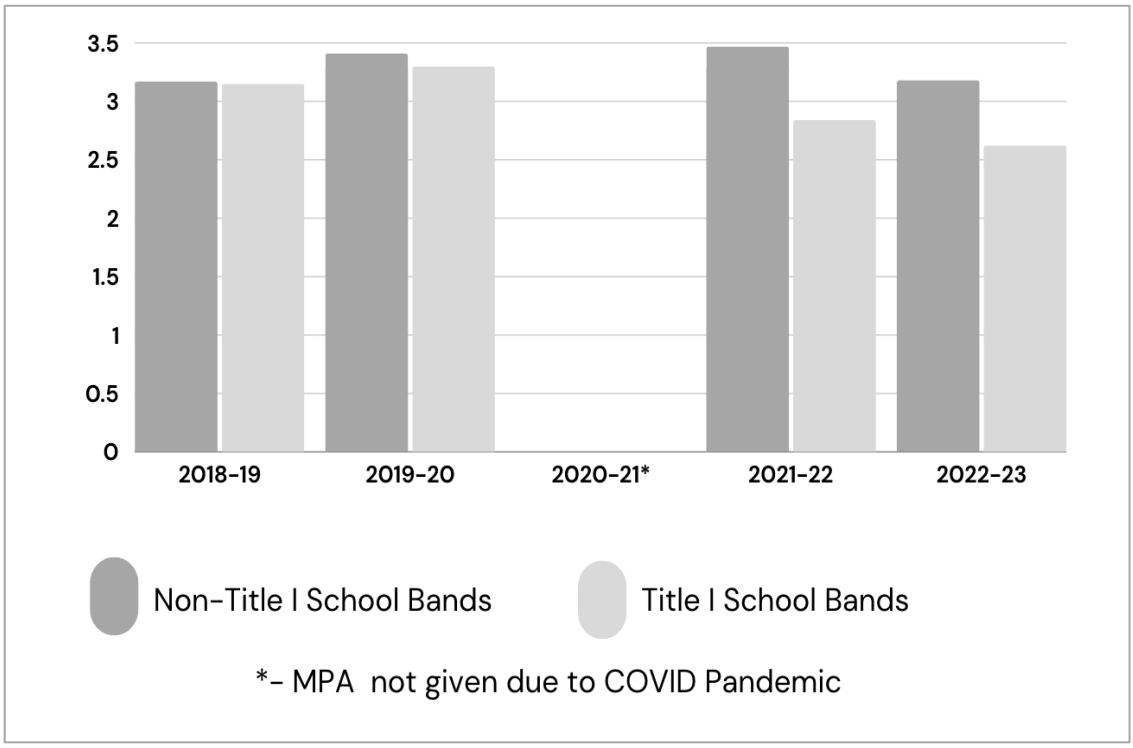


Figure 3.4. Average MPA Ratings for Magnolia County 2018-2023

Each school participating in their district's concert band MPA was assigned a number for the years between 2018 and 2023. The total number was then divided by the number of schools within each category within their district for each year of participation. A final score was given to each district to note the longitudinal change. Each county's schools are categorized into one of three Title I or non-Title I tier based on their district's qualification guidelines.

Figures 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 show a considerable achievement gap between Title I and non-Title I High School Concert Bands that attended MPA contests within the past four years. Based on their average scores, Title I bands have typically scored almost a rubric level lower than their non-Title I counterparts. For each district, the 2021 school year is scored with an "EX" to reflect the online/hybrid classroom model of instruction due to COVID-19; thus, no MPA event was scheduled. These observations are consistent with studies confirming that underprivileged

schools cannot compete with higher socioeconomic schools in Music Performance Assessments throughout the United States (Shouldice & Woolnough, 2022; Pittman, 2021; Warnet, 2021).

Participants

Title I School Band Directors

A sample of undergraduate music education professors (n = 4) and secondary school band directors (n = 4) was included in this study, each related to a Title I school band rehearsing through a typical concert cycle process for an MPA rating. Two directors scored an Excellent rating at their county-level 2024 MPA high school concert band event, and two received a Good rating. Three directors were recent graduates of a pre-service teacher program and has less than five years of experience. One director has 5-10 years of teaching experience in this environment. Two directors had at least one year of experience teaching in a Title I school band, and two were in the first year of their professional career. Furthermore, each attended a local university in two of the counties represented in my study and graduated with a bachelor's degree in music education. None of the band directors reported obtaining an advanced degree related to music or education at this point in their careers, nor have they taken initial steps to pursue additional graduate studies in their respective majors. These directors provided valuable insight into the long-term progression of the achievement gap between Title I and non-Title I school bands.

Music Education Professors

Each of the four band directors identified an undergraduate professor who taught a music education course during their pre-service training. Two were ranked as Assistant Professors with less than five years of experience teaching at the university level, one on tenure-track, and the other was a non-tenure-track instructor. Two had the rank of Associate Professor at their university, with one having 6-10 years and one over 15 years of experience in collegiate-level

instruction, one on tenure track and the other on a non-tenure track. All of them had a doctorate in either Music Education or Wind Band Conducting, along with experience directing an ensemble at the secondary level before pursuing advanced degrees. Each professor taught a band method class or a music education foundation class for at least one year. None of them have adjudicated an MPA event in the state within the previous five years. Their specific teaching course load included a combination of secondary instrument methods, conducting, foundations of music education, special needs in music education, internship in music education, and other courses designed to prepare pre-service teachers for employment in secondary schools. Additionally, each had some experience either teaching or interning in a Title I school before transferring into a collegiate position.

Recruitment

A recruitment email was sent through the master list of the state's Music Education Association, asking for volunteers to participate in this study. After obtaining consent, a brief survey was sent to interested parties asking about their experience teaching students from low-income areas, thereby narrowing my selection pool to my desired number of participants. Each band director was asked to share their most recent MPA rating and any specific comments they wished to include in the study, along with either audio or written comments from a clinician, indicating specific justification for the evaluation rating. Additionally, each university professor was asked to submit their most recent course syllabus from the music education course they were teaching. Demographic information was collected from participants. Specific variables included gender, ethnicity, years of teaching experience in a Title I school, teaching level, whether secondary or collegiate, and educational level.

Location

This research was conducted through fieldwork at two large urban school districts and two small to medium sized rural districts in the southeastern United States. Two of the districts were among the largest in the country in terms of enrollment. The other two reflected smaller enrollments, but heavily resemble the demographic of the other two districts. All four schools featured a population base that validated its selection for this study. Specifically, the demographic breakdown of the state is around 37% Hispanic, 30% White, 21% Black, and 6% multiracial (Document B, 2023). 64% of the student population was considered to be economically disadvantaged, and 63% of its schools qualify for one of the four funding mechanisms of Title I services (Document C, 2023).

Secondary concert band programs in this location have enjoyed regional and national recognition for their performance excellence. Several ensembles in this area have been invited to perform at international music conferences and major national competitions. Several school districts have consistently been featured as one of the top 100 music education communities in the United States (NAMM, 2023). Within the state band association, awards were available for directors who achieved a superior rating for five consecutive years and 15 years. Additionally, an award was dedicated to band directors who demonstrated a significant improvement in MPA scores compared to the previous year. As of this writing, none of the band director participants have won any of the mentioned awards.

Regarding financial support, most music programs in these districts were self-funded, for which they must fundraise for instruments, uniforms, sheet music, and part-time instrument tutors. Typically, school administrations only covered the cost of the band director. As such, these programs incorporated rather extensive parent booster associations that organize

fundraisers to cover the financial burden of operating thriving secondary school bands. Sponsorships and donations from community business leaders also made up a significant portion of revenue coming to the booster organization.

Research for this study took place over 14 weeks and was conducted during the 2024 MPA concert instruction cycle, which typically last from late January through March each school year. Specifically, I wanted to gain insight from the participants while they prepared their ensemble for this event, allowing their responses to be as naturalistic as possible. I then cross-referenced the interview responses with rehearsal videos, photographs of each band room, and adjudicator comments each ensemble received from their MPA event.

Survey Tool

Each participant took an initial online survey delivered through the Qualtrics platform (see Appendix A). I then generated questions from various studies on generational poverty and teaching underserved students (Alegrado & Winsler, 2020; Beverage, 2022; Spruce et al., 2021). Example questions included "What do enrollment patterns look like in your school band?" and "What makes this a Title I school?" Using a 7-point Likert scale, each participant was asked 15 questions about living in poverty, middle-class, and wealthy environments. The survey also asked for their age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, years of experience teaching in a Title I school, and other experiences working or volunteering with low-SES community organizations. These questions focused on how educators perceive cultural and economic aspects of lower-income versus middle- and higher-income home environments.

First, they were asked five scenario questions focusing on the economic differences between lower, middle, and higher SES neighborhoods (e.g., "I know what type of food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card"). Next, they were asked five

questions about musical activities within and outside of their typical work environment (e.g., “I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance”). Finally, they were asked about which career paths seem important to them (e.g., “I considered college to be my best choice for a career path in life”). I aimed to uncover possible *a priori* codes, which I would then use to craft my interview questions.

Interviews

Interview 1: Open-Ended Interviews

I initially chose a 45 to 60-minute open-ended interview sessions (see Appendices B and C) for my participants to “respond in a way which accurately represents their point of view” (Patton, 2015, p. 26). Each band director gave me their unique perspective in rehearsing their current students for a successful concert evaluation process at an MPA contest. In turn, each undergraduate professor identified by the teachers described the process of planning a curriculum that prepared these directors for teaching in a low-income school. This was consistent with participants' approach showcasing their individual experiences in the music teaching profession (Patton, 2015). Additionally, choosing this method allowed for a better representation of my participant's feelings and opinions without the restrictions of written questionnaires or reflection journals. Their responses addressed key areas of cultural bias within the required music selection list, along with possible concerns with students understanding the MPA rubric to achieve a high rating. Finally, in these interviews, each participant had opportunities to express their opinions on their experiences in undergraduate music education courses and how they prepared college graduates to teach band in a Title I school.

Interview 2: Semi-Structured Interviews

I incorporated follow-up questions (see Appendices D and E) using a semi-structured interview approach (Patton, 2015). This method helped me to establish categories of responses, which became some of my initial codes. Data collected in my open-ended questions was connected to participant responses to the related literature about ensemble training in Title I schools. In doing so, I discovered some commonalities between the interviews of the band directors and university professors (Miles et al., 2020). One of these comparisons included the disconnect between the personal values of middle- to higher-SES teachers and their lower-SES students. Another included contrasts between the teaching strategies of band directors at schools who were successful in achieving a Superior rating at MPA versus those who could have been more successful. These comparisons lead to coding, which allowed me to cluster responses into three major dimensions: formalized language comprehension, class and economic differences in secondary ensemble etiquette, and understanding the cultural difficulties teaching students in lower SES situations.

Focus Groups

In addition to interviews, I asked my eight participants to come together for one 90-minute focus group session via Zoom. With this session, I utilized a key informant interview approach for my questions (see Appendix F), taking advantage of the expert knowledge of each university professor in the music education field compared to what each band director used daily in their rehearsals (Patton, 2015). This focus group meeting allowed me to cross-reference individual responses with spontaneous reactions in an open and friendly format (Barbour & Barbour, 2018). From this conversation, I aimed to use heterogeneity sampling to formulate possible themes based on common patterns of their shared experiences in Title I school bands

(Patton, 2015). Specifically, I focused on brainstorming success strategies to achieve high MPA ratings despite the challenges of teaching in lower SES environments. These ideas included the review and overhaul of the MPA rubric criteria to reflect a fair and equitable rating for every ensemble, reevaluation of the school classification and music selection process to reflect challenges of teaching in a lower SES school, and possible considerations to incorporate more opportunities for Title I teaching in university pre-service training courses.

Procedures

I required participants to accept an informed consent before starting the intake demographic survey (Miles et al., 2020). Due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the study, I did not feel that interviewing students or their families would have given me an accurate picture of the process of rehearsal planning and programming. Table 3.3 shows an approximate timeline that I followed for data collection and analysis.

Table 3.3. Study Timeline

Weekly Schedule	Title I Band Directors	University Professors
Week 1	Finalized participants for study	Finalized participants for study
	Informed Consent form	Informed Consent form
	Collected Previous MPA adjudication comments and ratings.	Collected Music Education course syllabi
Week 2	Completed intake demographic survey	Completed intake demographic survey
Week 3	Conducted Interview 1: Open Ended	Conducted Interview 1: Open Ended
	Submitted MPA Concert Program list	
Week 4	Field observation of rehearsal	Field observation of university class
Week 5	Participant review of transcript from interview 1	Participant review of transcript from Interview 1
Week 6	First cycle coding completed	First cycle coding completed
Week 7	Conducted Interview 2: Semi-Structured	Conducted Interview 2: Semi-Structured

Table 3.3. Continued

Week 8	Field observation at MPA Performances	Field observation of university class
Week 9	Submitted MPA comments from the current concert cycle.	Submitted a sample student assignment from a current class.
	Participant review of transcript from Interview 2	Participant review of transcript from Interview 2
Week 10	Focus Group Session	Focus Group Session
Week 11	Participant review of transcript from focus group	Participant review of transcript from focus group
Week 12	Second cycle coding completed	Second cycle coding completed
Week 13	Thematic analysis completed	Thematic analysis completed
Week 14	Compiled results completed report	Compiled results completed report

I conducted two interviews and one focus group with each participant. Two of the music education professor interviews were conducted via an online interview using Zoom, and two were conducted in person during the participants' office hours. The band director interviews were all completed via Zoom during their school's planning period.

The open-ended interviews (Patton, 2015), lasting between 45 and 60 minutes for each participant, helped to identify possible barriers in lower SES secondary bands to achieving high MPA scores at the same rate as their higher SES counterparts (see questions in Appendix B & C). I began with a narrative inquiry (Patton, 2015) example, a band director's question, "Can you tell me about your ensemble and how it fits into your school vision?" and a professor's question, "Can you tell me about your course offering and how it fits into the overall music education curriculum of your school of music?" I transitioned to follow-up questions such as "How does preparing your students for an MPA event fit into the philosophy of how you structure your lesson planning?"

The semi-structured (Patton, 2015) interview, also lasting 45 to 60 minutes each, focused on how the pre-service music education training at each respective university prepared teachers for success in conducting secondary bands in a Title I school. Specifically, I investigated how the use of formal versus casual language in rehearsals, along with the MPA rubric and student understanding of the unwritten rules of ensemble etiquette, affect participation in a school band at a Title I school. I referred to previous responses by asking such questions as "Based upon your previous experience at an MPA contest, what is your opinion regarding the repertoire selection of the required music reading list"? or "Based on the success rate of former pre-service teachers at this university in MPA events, what is your opinion on the required music list for music selection?" I aimed for each participant to reflect upon how much of the undergraduate pre-service curriculum at each university was devoted to teaching students in lower socioeconomic environments. The expectation was to learn how each ensemble used the challenges of their unique school population to better prepare for a successful performance at an MPA event.

Analysis

Data Sources

I utilized the Otter transcription software to collect the director and professor's audio transcripts. This transcription service best equipped me to record my participants' verbatim responses (Patton, 2015). I also employed methodological triangulation (Patton, 2015) and explored "a variety of data sources" (p. 316) to test for inconsistencies by collecting audio and written samples of previous adjudicator critiques from the ensembles in the study. Additionally, I requested syllabi from current undergraduate music education courses to offer more insight into the material taught and its transfer to work with a Title I school band. I then uploaded them onto

the MaxQDA software, allowing me to organize and categorize significant quotes electronically, thereby coding “high quality, accessible data” (Miles et al., 2020, p. 39) into eventual themes.

Both within-case and cross-case analysis contributed to determining possible strategies for achieving a high rating at an MPA event (Yin, 2017). Initially, I provided an in-depth investigation of four Title I school band programs to gain insight into the broader concept of cultural relevance within MPA concert preparation. The purpose of using a within-case analysis was to thoroughly understand the complexities of preparing a graded concert, given each school's unique socio-cultural and economic challenges. Then, using a cross-case analysis, I compared the four schools to identify common patterns, trends, or differences across the cases. By incorporating this approach, I examined how the different cases related to each other or produced a similar result at MPA. Specifically, I aimed to use cultural relevance as a phenomenon to identify overarching themes or principles that could be useful for future teachers who will be preparing an ensemble for MPA in a Title I band program.

I triangulated the data, consisting of 16 interview transcriptions of different viewpoints of the MPA preparation experience. Several sources verified this for “consistency in overall data patterns” (Patton, 2015, p. 662). Table 3.4 shows examples of data source and methodology triangulation that I used for “convergent evidence” (Yin, 2017, p. 193) of the participant interviews (Patton, 2015). Specifically, I provided examples of artifacts such as the posted ratings of each director's school band via the state's Music Educators Association website, written comments from previous adjudicators, course syllabus from undergraduate music education courses, and recorded examples of comments adjudicators evaluating a Title I school ensemble. Additionally, video rehearsal observations were conducted with the ensembles in the

study, confirming detailed accounts of rehearsal techniques during the school's MPA concert cycle.

Table 3.4. Data Source and Methodological Triangulation

Triangulation Item	Purpose
Data Sources	
MPA Scores from State MEA	Verification of rating from a Title I School Band
Clinician Audio/Written Comments	Justification for rating of a Title I School Band at MPA
Music Education Course Syllabus	Verification of training for teaching in Title I School
Student Sample Project: Music Ed course	Assessment sample for teacher training within a Title I School
Websites: Participant Bios, Schools	Verification of Title I School status, Professor education background and Secondary School Demographic information
Title I School Accountability Reports	Verification of School qualification for Title I grant services
School of Music Course Catalog	Verification of course offerings for Title I training undergraduate music education.
Transcripts of Title I Band Directors	Verification of rehearsal techniques and barriers for success in teaching Title I School Bands
Transcript of University Professors	Verification of course curriculum for Title I School teacher training
Methods	
Video Observations	Observing rehearsal techniques and classroom instruction of teaching methodologies for Title I School Bands
Individual Interviews	Collection of detailed accounts of the process in preparing a Title I School Band for the MPA event.
Focus Groups	Collection of success strategies for teaching band in Title I Schools
Demographic Intake Survey	Collection of demographic information and participant familiarity of lower socioeconomic barriers in Title I Schools.
Examination of Submitted Artifacts	Verification of rehearsal techniques and barriers for success in teaching Title I School Bands
Examination of Provided Websites	Verification of rehearsal techniques and barriers for success in teaching Title I School Bands

First Cycle Coding

Using Ladson-Billings' (2006) educational debt theory as my guide, I began my initial coding with *a priori* categories or financial, moral, social-political, and disconnect, representing possible reasons for achievement gaps from Title I school bands (Miles et al., 2020). For each interview transcript, I utilized deductive coding and concept coding methods in the first cycle to organize the topic of opportunity gaps within Title I concert bands to data segments from previous research (Saldaña, 2021). Deductive coding allowed me to begin a starting point using "Process Codes" (p. 149), such as a feeling or action by the interviewee and a short phrase of reference to particular statements. The data were then sorted into three colmns: one for my transcripts, a second for establishing a preliminary code list, and the third listing the final codes (Saldaña, 2021). I formed the second column with preliminary codes based on reflective questions after my interviews, such as "How exactly are they rehearsing their bands?" or "What can pre-service teachers learn from this course?" I used concept coding from this second column to organize the written notes into categories (Saldaña, 2021). This entailed using short words or phrases that broaden concepts of teaching underserved band students.

Intercoder Reliability

To ensure the rigor and transparency of the coding frame, I incorporated qualitative inter coder reliability to reduce subjectivity and bias (Cheung & Tai, 2023). Specifically, I recruited a fellow doctoral music education student with an extensive band background and research training to serve as a second coder for one interview and three artifacts (Cofie et.al, 2022). The second coder had experience analyzing qualitative data with several published articles, thereby knowing that their coding would also be deductive for my initial interviews (Cheung & Tai,

2023). Additional steps were taken to ensure that the additional coder was external and removed from the current investigation (Cofie et.al, 2022).

A sample of four transcripts were given to the second coder for an independent review. In addition, I took the same transcript and coded the same data points. The second coder was given a copy of my initial codebook for reference, along with an uncoded transcript and an Excel sheet with specific data points. The results showed the total artifacts represented approximately 88% of agreement between each item and 12% of disagreement. To measure the reliability of both coders agreeing on the same codes along the remaining artifacts, Cohen's Kappa was calculated with the sample transcript (Cohen, 1960). After comparing the two different coders' results of analysis, it was determined through Cohen's Kappa that the raters had a positive ratio of 0.66, which indicates a moderate agreement among both coders (Cole, 2023; Landis & Koch, 1977).

Second Cycle Coding

The second cycle involved focused coding and evaluation coding, allowing me to convert my initial categories into emergent themes (Saldaña, 2021). Using focused coding from my initial categories from the first cycle, I reviewed my transcripts for ways to consolidate my notes into common themes. From there, I identified commonalities between codes from my participant interviews and merged them into broader themes. I aimed to uncover codes that reflected the related literature on the success rate of Title I school bands at MPA contests. With evaluation coding, I then defined each code with previous data along with the rationale of my study (Saldaña, 2021). Specifically, I created my final set of codes to describe the merit and policy view of MPA and its role in creating an achievement gap between Title I and non-Title I school bands (Deterding & Waters, 2021). Once completed, I began transferring my codes to "narrative form" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 344) to begin organizing my themes.

Emergent Themes

Using code weaving (Saldaña, 2021), I began to create major categories from my lists of codes. Like my first coding cycle, I developed a three-column matrix data display to develop my emergent themes (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003). My first column consisted of my generated codes from each cycle. The second column contained a quote or passage from an interview transcript that supports my selected codes. Finally, my third column attempted to interpret the findings of each code and make connections to form my emergent themes. For example, my first column had the code "balance" from my first cycle and "lack of instrumentation" from the second cycle. I then tied them to data collected in the transcript, such as a participant stating, "The balance issues on our ballad were mainly due to the lack of proper instrumentation in our ensemble." In my third column, I interpreted my codes as a band director "choosing music which best fits their lack of proper instrumentation." Finally, using MaxQDA transcription software (Miles et al., 2020), I used a hierarchy arrangement to organize my codes based on frequency. From there, I saw which codes would be considered for my emergent themes from this method.

CHAPTER FOUR: WITHIN-CASE ANALYSIS

The following four case studies provide illustrative views of the preparation of Title I school bands to perform at a Music Performance Assessment (MPA). The data was collected over three months between February and April 2024. The cases identify common patterns or trends in the financial, political, sociocultural, and moral challenges of teaching band at a Title I high school. I interviewed four high school band directors (Tyler, Chris, Joel, and Evan) from a southeastern US state to gain insight into the relationship between culturally relevant pedagogy and preparation strategies for a Music Performance Assessment. In each instance, I spoke with university professors (George, Suzy, Alex, and Mike) from whom these directors took music education courses to understand better the training each director received to prepare them for public school teaching. I also visited each community to gain an insight into the importance of each school to the surrounding area, thereby considering the holistic views of each case (Yin, 2017). Finally, I collected video samples of rehearsals from each director and evaluation comments from their MPA performance to gain a deeper understanding of their rehearsal techniques and results from their local MPA event.

I assigned pseudonyms to maintain anonymity of the band directors and professors. The schools and districts were given pseudonyms to represent common school names associated with low-income environments (Central High School, Memorial High School, Eagle Heights High School, and George Washington High School). The names of the universities where each professor teaches were not named, as this information was not vital to the results of my study. Each participant took an initial intake survey to assess their familiarity with fundamental aspects

of lower, middle, and high-class society. The purpose of this survey was to gauge the lifestyle choices of each participant, along with determining the extent to which each director/professor could relate to the student population of Title I schools. As I incorporated a replication approach with each case, I paid close attention to presenting each school holistically (Yin, 2017). Specifically, through my analysis of each case, I allowed the reader to get insider access to the band program to view patterns of cultural misappropriation, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Each case was located within a different corner of the state and is representative of the public schools in their respective areas. Two school districts, Luther and Magnolia (Cases 1 and 4) were in smaller, rural parts of the state that typically have small to medium-sized school districts. In contrast, Charlie and Paradise County Public Schools (Cases 2 and 3) were in major metropolitan centers as large school districts. The demographics for each school were similar to the overall student population in their area in terms of ethnicity, median household income, and family structure. Each theme in the four cases presents a unique obstacle that each band director navigated to prepare their ensemble to perform at their respective district MPA.

Case 1: Tyler, Central High School

Tyler was a 23-year-old white male band director at Central High School in the Luther County Public School District. He was in his second year at the school and in his first job after graduating with a bachelor's degree in music education. His primary instrument was brass, and he did not report experience teaching in a capacity other than school-based music programs. As shown in Table 4.1, Tyler's initial intake survey indicated that he was most familiar with a middle-class lifestyle. He strongly agreed that college was the best decision to better his career and that he knows how to register his biological child for school music extension programs such as after-school lessons, community youth ensembles, and performance competitions. He

indicated that he needed to become more familiar with living in a poor environment. He strongly disagreed that he had ever attended a hip-hop, Spanish, or electronic dance concert, which are genres trendy among lower-income students. He was also not as versed in typical problems that lower SES students may face daily, such as knowing what products could be purchased with an EBT card, maintaining social networks without an online connection, and knowing how to move to another location if he were evicted suddenly.

Table 4.1. Tyler's Intake Survey Results

Question	Response
Lower Income/Poverty Class	
I know what food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card.	Disagree
I regularly attend hip-hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concerts.	Strongly Disagree
I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, the internet, or a smart device.	Disagree
I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours notice.	Disagree
I know how to obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost.	Neither Agree nor Disagree
Middle Class	
I considered college my best choice for a career path in life.	Strongly Agree
I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a "step-up" model in the future.	Agree
I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above.	Agree
I know how to "be my own boss" and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction.	Somewhat Disagree
I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons.	Strongly Agree

Table 4.1. Continued

Higher/Wealthy Class	
I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance.	Somewhat Agree
I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal.	Somewhat Agree
Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is vital.	Disagree
I have the means to send a child to a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state.	Disagree
I owned an instrument that was considered "professional level" before attending college as a music major	Somewhat Agree

Tyler's University Professors

George. George was a 51-year-old white male professor at the university where Tyler obtained his music education degree. While in school, Tyler took George's course in secondary instrumental music methods. Besides this class, George taught several graduate-level courses in wind band conducting and was the conductor of the wind ensemble in the School of Music. He frequently conducted clinics for honor bands and conventions throughout the country, and he was heavily involved with developing new and progressive compositions for wind band. He has a doctorate in music education and over 15 years of experience teaching at the collegiate level. Before that, George taught middle school band for four years in a rural school with several Title I students enrolled in his ensembles.

As shown in Table 4.2, George also responded most favorably to middle-class scenarios, compared to the ones that reflected wealth or poverty. He shared similar responses to Tyler regarding going to college, being involved with musical activities outside of school, and being unfamiliar with food insecurities and eviction protocol. He also identified with several middle-class and wealthy aspects of life, such as proper restaurant etiquette and the process for acquiring

a professional-level instrument from a music store. He indicated a need for knowledge to start a small business and own a vacation home, which are components of having disposable income, as found typically in more affluent family lives.

Table 4.2. George's Intake Survey Results

Question	Response
Lower Income/Poverty Class	
I know what food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card.	Disagree
I regularly attend hip-hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concerts.	Disagree
I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, the internet, or a smart device.	Somewhat Agree
I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours notice.	Disagree
I know how to obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost.	Agree
Middle Class	
I considered college my best choice for a career path in life.	Strongly Agree
I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a "step-up" model in the future.	Agree
I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above.	Agree
I know how to "be my own boss" and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction.	Disagree
I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons.	Strongly Agree
Higher/Wealthy Class	
I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance.	Somewhat Agree
I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal.	Agree
Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is vital.	Disagree
I have the means to send a child to a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state.	Somewhat Agree
I owned an instrument that was considered "professional level" before attending college as a music major	Agree

Suzy. Suzy, a 35-year-old white female, was another professor who guided Tyler through his undergraduate program at the university. She taught beginning and advanced conducting classes, woodwind, and brass techniques classes, and conducts one of the concert bands at the university. Like George, she was a clinician who was heavily requested as a conductor and adjudicator for honor bands and marching band events. Suzy was also on several national panels that work towards diversity, equity, and inclusion in the wind band sphere. She was in her third year as assistant professor of music. Before this role, Suzy taught high school band outside a major urban city in the northeastern United States. Her experience in Title I school included her pre-service teaching, where she was required to spend half her internship at an inner-city school.

As shown in Table 4.3, Suzy showed more knowledge of poverty-level circumstances than some of the other participants. She was familiar with the type of food products one can purchase with a government assistance card, knows where to find short-term housing after being evicted, and knows how to obtain a music instrument with little to no available credit. Additionally, she has an expert knowledge of middle-class indicators and regularly attends symphonic concerts. Suzy also has had experience setting a fine dining table, and felt that having disposable income to purchase items such as vacation homes and property was extremely important to her.

Table 4.3. Suzy's Intake Survey Results

Question	Response
Lower Income/Poverty Class	
I know what food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card.	Agree
I regularly attend hip-hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concerts.	Somewhat Disagree
I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, the internet, or a smart device.	Disagree
I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours notice.	Agree
I know how to obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost.	Strongly Agree
Middle Class	
I considered college my best choice for a career path in life.	Strongly Agree
I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a "step-up" model in the future.	Strongly Agree
I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above.	Strongly Agree
I know how to "be my own boss" and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction.	Somewhat Agree
I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons.	Strongly Agree
Higher/Wealthy Class	
I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance.	Strongly Agree
I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal	Agree
Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is vital.	Agree
I have the means to send a child to a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state.	Disagree
I owned an instrument that was considered "professional level" before attending college as a music major	Agree

Central High School (CHS)

Central High School in Luther County, with a state rating of "C" for overall academic achievement, was considered a small urban school by the state, with around 1,500 students enrolled in grades 7-12. According to their school accountability report, an overwhelming majority of students identify as being of Color, and 100% reported being eligible for free/reduced lunch. Several of the students were considered homeless, almost a third identified as having special needs, and 15% are English language learners. The graduation rate has been considerably lower than the state average for several years. From a Title I standpoint, the school received additional targeted support due to several subgroups of students needing assistance for grade level achievement in reading and math. Also, the COVID pandemic caused a widening achievement gap in all school subject areas. As part of their school improvement plan, a major focus has been placed on more opportunities for reading in every class, creating positive campus experiences for students and staff. One bright spot of the school was its athletic program. The football team has won three of the last four state championships in their class, and the basketball and track teams are nationally ranked.

The success of the athletic programs has trickled down to the need for a quality band program to play at these events. The pride and support were evident during my visit as the football stadium had recently installed a synthetic turf field, a large banner that read "Welcome to Titletown," and new sound equipment. The band's enrollment history was very similar to that of the school. Enrollment declined drastically after COVID-19, leaving it with around 23 members. Central's band has historically received Good to Excellent ratings at their District MPA. According to the state MPA results, they last scored a Superior in concert band in 2007. Table 4.4 shows the recent scores from the previous five years of MPA events in which Central

participated. It is also noted that Central's ratings from 2019-2022 were with a previous band director. Despite the school population and band enrollment comprised mostly of students of Color, Table 4.5 shows that all three pieces selected for the 2024 district MPA were composed by White males. Central was grouped into Class E according to the state MEA rules and regulations and performed two works at a Grade 2 Level. All 2021 district MPA events in the state were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 4.4. Recent Scores for Central High School at MPA

Ensemble	2019*	2020*	2022*	2023	2024
Concert Band	Good (III)	Excellent (II)	Excellent (II)	No Rating (Comments Only)	Good (III)

*denotes previous band director

Table 4.5. 2024 MPA Concert Program for Central High School (Class E)

Title of Piece	Composer	Grade Level	Composer Demographics
High School Cadets	Sousa/Contorno	1	White Male
Anthem	John Edmonson	2	White Male
Glen Canyon Overture	John Edmonson	2	White Male

From my participant interview transcripts, MPA adjudication comments, school accountability reports, videotaped rehearsals, and various artifacts, I noted 437 codes in my case analysis. Table 4.6 shows the percentages of frequencies for the coded statements at Central High School. In the initial analysis, Ladson-Billing's theory of educational debt was used to organize four prominent themes within the data: Student Culture, Preparedness, Financial

Support, and Instrumentation. The four initial a priori codes (i.e., financial, moral, social, and political) fall within several places within the chart and represent more than 60% of all coded segments. Overall, student culture accounted for the most frequent code at 39%, while preparedness represented 25%, financial support at 20%, and instrumentation at 16%. The following section provides detailed excerpts from each highlighted theme.

Table 4.6. Prominent Themes and Codes for Central High School

Code	% of Material Coded
Culture (39%)	
Student expectations	11%
Student investment	10%
Student enrollment	9%
Grade level	3%
Student growth	2%
Reading	2%
Cultural traditions	1%
Transportation concerns	1%
Preparedness (25%)	
Conductor expectations	10%
Informed musical decisions	7%
Culturally relevant	5%
Teacher turnover	1%
Growing up	1%
Opportunity	1%
Financial Support (20%)	
Band funding	11%
Rebuilding program	7%
Employment	1%
Free/reduced lunch	1%

Table 4.6. Continued

Instrumentation (16%)	
Instrument repair	8%
Lack of instrumentation	5%
Music assessment	1%
Take it seriously	1%
Student playing level	1%

CHS Theme 1: Culture. Based on my data, the lack of a positive student culture at Central High School may impact the band program and its low ratings in recent Music Performance Assessments. This was noted in almost 40% of the coded segments.

Student Expectations. The Central High School band faced enormous challenges preparing for MPA because the student community expected that they would fail academically. Tyler mentioned many times how students generally did not enjoy going to Central due to its low academic performance and focus on reading remediation in all subject areas. He often referred to the students calling it a “ghetto school” where “they don't care how they do in school if they get suspended, that's a good thing, it means they don’t have to come to class for a few days" (Interview 1, February 16, 2024). He further expressed his frustration that many teachers on campus felt that students don't want to apply themselves to education, and that "any teacher can see potential in a student, but they have to see it within themselves in order to make learning happen." George, Tyler’s professor, mentioned that the biggest “real world” take away from learning to be a band director should be as follows:

> If you don't have a plan, you will fail as a teacher. If you don't have a belief system, you will fail. If you don't have a plan for what will happen in your classroom, the students will make it for you. If you don't know what's important, specifically the direction of your

band program, the students will make that decision for you. (Interview 1, February 19, 2024)

George further discussed his philosophy on motivating an ensemble by stating:

> There are lots of directors who will be happy to help you with this. However, you've got to step out of your bubble and start looking for it. You've got to start meeting people. If speaking to people is uncomfortable for you, tough! You need to go to the best schools in the area. You need to go to the worst schools in the area. You need to go into schools that you would think are bad but have thriving programs. Ultimately, it's all about the teacher and the passion and planning they bring into their bands. (Interview 1, February 19, 2024)

Central needed help demonstrating more advanced music performance concepts such as phrasing, intonation, balance, and blending as an ensemble during their MPA performance. All three clinicians unanimously agreed that the students could achieve better artistry and musicality if they were to go deeper into their preparation for future performances. Figure 4.1 shows a comment made by one of the adjudicators from their district MPA event where they scored a Good rating rather than Superior due to the ensemble having potential but needing to work on consistency in several technical areas. Several of the recorded comments also indicated that the ensemble lacked musical maturity. Specifically, they mentioned that the ensemble should continue working daily on fundamentals like long tones, scale techniques, and other artistry concepts like "learning to crescendo and decrescendo while maintaining proper pitch" (Central HS MPA clinician comments, March 29, 2024).

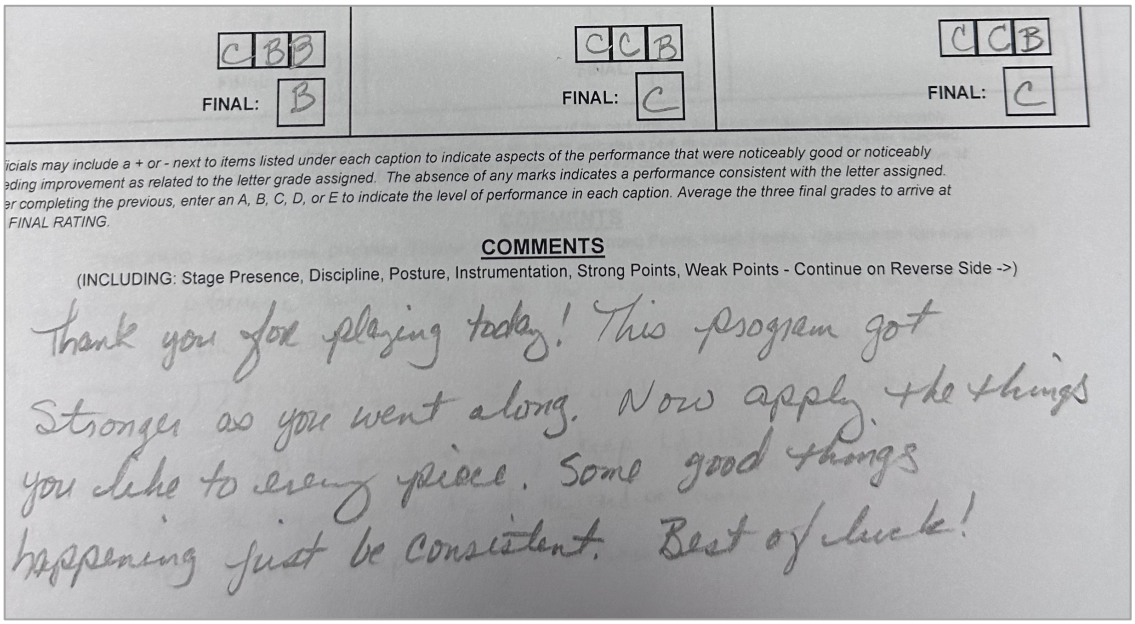

C B B
FINAL: B
C C B
FINAL: C
C C B
FINAL: C
icials may include a + or - next to items listed under each caption to indicate aspects of the performance that were noticeably good or noticeably
eding improvement as related to the letter grade assigned. The absence of any marks indicates a performance consistent with the letter assigned.
er completing the previous, enter an A, B, C, D, or E to indicate the level of performance in each caption. Average the three final grades to arrive at
FINAL RATING.
COMMENTS
(INCLUDING: Stage Presence, Discipline, Posture, Instrumentation, Strong Points, Weak Points - Continue on Reverse Side ->)
Thank you for playing today! This program got
Stronger as you went along. Now apply the things
you like to every piece. Some good things
happening just be consistent. Best of luck!

Figure 4.1. 2024 MPA Adjudication Comments for Central High School

Tyler acknowledged that, despite the school's initiative for students to learn reading comprehension, he spent little time teaching his students the concepts behind the terminology of the MPA rubric. Instead, he focused on teaching musical categories in terms of "box one being performance fundamentals, box two as technical preparation, and box three being music expression," where the goal was to achieve excellence in all three boxes (Interview 2, March 5, 2024). Tyler's other university professor, Suzy, also stated that she discusses with students in her conducting courses "general topics that would affect how they prepare for MPA such as score study and making musical decisions" (Interview #2, March 6, 2024). She reframed the specific goal of "preparing future ensembles for an MPA event" as, instead, learning to become effective at rehearsing and conducting an ensemble in general.

Student Investment. In line with the student culture issues at Central, Tyler felt that there needed to be more student investment in creating a high-performing concert band that could consistently score a superior rating at their district MPA. He mentioned that many students who

sign up for band only cared about playing drumline cadences and pep band music, primarily hip-hop arrangements, at the football games. This was reinforced by his view of the administration at Central, in which he felt that "all they want is marching band, that's it, nothing else" (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). In his rehearsal video, Tyler often attempted to correct the ensemble's intonation and issues with wrong notes. However, he also constantly had to ask students to put their cell phones away in class, to stop banging their drumsticks on random equipment, and to refrain from yelling over him after they stopped playing a section of music.

Tyler's view of his student's motivation was that most of the class did not care about learning concert band music. He theorized that "10% of my students love band, 10% are only doing it because their parents are making them, and about 80% are there because of their friends or they think it's an easy A" (Interview 1, February 16, 2024). He was convinced that, due to teacher turnover, "most of the students were not 100% bought into the band program being successful." In my observation of Suzy's conducting class, she addressed the personal characteristics of a successful conductor by discussing a chapter in the book *Teaching Music with Passion*. One of the major considerations for student investment included "asking students to do possible, realistic, achievable and appropriate" level of music (Boonshaft, 2002 p. 7). There were several other discussions in making sure future teachers are not being stagnant in the ways to preparing a concert program and choosing the same literature that does not "interact with different mediums which help to expose students to understand musical genres better" (Suzy, Teaching Observation, February 18, 2024).

Another consideration Tyler made for low student investment was the possibility of his students fearing failure while performing in the band. He attributed this thought to their constant academic failure and home lives. This was also evident in the video rehearsal as Tyler attempted

to encourage throughout the class period with little success in improvement among the ensemble. He also noted that “being able to just get from the beginning to the end of a run of a performance" was a constant challenge as they were afraid that they would make mistakes and, therefore, not want to perform (Interview 1, February 16, 2024). He further explained that throughout the MPA rehearsal process, he made it a point to push his ensemble to failure, thereby getting the students to be more comfortable with that feeling. By doing so, he claimed that “they realize that failure is not so bad, and by the end of class, no one remembers who failed” (Interview 2, March 6, 2024).

Student Enrollment. Like several underserved music programs throughout the US, Central suffered from declining numbers from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, records show that the school never had more than 40 students in the ensemble for an MPA event prior to the pandemic. Tyler attributed the small enrollment to several factors. With a total school population of only about 900 in grades 7-12, he felt that his recruitment pool needed to be expanded as he had to compete with more successful campus programs, such as athletics. He also felt that many potential students are pulled from their electives to address their lack of reading ability by putting them in remedial reading courses.

Finally, Tyler considered that the lack of music selection and genre may discourage students from enrolling in his class. He noted that “much new music is coming out by composers of Color and LGBTQ folks that are completely absent from the MPA list” (Interview 1, February 16, 2024). He further admitted that the composer's identity is not the first aspect of a piece he looks for; instead, it is “educationally sound, fulfilling to play that will interest the kids and keep audiences entertained.” Suzy, however, emphasized choosing repertoire representing a “wide

variety of student identities" throughout her conducting classes, as evidenced by my observations (Interview 2, March 6, 2024).

Low enrollment seemed to have severely affected his ability to operate the band program with the tools needed to address the lack of fundamentals taught to his students. Tyler's top ensemble, which participated in MPA, was primarily comprised of first-year students, many with only beginning-level experience playing their instrument. He started working at Central in the middle of the previous school year because the position was left without a certified teacher for four months. The result was that most of the students did not play an instrument until well into the second semester, and the vast majority switched to other electives. Compounding the situation, he mentioned how the school's mindset is "wondering, if there's only this small number of people enrolled in band, why should the school fund this program" (Interview 1, February 16, 2024). He claimed that plans to construct a new theater or pay for instructional staff to help with small group lessons may be put on hold due to the limited number of students in the band not warranting such a huge investment.

CHS Theme 2: Preparedness. My observations and interview sessions showed that neither Tyler nor the Central High School Band was prepared for success at their district MPA event. This was noted in over 25% of my coded segments. Subthemes related to preparedness include training, informed musical decisions, and cultural relevance.

Training. The university where George and Suzy teach is considered a nationally award-winning research institution. The undergraduate music education program reflected cutting-edge methodologies for providing diversity and inclusion in secondary school ensembles. Both professors regularly programed leading underrepresented composers in all of their concerts and studied them in their music education courses. Additionally, each has made it a point to consider

diversity and equity through hiring graduate assistants and high acceptance rate of BIPOC music education majors.

An excerpt from a student assignment in Suzy's conducting course revealed her passion for wanting future directors to consider inclusivity when programming concerts, as noted:

> Music is something that can easily leave kids feeling excluded or out of place, so choosing music from all different varieties, including composers, genres, and cultures, is extremely beneficial to creating a healthy environment in the classroom. (Student Sample, Suzy, March 20, 2024)

In George's secondary methods class, students were well-versed in discussing the inner workings of trombone and tuba fingerings and alternate options to play specific notes. Each could properly discuss the functions of using the fourth valve as an alternative for a first and third finger on low brass instruments, along with the purpose of the trigger on a trombone in place of the sixth and seventh positions on a traditional model. They seemed generally excited to be in the class, and it was obvious that learning was taking place at a high level. His high demand for professionalism among his students reflected George's desire to create master educators who have staying power once they are real teachers in the area. In his course syllabus, he indicated that each assignment would receive either an "A" or an "F," which reflected the reality that their submissions for grades were either "suitable for beginning a professional career, or not" (Syllabus for Instrumental Methods, George, January 15, 2024).

Despite high standards like that, Tyler mentioned in both interviews that he was unprepared to enter his current school assignment. Although he agreed that his university only gave him basic training on rehearsing an ensemble, he felt that the actual application of these

subjects to a typical "starter job" such as his was minimal, which left him unprepared, as he states below:

> I went to college at a school that didn't teach perfect world scenarios but also didn't necessarily prepare me directly for a Title I school. Further, I had my internship at a school that was even further away, economically, from a Title I community. So, when I got to Central, I felt like I was struggling to relate to some of these students. (Interview 2, March 5, 2024)

In particular, Tyler mentioned that he struggled the most to apply the knowledge he gained from his undergraduate classes. When he started at Central, he was mainly focused on "basic teaching of musical concepts, getting the actual music in front of the kids and applying these concepts to the pieces" (Interview 1, February 16, 2024). These deficiencies were also noted in all three of his MPA adjudication comments. Some specific comments included how Tyler could incorporate buzzing into a daily brass warmup to "help find their center of pitch" on their instrument and "not clinching teeth or biting down on clarinet mouthpieces" to help create better resonance and overall characteristic sounds (MPA Adjudication Comments, Central High School, March 13, 2024). A major reason why Central did not score very well, according to the comments, was a lack of musical understanding in terms of pitch training, intonation, and basic note reading. Additionally, each judge suggested to Tyler ways he could address these issues through daily warmup routines and listening to professional recordings.

Informed Musical Decisions. In my field observation, Tyler discussed five levels of listening to his ensemble to help them with balance, blending, and intonation issues throughout their pieces. He referred to level one as listening to themselves, level two to their neighbor, level three as their instrument section, level four as the "choir" (referring to woodwind and brass

sections), and level five as the entire ensemble. As he asked each student what the different levels were about, they could only correctly answer with his assistance, which told me they needed to better understand the terminology behind this concept. Ironically, during this portion of the rehearsal, Tyler had to raise his voice louder as the ensemble was talking loudly over him and not listening to his instructions, which likely lead to them not fully embracing the concept he was attempting to develop. As a result, during the concert march of the MPA performance, clinicians commented that Central struggled to "hear the integrity of the rhythms within the melody" and "hear a stronger blend between the flute, clarinet, and bells towards the final strain" (MPA Adjudication Comments, Central High School, March 13, 2024). During the final piece, the same judge asked the ensemble to "listen for the interpretation of quarter note motifs at measure 52. Everyone's playing these notes a bit differently, which causes differentiation of the entire melodic structure." Due to the constant talking during rehearsals, they were not likely to listen to each other's playing at a depth to address these issues.

Another focus of Tyler during the MPA cycle was mastering terminology while getting the ensemble to play with four-bar phrases. He discussed with me his philosophy of achieving musical maturity at Central High School, saying:

> A lot of it is the buzzword bingo game. I keep mentioning music terms over and over again. Are we balancing? Are we blending? How is our intonation? How is our tone quality? Are we playing with a characteristic tone quality? Do the trombones sound like trombones? Are the tubas playing with a good foundational sound?" (Interview 1, Tyler, February 16, 2024)

In the rehearsal, he asked the ensemble to think in four-bar phrases when playing the slower piece *Anthem*. Then he asked, "So, does anyone know what that means?" and the entire

class replied "No" indicating that there may be no prior training on this musical concept (Classroom Observation, Tyler, March 5, 2024). Rather than explaining the musical terminology behind phrasing, he then portrayed a robotic voice to demonstrate how ignoring phrasing was like “computer-generated sounds playing machine music.” During the MPA performance, a judge noted to the ensemble, “As far as the phrasing goes, I feel like we're breaking up what was written” (MPA Adjudication Comments, Central High School, March 13, 2024). They further say that Central should “make sure they are connecting notes together to make musical sentences better.”

Cultural Relevance. Along with the musical development of the ensemble, Tyler struggled with relating to the student population of Central High School. In particular, he mentioned how it was challenging to get his ensemble to “do things without threatening to lower their grade, giving an alternate assignment, or sending them to the discipline office” (Interview 2, Tyler, March 5, 2024). He also mentioned that his background was far from a low-income lifestyle. When he was in high school, students in his band had a great routine of practicing at home and coming to class prepared to have great rehearsals. Coming to Central was a culture shock as there was no established work ethic for education.

During the rehearsal, he often gave analogies to the ensemble, which may have seemed out of place considering the school's culture. For example, when asking a Black clarinetist to play an accelerando in *Anthem*, they responded as Tyler requested. His response, however, may have been interpreted as not being culturally sensitive, saying “Can you play this at a quicker tempo? Yes! And that's like the seasoning on the fried chicken we want. Don't just season it with salt and pepper. Put some hot sauce on it! Put some good stuff on there” (Video Observation, March 5, 2024).

As a pillar of her research focus, Suzy regularly demonstrated to her college students how to be culturally sensitive towards students with backgrounds different than what they are accustomed to. In our interview session, she described some possible advantages to understanding and being familiar with the culture of band students you are trying to teach, sharing:

> I can see how someone from a similar background to those students might be a bigger motivator to them to continue in some cultures. For example, symphonic music may be seen as feminine. And which is interesting because in some cultures, being a musician or a conductor might seem more feminine than perhaps participating in a sport and athletic sport. (Interview 2, March 6, 2024)

CHS Theme 3: Financial Support. The lack of financial support, with no dedicated booster club and no long-term school funding mechanism for operations, may have contributed to the lack of student interest in joining the band at Central. This accounted for 20% of my coded segments.

Band Funding. The Central High School Band did not have a dedicated band booster association, nor were they given a projected budget from the school's general operating fund, which included several thousands of dollars in Title I funds. Instead, external financing was generated by band parents supporting the football program through concession sales during football games. This, in turn, allowed the band to receive a small portion of the athletic proceeds to purchase classroom materials such as reeds, valve oil, drumsticks, and sheet music. Beyond this, the Luther County Public Schools fine arts coordinator gave Tyler a “one-time” allotment for some smaller instruments like trumpets, saxophones, and clarinets. Central was also given money by the district to replace aging marching band uniforms and for transportation to football

games and the district MPA. The school seemed to recognize the importance of attending MPA events. However, as seen in the inventory list, they were less supportive of giving Tyler the means to purchase more expensive concert band instruments such as oboes, bassoons, or euphoniums. It was apparent that the school was more focused on having functional marching band instruments to support the athletic teams on campus than on the concert band curriculum.

Rebuilding Program. The low financial commitment expected from the families at Central High School may have severely affected the rebuilding process of the band. The students were only required to pay a $10 fee to be in the class, the maximum fee allowed to be charged by any school activity group. Part of the reason may have been that 100% of the school was reported to be eligible for free or reduced lunch. In terms of extra payments, Tyler explained that his school population was "highly impoverished" and that the school did not allow him to impose "any financial commitment to families in terms of instrument rentals, purchases, supplies, or any supplemental band fees" (Interview 1, February 16, 2024). When asked about the possibility of applying for educational grants, he explained that he had never been told about those opportunities in college or the process of getting some of the award money. When interviewing Suzy and George, they each told me there was little discussion of grant writing in their courses, which I observed. In one of her other courses, however, Suzy partnered with a prominent music instrument manufacturer to discuss instrument sponsorships with future band directors from a corporate level.

Additionally, due to the low revenue coming into the program, Tyler could not afford to invest in things such as "band shirts, an end of the year trip, or a band banquet," which would have helped create a positive environment for students to stay in the band (Interview 1, February

16, 2024). A concerted effort was also made for students to have resources for private lesson teachers in the area, but it was unsuccessful, as Tyler describes:

> I'm pushing students to take private lessons and keep a list of instructors for each instrument. However, a lot of the students can't afford that. Most private teachers charge about $25-40 per lesson. At the end of the day, if the kids can't afford it, they can't do it. (Interview 1, February 16, 2024)

CHS Theme 4: Instrumentation. Finally, a lack of proper instrumentation, specifically working instruments, was perceived as a barrier for Central High School to be successful at its MPA event. This accounted for about 16% of the coded segments.

Instrument Repair. Tyler aimed to raise enough money for the students to offset the financial burden of operating a high school band. Figure 4.2 shows several tubas and a drum set waiting to get sent out to a repair shop, but due to lack of a budget, they continue to sit on the floor of the band room. Several storage rooms connected to the band room had empty, molded cases and pieces of various wind instruments scattered in different lockers. The few functional brass instruments showed evidence of leaky spit valves, and one euphonium had a puncture in one of the tuning pipes. Many school-owned woodwinds desperately needed preventive maintenance like padding and key adjustments. Airy sounds were prevalent throughout the rehearsal I observed. This was also a major concern brought by the MPA judges during the performance regarding the “use of air in the brass” and “proper tone quality in the flutes and clarinets” during *Anthem* (MPA comments audio, March 12, 2024).

Figure 4.2. Broken Instruments in Central High School Band Room

Tyler mentioned that the previous director left him with a minimal amount of funds in his school band account, but he was stressed over being able to pay for instrument repairs. He shared:

> There is no way to realistically operate an $18,000 a year budget, which is what I need to take care of my instruments properly. I have an open purchase order for repairs during the school year but can't budget for money I don't have. (Interview 1, February 16, 2024)

Because of the lack of working instruments, Central's enrollment was limited, and many students dropped out of the band when they did not get the instrument they wanted to play. This was particularly hard with his percussion kids. The band room had a functioning xylophone and

orchestra bells, but lacked a high-quality marimba or vibraphone on which Tyler could properly teach mallet percussion techniques. He mentioned that he probably would have to "bench a few percussionists who couldn't learn their parts" because he did not have the resources to teach them the proper technique for concert band performance (Interview 2, March 5, 2024). During the rehearsal, it was evident that the lack of properly working instruments caused the ensemble to get frustrated with his instructions. During the warmup session, he attempted to correct intonation and tone quality issues. However, he was unsuccessful partly due to the condition of the instruments, along with issues like using cheaper quality reeds and "beginner mouthpieces" on most of the brass instruments, which limited the range of sound.

Lack of Instrumentation. As mentioned earlier, his choice of concert music for his district MPA reflected these issues in instrumentation. He expressed concern by noting that enrollment "in a larger band, multiple people play each section of the music, but in my small group, it's very obvious when they make a mistake since they are playing by themselves" (Interview 1, February 16, 2024). Regarding his rationale for concert program selections for MPA, Tyler discloses:

> The fact that we have one trumpet, we have one horn, and at the time, we had no trombone until someone transferred in—just a minimal brass section. I had so many pieces that I would listen to and think oh, this would be great. Oh, trumpet feature! Can't do that because it requires three trumpet parts. And it's unfortunate because the kids are playing at a level where I think we could achieve Grade III music or, at the very least, more difficult Grade II music. But just because of instrumentation issues, we can't perform these pieces accurately. (Interview 2, March 5, 2024)

This thought process failed based on the judges' comments during Central's performance. There were constant references to their lack of balance and blending through each piece. One comment about creating resonance “to have the vibrancy and ringing to the ends of phrases” may have been partially the fault of the leaky pads not allowing a characteristic tone on the instrument (MPA Comments Audio, March 12, 2024). Another comment about “clenching teeth and pushing too hard on the mouthpiece in the reed instruments” could have resulted in the numerous pads worn, which would cause a musician to press harder to make less stuffy sounds on the instruments.

Summary of Case 1: Tyler, Central High School

Central High School's challenges to producing a quality band program were multifaceted. Student enrollment was affected by limited resources and programming literature that did not resonate with the ensemble. The negativity around the school climate and culture, characterized by low academic expectations, impacted student engagement and hindered growth possibilities. The fear of failure also heavily contributed to their underachievement during the ensemble's MPA performance. The disconnect between Tyler's pre-service training and “on the ground” reality exposed his rehearsal ineffectiveness in addressing his students' needs. By not addressing the low reading abilities of his students, Tyler’s students did not develop an understanding of musical terminology that may have improved their MPA rating. More funding sources for instrument repair, student fees, and items for social activities further limited opportunities for student engagement and enrichment. Finally, the lack of quality working instruments affected several aspects of their MPA performance. The limited repertoire choices that were driven by enrollment and a very specific instrumentation also contributed to low marks for lack of sound quality, balance, blend, and understanding of musical phrasing.

Case 2: Chris, Memorial High School

Chris was a 32-year-old Black male who teaches band and guitar and is the department chair at Memorial High School. Like Tyler, his primary instrument was also brass. George was his professor when he was in school but regularly invited Suzy to his school to clinic his students. This is his second year at the school, but he has taught at several others in the Charlie County School District over the past nine years. He has obtained several superior ratings at most of his previous jobs within the district. He has recently completed the certification process to become an MPA judge for other districts in the state. As shown in Table 4.7, Chris indicated having more familiarity with middle-class society's social norms than being in poverty and wealth. He identified best with knowing about the ordering procedures of a casual restaurant (and fancier), registering a child for music extension activities, and owning a professional-level instrument before college. In turn, Chris showed the least commonality towards more wealthy aspects of life, such as setting a fine dining table, aspirations to own vacation properties, and sending a biological child to a private school.

Table 4.7. Chris's Intake Survey Results

Question	Response
Lower Income/Poverty Class	
I know what food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card.	Somewhat Agree
I regularly attend hip-hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concerts.	Somewhat Disagree
I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, the internet, or a smart device.	Somewhat Disagree
I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours notice.	Strongly Disagree
I know how to obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost.	Agree
Middle Class	
I considered college my best choice for a career path in life.	Somewhat Agree
I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a "step-up" model in the future.	Agree
I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above.	Agree
I know how to "be my own boss" and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction.	Somewhat Disagree
I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons.	Agree
Higher/Wealthy Class	
I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance.	Strongly Agree
I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal.	Strongly Disagree
Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is vital.	Strongly Disagree
I have the means to send a child to a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state.	Strongly Disagree
I owned an instrument that was considered "professional level" before attending college as a music major	Agree

Chris's University Professors

Like Tyler, Chris studied with George during his undergraduate program, but regularly collaborates with Suzy on clinics and recruiting for the university. Chris's intake survey results were similar to Tyler's (see previous case), except Chris indicated having more familiarity with low-income scenarios.

Memorial High School (MHS)

Memorial High School in the Charlie County Public School District is rated as a "C" school by the state and has similar demographics to Central. The school has over 2,400 students, almost all comprised of first-generation Hispanics or low-income Blacks. According to historical data, Memorial has not gotten a school rating of "B" or higher since a newer school was built in 2010 to relieve overcrowding in the old high school, which resulted in the district sending the more affluent students to the newer campus due to the proximity of their residences. Enrollment patterns also showed that many students would often transfer from Memorial to either a charter, magnet, or homeschool at a high rate after their freshman year, a problem that the school has been working to solve in their school improvement plan. Their Title I status allows them also to receive additional targeted assistance and, previously, a Unified School Improvement Grant through the state of approximately $50,000 when the school rating was a "D." Additionally, the school's focus has shifted to providing more opportunities for Planned Learning Communities (PLCs) with its middle school feeder programs to address enrollment declines.

Despite these challenges, the band program at Memorial High School has won several local and regional awards, while consistently being regarded as one of the top programs in the district. Of the four cases, Memorial was the only school that sent more than one ensemble to an MPA event, though only the wind ensemble participated in 2024. Table 4.8 shows that Memorial

scored a Superior rating at MPA in each of the previous five years, thereby bucking the trend of underserved school performance rates at such events. Additionally, this was the only school in the study with a thriving, functioning band booster association. This organization has been instrumental in subsidizing fees associated with instrument repair, instructional staff, and traveling to competitions. As shown in Table 4.9, Memorial High School was the only ensemble to program a piece from an underrepresented composer (i.e., an Asian female).

Table 4.8. Recent Scores for Memorial High School at MPA

Ensemble	2019*	2020*	2022*	2023	2024
Wind Ensemble	Excellent (II)	Excellent (II)	Excellent (II)	Superior (I)	Excellent (II)
Symphonic Band	Good (III)	Excellent (II)	Excellent (II)	Excellent (II)	Did Not Participate

*denotes previous band director

Table 4.9. 2024 MPA Concert Program for Memorial High School (Class B)

Title of Piece	Composer	Grade Level	Composer Demographics
Rough Riders	Karl L. King/arr. Swearingen	3	White Male
Ancient Flower	Yukiko Nishimura	3	Asian Female
Be Thou my Vision	Larry Clark	4	White Male

Using similar types of artifacts as Central High, I notated 412 codes in my analysis in this case. Table 4.10 shows the percentages of frequencies for the coded statements at Memorial High School. Overall, consistency accounted for the most frequent code at 44%, while tough love represented 25%, investment at 17%, and representation at 14% of the segments. The following section provides detailed excerpts from each highlighted theme.

Table 4.10. Prominent Themes and Codes for Memorial High School

Code	% of Material Coded
Consistency (44%)	
Musical Achievement	15%
Conductor Philosophy	13%
Student Consistency	12%
MPA Classification	1%
Resources for Education	1%
Special Education	1%
Student Competence	1%
Tough Love (25%)	
Neighborhood Mentality	9%
Fear of Failure	8%
Just Show Up	5%
School Environment	1%
Required	1%
Investment (17%)	
Booster Organization	9%
Teacher Investment	7%
Community Investment	1%
Representation (14%)	
Looks Like Me	7%
Composer Diversity	4%
Student Engagement	2%
Perception	1%

MHS Theme 1: Consistency. One of the major flaws with the Memorial High School wind ensemble was their need for more consistency in several musical areas throughout the MPA process. This accounted for over 44% of the coded segments.

Music Achievement. In our interviews, Chris emphasized that the key to musical achievement is sticking strictly to the established MPA criteria without external considerations influencing judgment toward an ensemble. He advised new band directors at Title I schools to "embrace the MPA process" while emphasizing its "validity to music in schools" (Interview 1, February 17, 2024). He went on to talk about MPA and having accountability and justification for principals to invest in "protecting those butts in seats" while maintaining thriving ensembles at every school. George (Chris's university professor), however, felt that the goal of MPA should be about the process of "working really hard to get really good at something music related" without the pressures of placing a number or rating beside the student's hard work (Interview 2, March 1, 2024). Chris mentioned how he used the MPA rubric daily for individual practice assignments. Specifically, he would use the word "consistently" when grading playing quizzes in preparation for the MPA event. He described his grading procedure in his video rehearsal to his students: "When you are playing that scale passage, are you consistently using good tone? When playing this section, were you consistently on time?" (Interview 2, March 4, 2024).

Overall, Chris regularly felt that "leniency and subjective judgment" at events such as MPA was detrimental to the ensemble's fair evaluation between schools, regardless of circumstances (Interview 2, March 4, 2024). In my observation of his rehearsal, he regularly pointed to a copy of the MPA rubric, which was blown up to poster size for the kids to see during the rehearsal. At one point, the ensemble stopped at a particular section in *Rough Riders* and gave the kids the following instant feedback using the rubric terminology:

> The way you're playing this, you are a very good high school band. Is the tone quality at the highest level? Yes. Is our performance consistently adhering to key signatures? Yes. Is our performance consistently achieving meaningful and expression phrasing? Are we doing that, or are we still at an excellent? (Classroom Observation, Memorial HS, February 22, 2024)

The students immediately responded by agreeing that this rubric category needed more practice before their assessment date. Of the four cases, the Memorial band understood the rubric the most, and was able to incorporate those terms into their performance. There were several instances, however, when Chris had to stop the rehearsal and repeatedly explain musical concepts from a basic, rudimentary level, rather than the kids being able to grasp the true definition of the terminology. Throughout the rehearsal, Chris continued reinforcing the rubric, letting students know where they needed to improve to score a Superior rating. When discussing in the university setting what a Superior-level concert band should look like, Suzy, being an established regional clinician for high school ensembles, expressed her view about artistic interpretation, adding that bands at MPA should "achieve the accuracy of each note value played with an appropriate style, appropriate tempo, with the characteristic tone, ensemble balance, and musical interpretation" (Interview 2, March 6, 2024).

Conductor Philosophy. Chris' philosophy on successful band teaching in a Title I school was based primarily upon consistency. He credited this to being the longest-tenured band director in Charlie County, and he taught at an underserved school. At that time, he became a mentor to new directors who were starting their careers in the district. He stated in the interviews that avoiding "new teacher burnout" was critical to "keeping high-quality band directors in our Title I schools" (Interview 1, February 17, 2024). To remedy this trend, Chris advocated for the

Charlie County School District to provide substitute pay for newer teachers to observe more veteran directors, thereby gaining a mentor to help them get through their first few years of teaching in Title I schools. In his college course, George also gave his secondary method students various scenarios where they were to debate topics such as keeping their jobs at a school due to low enrollment. He mentioned that the goal was to prepare them for real-life situations best once they left the university. Chris also felt he incorporated a cross-curriculum approach between music and core academic subjects, like language arts and math. He goes into more detail by explaining:

> I try to, as much as possible, bridge the gaps between reading and teaching kids to read notation and rhythms. I try to help them understand the parallel between writing and music by showing that songs have a beginning, middle, climactic section, and resolution, much like literature. (Interview 1, February 17, 2024)

This was evident during the rehearsal I observed. Chris constantly drilled statements with his students such as "You need to read the rhythmic phrase at measure 14. We are missing dotted quarter notes throughout here" or "Make sure that we are reading the dynamic levels during the trio section" (Classroom Observation, Memorial HS, February 22, 2024). The students could play their notes and rhythms with extreme accuracy during this session. During the sight-reading portion of the MPA event, where the ensemble must play a piece of band music without first rehearsing it, Memorial got a superior rating and was considered one of the highest scores at the event.

When discussing what he looked for when evaluating high school bands, George mentioned that he often notices "the communication between the conductor and student" and whether the ensemble followed its director's gestures as opposed to the music being "drilled into

them" and played mundanely (Interview 2, March 1, 2024). Additionally, he showed disgust towards band directors who would spend most of the school year "working on three tunes" and "putting their self-worth into the ratings." He told me in detail about his first year sending an ensemble to an MPA event and how they scored a Good rating. It was apparent how it crushed him emotionally and how he used that experience to shape his teaching. He hoped to inspire future directors to program music based on their ability level and where they could best achieve success.

Student Consistency. Despite a detailed plan of rehearsals during his MPA concert cycle, Memorial scored an Excellent at their district MPA event. However, several comments made by the adjudicators may have been beyond the band's control to adjust and improve their rating. In *Ancient Flower*, Memorial was penalized for student inconsistencies such as "the intonation in the French horn is off slightly, the tone quality sounds more like a trumpet" (MPA Comments, Memorial High School, March 4, 2024). Other comments included "making sure you play longer phrases without breaths interjecting" and "practice entrances so that we don't hear sputters at the beginning of attacks." In discussing some of the weighing of musical concepts in an MPA rubric, Suzy mentioned the following concern:

> Tone quality is heavily rated on these rubrics, and tone is a factor in the instrument quality that the student or school might own. In addition, a more mature tone production comes from individual or small group studies. If that is not part of the student's music education outside of the normal band class, they won't have the same opportunity to develop their tone, and therefore will lose points on the rubric for that. (Interview 2, March 6, 2024)

George gave another consideration to groups with these issues, saying “if you’re not musical, or cannot error detect, and you are bound and determined to play harder music than your ensemble should, then no rubric training will help your students whatsoever" (Interview 2, March 1, 2024).

In our second interview, Chris reflected on each adjudicator's comments shortly after his performance. He shared:

> The biggest thing was intonation. So, we’re going to now hammer intonation. We’re going to do a lot more listening to different melodic lines. I'm going to hit the scales harder. I'll grease these things, so they are no longer issues in my ensemble. (Interview 2, March 4, 2024)

MHS Theme 2: Tough Love. Along with correcting performance inconsistencies with the Memorial High School Band, Chris instilled a tough-love mentality toward his students throughout the MPA concert cycle. He was adamant that students in underserved communities needed to develop toughness to be successful in the real world. This also accounted for nearly 25% of my coded segments.

Neighborhood Mentality. Throughout our interviews, Chris talked at length about his kids learning to develop a tough mentality toward success. Though Memorial is labeled as a suburban school on their accountability report, being nearly 20 miles from downtown, the crime rate per capita was significantly higher than other parts of the metro area, matching statistics of a typical inner city. Because of the attributes of poverty within this community, he felt that his students were already “pushed down to the point where they think they won't ever be able to succeed” (Interview 2, March 4, 2024). He further explained that he felt students in this type of environment needed someone who would give them the cold, hard reality of trying to get out of their home life situations. He went further into theorizing his passion for uplifting students by

saying, “I'm always going to beat them up mentally, but I'm also going to love them ten times harder. I will tear them down and then build them back up. I don't care about their circumstances today because I’ll watch them fly tomorrow” (Interview 2, March 4, 2024).

In my observation of his rehearsal, Chris showed frustration at several students who needed to prepare their parts before allowing them to play the MPA pieces with the full ensemble. At one point, he scolded one of the woodwind sections for not writing down a double forte in their individual parts, openly questioning out loud to his students if they were “talented enough” to play the correct dynamics of *Rough Riders* (Classroom Observation, March 1, 2024). When they kept missing notes during *Ancient Flower*, he called out another student by sternly saying, “It surprises me that you still can't play your part.” He went further by explaining to the student, “Obviously you didn’t practice in sectionals because you still can’t play, and I even conducted where you needed to be. You're just not watching.”

As the rehearsal went on, I could hear several frustrated students crying in the video because they kept missing notes. Chris became much pickier about nuances like note lengths, intonation, and missed entrances through this piece. He questioned the ensemble's mental toughness by asking them, “Are we tired yet? Are we starting to mentally check out of my rehearsal?” (Classroom Observation, March 1, 2024). As I continued watching, I questioned whether his students were actually taking ownership of the rehearsal or operating on a fear basis of disappointing Chris.

Regarding mental toughness with band students, each of Chris's professors had vastly different experiences with underserved students. Suzy felt the key to successful rehearsals at lower-income schools like Memorial was to develop strategies that “actively assisted in musicians feeling comfortable and safe in the rehearsal room” (Interview 2, March 6, 2024).

Meanwhile, George explained his approach to getting his former students to prepare for MPA events. He mentioned that his experience teaching in Title I school included more open access to the band room before, during lunch, and after school on weekdays. He also required two sectionals for each student each week after school before major concerts, and he questioned whether he was “practicing for them” by spoon-feeding them their concert music (Interview 2, March 7, 2024). Using this strategy, however, his middle and high school bands were considered one of the state's best programs. His ensemble was also invited to perform at the state's Music Education Conference.

Fear of Failure. The students in the Memorial High School band appeared to suffer from extreme fear of negative reinforcement which may have caused them to underachieve at the district MPA event. At several points during our interviews, Chris mentioned how he had to show them that they could succeed in life before a mindset change could happen for them to achieve musical excellence. He was particularly disgusted with people using phrases like “despite the challenges of everything” when commenting on a positive outcome of a Title I student (Interview 1, February 17, 2024). He placed much of the blame on bad societal influences that stereotype underserved students as quitters and lazy members of society. He further elaborated by saying, "Nothing is hard inherently unless we, as a society, tell them it's hard. And when they constantly hear that from birth through adolescence, that's their mindset. Society has pushed that onto them."

George used his secondary methods course to prepare future band directors for these situations. In his course syllabus, he informs his students that they will be put in uncomfortable situations by sending them to observations where they can help their students work past their “comfort zone” (Course Syllabus, January 24, 2024). For example, he warned that brass students

might have situations where they would teach "a clarinetist who couldn't cross the break on their instrument," or flute majors may have to "teach a trombone sectional" while at a school. His goal with a music education major was to get them to think about the type of program they wanted to develop after graduation. A major pillar of his class was having students think about what is important to them as educators, which dictated what they would consider a success or failure with their ensembles.

Just Show Up. Showing up prepared for rehearsals was another major concern at Memorial. Chris mentioned several times in our interviews that students fail to show up physically, mentally, and emotionally at a place like his school to learn music at a high level. In his rehearsal, he asked several students why they did not attend after-school sectionals to learn their parts. At several points, he would stop when the ensemble was making mistakes and say comments to a student such as “When are you going to schedule a sectional? Because you still can't play your music” or “I need to move on, but we don't know how to play this part because we don't show up and practice” (Classroom Observation, March 1, 2024). In one instance, Chris repeated the opening section of *Ancient Flower* several times due to the missing entrances of the clarinets. He sang the correct phrase for the musicians to imitate, but they could not demonstrate it back to him. After the fourth attempt, he scolded the section by saying, “You have to crescendo into the notes, and I’ve said that several times! So, we will keep moving backward now because you are unprepared for rehearsal."

During my interviews with George, he discussed his personal experiences teaching in Title I schools and the extent to which future band directors understand their students' home situations. We talked at length about the “blockade to success” teaching in Title I schools, knowing students' circumstances when they are not at school (Interview 1, February 19, 2024).

He further suggested that some students in these environments “probably had more bad things happen to them before breakfast that morning than the teacher has in their entire life.” For many of his former secondary students, “getting to school every morning was miraculous” (Interview 1, February 19, 2024).

MHS Theme 3: Investment. Investment in the Memorial High School Bands contributed to their success compared to the other schools in my study. This accounted for over 17% of my coded segments.

Booster Organization. Of the four cases, Memorial High School received the most parental and financial support for its band program. This was the only case study that operated a dedicated band booster association, which provided much-needed investment into student growth. Memorial also had the largest financial commitment, with students having to pay from $500-1,150 depending on which instrument they played and whether or not they competed in winter percussion or colorguard. Chris explained that his booster association uses fundraisers to provide scholarships to “offset students who can't afford our band fees” (Interview 1, February 17, 2024). The boosters also provided money for students to attend honor band clinics and audition for one of the many youth ensembles available in Charlie County. They are also responsible for paying instructional coaches to provide small group tutoring with students based on the instrument. Providing “supplemental student learning for those without access to private lessons” was also discussed in length during my interview with Suzy (Interview 1, February 15, 2024).

The Memorial Band has the largest enrollment of the cases in this study, with a full schedule of band and colorguard classes. Also, the booster association paid for several instrument coaches, one for each instrument, who visited the students almost weekly to give

masterclass lessons on technique and to prepare them for honor band auditions. George commented on this approach by agreeing that directors could develop students faster than those without coaches as he “did not teach one class with every single instrument” as a middle school director (Interview 2, March 1, 2024). He added that a major pillar of student achievement was having multiple directors teach in small group instruction, offsetting the economic issue of students who could not afford private lessons. The coaching sessions were conducted primarily before or after school, which causes a minimum disturbance to the core academic portion of the school day.

Teacher Investment. Chris discussed the lack of teacher investment leading to burnout and factors for which future band directors may leave the profession early or request transfer to other schools. Specifically, he cited issues such as student placement into the band without the director's consultation, constant remediation of musical skills from middle school feeders, and the disregard for most aspects of the program beyond marching band for football games. In his interview, Chris acknowledged the support he received from his school administration but felt it was geared more towards the marching band and less towards understanding the process of a district MPA event. In our interview, he was pretty emotional about the counseling department at his school not making the changes he requested to level off his ensembles better. He mentioned how scoring a superior at last year's MPA “held zero administrative support’ (Interview 2, March 6. 2024). Furthermore, Chris suggested that “nobody is going to say, 'Well, you got a superior, let's make sure your classes are correct’” and “Nothing changes with support unless I use the results to make a change.”

As such, Chris spent considerable time remediating incoming freshmen on technical instrumental proficiency while also working with the challenges mentioned with this school

population. The administrative team at Memorial refused to allow him to set up his classes by placing the more advanced musicians into his wind ensemble, thereby considering elective courses as an afterthought to the core subjects that students needed for remediation. This was one of his biggest frustrations as he tried to maintain his philosophy of work ethic while constantly having to reteach and review for a new student whom a counselor would put into his class without experience. Enrollment played heavily into the rating his ensemble received, having to be rated alongside schools of similar size but with better middle school feeder programs and budgets.

MHS Theme 4: Representation. Chris felt that the biggest keys to teacher longevity in Title I schools was his ability to make the students relate to them. Representation accounted for over 14% of my coded segments.

Walks of Life. Chris had a mantra about teachers knowing their student's walk of life. He shared with me his personal story about him being adopted by a White family at a young age. He used his family history as a motivator to show his students that they could overcome any obstacle in their personal lives. His biological mother was a crack cocaine abuser, and he mentioned very little about his father. He was the only member of his family to go to college, paying his way due to his parents' financial issues. Throughout his education, he remembered how he looked up to his Black teachers more than others. He told me a story of one of his high school history teachers who was brilliant and "dressed nice every day" (Interview 2, March 4, 2024). It motivated him to believe that "if he can do it, I can do it too; I can be like him."

As a result, his upbringing played a significant role in how he teaches music. He emphasized understanding what his students goes through in their daily home lives. To get more familiar with what his students faced outside of school, he would spend considerable time

driving around the boundary zones to better understand the situation. Figure 4.3 shows a typical convenience store that littered the neighborhood near Memorial. Compounding the food insecurities, most of his students did not have access to a grocery store or “sit down” restaurant within walking distance of their homes. In the absence of other options, these stores were where most families shop, while also being notorious as centers for dealing drugs and human trafficking (Edelman, 2019).

Figure 4.3. Typical Convenience Store near Memorial HS

Chris further describes his teaching philosophy: "It doesn't matter where you start, it's where you finish, it's what I care about,” explaining “My thing is if the students see that I have

struggled and now they are struggling, but they see that I overcame my struggles, they can say ‘look at where he’s at now’ as an inspiration. I can say that I’ve done my part” (Interview 2, March 4, 2024).

Suzy agreed with the notion of “role model theory” where there may be, saying in her interview, “evidence of someone similar achieving a status for another person to see themselves in that same position" (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). The student samples from her conducting class that I analyzed revealed her experience in diversity and inclusion. Additionally, her work presented at several state and regional music conferences showcases her research focus on integrating more diverse populations in wind band literature.

Composer Diversity. When selecting music for his MPA program, Chris acknowledged the need for more diverse representation in the required performance list options, particularly for grade level four, where his ensemble was classified. As part of his secondary method class, George emphasized getting his students to understand the purpose behind programming underrepresented works, rather than just feeling obligated to be more diverse in their concert selections. Specifically, he taught his class about the philosophy behind “choosing music from underrepresented composers” and why that should be important in their future teaching practices (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). He was further troubled by the fact that the trend for secondary schools continue to “program the Maslankas and the Sousas” out of conductor lineage and habit, rather than the educational experience of students.

Chris believed that a significant concern to improving the diversity of the MPA list was the idea that more contemporary works such a movie soundtrack and incorporating genres like hip hop and rock were not considered on the same level of quality as symphonic music by the selection committee. As such, he felt that the state organization that operates MPA needed to

adapt to the needs of lower income programs rather than the school. He explains further on why different genres of music should be considered for a rating:

> I can't go to MPA and tell judges that my school doesn't give two craps about *Boogie March*. If they can't evaluate pieces like *How To Train Your Dragon* or the theme from *The Avengers*, using the same rubric system, then they must be poor judges. With this, we can still put bands on stage and adjudicate them based on their merits. (Interview 2, March 4, 2024)

Summary of Case 2: Chris, Memorial High School

Musical achievement was a central theme to the success of the Memorial High School Band. Chris stressed the importance of consistency and accountability while adhering to the established criteria of the MPA rubric throughout the rehearsal process. Despite this, student consistency emerged as a major concern, which may have led to their lower rating at this year's district MPA. Adjudicators noted several instances of incorrect tone quality, intonation, and articulation throughout their program. Chris attempted to address these challenges by providing support and resources through their band booster association. However, Memorial still needed more administrative support and teacher investment outside the marching band. As such, the task proved too much to overcome their systemic barriers. Chris drew heavily upon his personal experiences to connect with his students, understand their backgrounds, and serve as a role model for overcoming adversity. Embracing a stern approach to classroom management prepared the ensemble to overcome obstacles and develop mental toughness. However, my concerns were raised about the emotional toll this rehearsal style took on the students, particularly those facing extreme hardships.

Case 3: Joel, Eagle Heights High School

Joel was a 23-year-old Hispanic male who taught band, color guard, and jazz at Eagle Heights High School in Paradise County. He was in his first year at the school and recently completed his bachelor's degree in music education. His primary instrument was the saxophone, and he indicated that he had prior experience teaching private lessons and performing at shows in his local area. As shown in Table 4.11, Joel indicated familiarity with middle-class society's social norms more than those of poverty and wealth.

Joel's University Professors

Alex. Alex was a 40-year-old white female professor who was previously at the university where Joel obtained his music education degree. She recently transferred to another university where she is now the music creativity and technology coordinator, along with teaching courses in music technology. While in undergrad, Joel took Alex's courses in instrumental (woodwind and brass) techniques and special needs in music education. Besides these classes, she was the undergraduate coordinator for internships in the school of music. She has published several award-winning articles in international journals and regularly presents at music teaching conferences. Her teaching focus has also included music technology, working to establish electronic music ensembles in school districts nationwide. She has a doctorate in music education and over eight years of experience teaching at the collegiate level. Before that, Alex taught high school band and studio production for nine years in one of America's largest urban school districts. As shown in Table 4.12, Alex also most closely identifies with middle-class scenarios compared to the ones that were more of wealth or poverty.

Table 4.11. Joel's Intake Survey Results

Question	Response
Lower Income/Poverty Class	
I know what food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card.	Agree
I regularly attend hip-hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concerts.	Neither Agree nor Disagree
I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, the internet, or a smart device.	Somewhat Agree
I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours notice.	Somewhat Agree
I know how to obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost.	Agree
Middle Class	
I considered college my best choice for a career path in life.	Strongly Agree
I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a "step-up" model in the future.	Somewhat Agree
I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above.	Agree
I know how to "be my own boss" and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction.	Agree
I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons.	Agree
Higher/Wealthy Class	
I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance.	Agree
I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal.	Neither Agree nor Disagree
Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is vital.	Somewhat Agree
I have the means to send a child to a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state.	Somewhat Agree
I owned an instrument that was considered "professional level" before attending college as a music major	Agree

Table 4.12. Alex's Intake Survey Results

Question	Response
Lower Income/Poverty Class	
I know what food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card.	Agree
I regularly attend hip-hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concerts.	Somewhat Agree
I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, the internet, or a smart device.	Strongly Disagree
I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours notice.	Somewhat Disagree
I know how to obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost.	Neither Agree nor Disagree
Middle Class	
I considered college my best choice for a career path in life.	Strongly Agree
I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a "step-up" model in the future.	Strongly Agree
I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above.	Strongly Agree
I know how to "be my own boss" and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction.	Somewhat Disagree
I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons.	Strongly Agree
Higher/Wealthy Class	
I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance.	Somewhat Disagree
I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal.	Somewhat Disagree
Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is vital.	Strongly Disagree
I have the means to send a child to a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state.	Strongly Disagree
I owned an instrument that was considered "professional level" before attending college as a music major	Strongly Disagree

Mike. Mike was a 35-year-old white male professor who taught at the university where Joel obtained his degree. Though he did not directly teach Joel during their preservice training, he brings much needed expertise in teaching Title I students into Paradise County. He recently graduated with his doctorate in music education and is in his first year of collegiate teaching. He took over the position left by Alex when she moved to another university. Mike's teaching load includes the previously mentioned special needs in music education course and supervision of internship placements in local schools. He is also a leading researcher in inclusion and creative musical performance. He is in high demand as a guest speaker at major international conferences. In addition, he has written over a dozen articles in publications such as *Psychology of Music* and the *International Journal of Music Education*. Beyond the research spectrum, Mike is a bassist and regularly performs electronic and hip music at local venues. Before teaching college, he taught orchestra for several years in a rural, poor Indian reservation. As shown in Table 4.13, Mike also identified with most of the middle-class scenarios compared to the ones that were more of wealth or poverty.

Table 4.13. Mike's Intake Survey Results

Question	Response
Lower Income/Poverty Class	
I know what food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card.	Agree
I regularly attend hip-hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concerts.	Somewhat Disagree
I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, the internet, or a smart device.	Strongly Agree
I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours notice.	Somewhat Agree
I know how to obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost.	Somewhat Agree
Middle Class	
I considered college my best choice for a career path in life.	Strongly Agree
I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a "step-up" model in the future.	Strongly Agree
I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above.	Strongly Agree
I know how to "be my own boss" and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction.	Strongly Agree
I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons.	Strongly Agree
Higher/Wealthy Class	
I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance.	Strongly Disagree
I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal.	Somewhat Disagree
Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is vital.	Strongly Disagree
I have the means to send a child to a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state.	Disagree
I owned an instrument that was considered "professional level" before attending college as a music major	Agree

Eagle Heights High School (EHHS)

Eagle Heights High School in Paradise County, with a state rating of "B" for overall academic achievement, was one of the largest urban schools in the state, with around 2,300 students enrolled in grades 9-12. According to their school accountability report, almost 97% of students identified as being of Color, and a majority reported being eligible for modifications for learning English as a second language. Additionally, many of the students were children of migrants from Central and South America, commonly referred to as "Dreamers," many of whom have come to the US without proper documentation. Over the last few years, the graduation rate has exceeded the district and state averages due to the interventions to help students learn English. From a Title I standpoint, the school received additional targeted support. However, it has shown tremendous improvement in all vulnerable populations for grade-level reading, science, and math proficiency. As part of their school improvement plan, a significant focus has been placed on cooperative opportunities with the nearby community college programs to create dual enrollment career and technical certifications. A new partnership created a Jump Start program where students could earn high school and college credit towards general requirements as an alternative to taking high school advanced placement classes.

The school's gains have been noticed on a regional and national level. Like Central, the football team is a bright spot in the school, where they have advanced to their class's last two state championships. They were a recent high school “game of the week,” nationally broadcasted on a major sports network. Eagle Heights cut the band program from the curriculum in 2003 but was resurrected based on its school improvement plan in 2021. Since then, student interest has grown significantly, with around 55 students in multiple sections. Since its return, the Eagle Heights band has received Excellent ratings at their district MPA. Table 4.14 shows the recent

scores from the previous three years of MPA events, while also noting the two years the band was not in existence. Despite having similar enrollment demographics to Central, Table 4.15 shows that the three pieces selected for the 2024 district MPA were also composed of White males. Also, Central was grouped into Class E according to the state MEA rules and regulations and performed two works at a Grade 3 level.

Table 4.14. Recent Scores for Eagle Heights High School at MPA

Ensemble	2019	2020	2022*	2023*	2024
Concert Band	Did Not Participate	Did Not Participate	Excellent (II)	Excellent (II)	Excellent (II)

*denotes previous band director

Table 4.15. 2024 MPA Concert Program for Eagle Heights High School (Class E)

Title of Piece	Composer	Grade Level	Composer Demographics
Left Right March	Sousa/Brion	3	White Male
Yorkshire Ballad	James Barnes	3	White Male
Quebec Folk Rhapsody	Robert Buckley	2	White Male

Using ten different artifacts, I notated 558 codes in my analysis of this case. Table 4.16 shows the percentages of frequencies for the coded statements at Eagle Heights High School. Overall, administrative support accounted for the most significant code segments at 35%, while fundamentals represented 30%, student needs at 20%, and relationships at 15% of the coded segments. The following section provides detailed excerpts from each highlighted theme.

Table 4.16. Prominent Themes and Codes for Eagle Heights High School

Code	% of Material Coded
Support (35%)	
Smaller Band Size	16%
Administrative Support	9%
Teacher Burnout	6%
Get out of line	2%
Do their part	1%
Back to Basics	1%
Fundamentals (30%)	
Expectations	11%
Rehearsal Strategies	10%
Conductor Lineage	6%
Progress	1%
Teacher Mentorship	1%
Student Needs (20%)	
Student Investment	9%
Understanding	8%
Fear of Failure	2%
Perception	1%
Relationships (15%)	
Rapport	6%
Neighborhood Mentality	5%
Conductor Accountability	2%
Student Adaptations	1%
Conductor Preparation	1%

EHHS Theme 1: Support. Though the Eagle Heights administrative team loved the band's positive impact on the school's climate and culture, the lack of support and advocacy kept

the program from growing to its true potential. This accounted for over 35% of the coded segments in the case.

Smaller Band Size. The small band size at Eagle Heights played a significant role in their success at their district MPA. Although their concert band only had 27 members, the enrollment was average for traditional, comprehensive high schools in Paradise County Public Schools. For their 2024 district MPA event, I observed that no ensemble under 40 members received a Superior rating. Furthermore, most schools with more students and higher ratings were listed as charter, private, or magnet schools within the county. Joel commented on this at various moments in our interviews by claiming that "just because each school has almost 2,500 kids, doesn't mean that their bands are supported equally" (Interview 1, February 21, 2024).

Several of the comments made by adjudicators during his evaluation performance pointed out the smaller instrumentation, noting “Be really sensitive to the size of the band so that we’re not playing too loud. The band being a little bit smaller, we don't want to play so loud that we are covering up the hard work we're doing” (MPA Adjudicator Comments, March 13, 2024). Other comments on the MPA rubric also noted ensemble size, such as “listening to each player that they're all articulating accurately” and “being mindful of your instrumentation with only having one flute on the stage.”

A point of contention was that Eagle Heights, with a considerable English learning and special needs population, was placed in the same classification as schools with similar total enrollment, but few of the same concerns. Mike and Alex were concerned about comparing a Title I band program to more established groups in affluent parts of the district. In our interview, Mike was very passionate about the misuse of time that a high school director spends on “perfecting the same process in class, hearing the piece perfect for achieving expert

performance” (Interview 2, March 30, 2024). Further, he raised some concerns over the exclusion of vulnerable populations in the MPA process by saying:

> The biggest impact MPA may have on music education is that it could create a de facto elimination of playing in a band, especially with our special needs students. If the student doesn't have the performance chops, directors may not let them play at MPA. They might not be able to play at the concert like other kids.

Alex was concerned that band directors are so worried about their ensemble rating that they ignore the human considerations of "not practicing at home" to prepare for these events, which may lead to putting increased pressure on students who eventually quit band (Interview 2, March 18, 2024). She further discussed in her methods classes the "delicate questions" that often these directors may forget to consider with their children in Title I ensembles, asking:

> Do they find out if their kids have eaten that day? Did their parents try to pawn off their instrument for no good reason? Are these students housing insecure? Are there drug issues going on in the family? You never know what happened the night before that they didn't practice.

Joel was very mindful of his ensemble’s tendencies during the video rehearsal I observed. His key indicators of a superior-level ensemble included "intonation, balance and blend, and adherence to style" (Interview 2, March 11, 2024). The primary focus included finding ways to balance the group, based on the instrumentation, teaching the percussion not to overpower the wind players, and having individuals not stick out over each other throughout their three pieces. At some points of the rehearsal, Joel mentioned suggestions to hide his instrumentation issues, like “that was a very nice clarinet choir kind of accompaniment, just make sure we're not

overpowering what we need to hear" and "make sure that we are playing with more confidence" (Classroom Observation, Eagle Heights HS, March 7, 2024).

Administrative Support. Joel found it challenging to recruit students to join the band and convince counselors to level his classes correctly. He did not receive any funding beyond his teaching salary to support growth. In our initial interview, Joel gave his honest assessment regarding his administration, saying, "I feel like they provide us only with the bare necessities to get the job done" (Interview 1, February 21, 2024). He elaborated that his principal wanted to see the band grow and was excited about the positive culture changes the program has provided the school. However, his primary concern was that he had not taken the time to "enlighten them more on the MPA process" and how it is a county-wide "enriching experience for the kids to go and get adjudicated" (Interview 2, March 11, 2024). It was important to him to eventually get his administration to see the purpose behind MPA and its impact on the school's outlook. He mentioned that he hopes for a system where his band program is more than "a dumping ground for kids that don't have another class to go to" (Interview 1, February 21, 2024).

One of Joel's requests was for a paraprofessional to help with the remediation of technical proficiency with most of his students. He was very frustrated that, despite the school district having grant-funded instructors on multiple instruments, they were often booked at more established programs and rarely came to Eagle Heights to work with his students. Mike also concluded that fewer "full-time paraprofessionals have often been at a school for a long time" at Title I schools in Paradise County (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). As such, Joel spent a large sum of his paycheck hiring close friends to help tutor students on basic skills. He justified using his own funds, saying: "I could get someone in tomorrow for my kids who desperately need help with an oboe, for example, rather than jumping through the district hoops" (Interview 1,

February 21, 2024). According to Joel, it was a common practice to pay these coaches above market rate to come to his school based on the stigma of school violence.

Teacher Burnout. Music teacher burnout was a constant problem with Title I Schools in Paradise County. In my interview with Mike, he said that he covered school staffing needs and avoiding teacher burnout in his music for special needs course. He attributed the higher teacher turnover rate in Title I schools to "stressing and knowing there's going to be a lot of work" and "feeling unprepared for knowing how to manage multiple responsibilities" (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). Alex based her woodwind tech class on the idea that future band directors in Title I Schools "have to wear many hats" as the only person in the school who operates band, indoor percussion, color guard, and guitar, among other instrumental classes (Interview 1, March 4, 2024). She further gave me her realistic goal of giving her students "enough foundation to say, 'not my area,' but I will figure it out."

Joel looked incredibly tired and defeated throughout our interviews and in the rehearsal that I observed. Though given excellent instruction in his methods courses, his overall tone was monophonic and lacked excitement. The students were having a hard time with the rehearsal during *Yorkshire Ballad,* as evidenced by comments like "I was struggling to hear what you are doing rhythmically" and "Make sure we're anticipating the dynamic change into the *piu mosso*" (Classroom Observation, Eagle Heights HS, March 7, 2024). The students were not involved in the learning process but instead reacted to Joel's instructions on the podium. In his college music courses, Mike encouraged his students to consider a more student-centered approach to music making, which would better involve the students and prevent routine within the rehearsal setting. Specifically, he stated that it "helps with the burnout of new teachers by not micromanaging every musical decision" (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). When asked if he planned on staying

at Eagle Heights, Joel replied, "I plan on staying up to three to four years, but then I will probably move onto a performance career; it's where my true passion is" (Interview 2, March 11, 2024).

EHHS Theme 2: Fundamentals. Joel felt that a central pillar to success at MPA was constantly reinforcing musical and technical fundamentals with his ensemble. Due to the lack of a proper middle school band feeder program, as was common in his district, having students learn fundamentals was crucial for eventually playing high school-level literature. This accounted for over 30% of my coded segments.

Expectations. In year one, Joel's priorities for the band program were to "always be prepared, always be punctual, and be disciplined in rehearsal" (Interview 1, February 21, 2024). From there, he focused on "actively listening" during the essential aspects of musical performance by asking the students "Where is the accompaniment? Can you hear the clarinets here, the tubas there?" He reinforced this approach during his rehearsal observation. During *Yorkshire Ballad*, he thanked his flute player for "following him at the *molto rallentando* at measure 45" (Classroom Observation, Eagle Heights HS, March 7, 2024). In another section of the piece, he asked the ensemble to "exaggerate the 'hairpin crescendos' into measure 51." The attention to detail was noted by one of the adjudicators during his MPA performance. In their comments, they mentioned that they "could tell that he was working on the details" but then added that "continued refinement is needed to get this piece to a higher level" (MPA Adjudicator Comments, March 13, 2024).

Mike, however, questioned the approaches of concert band training for an MPA event. In our interview, he questioned "the purpose of the traditional concert band" in schools when the

current trend was composers writing more inclusive, contemporary, and abstract wind literature (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). He goes further by asking:

> Should we focus on teaching the 'standard ensemble' developed in the heyday of White male composers? Or could we now consider the school-based concert band as an ensemble that can be used to perform multiple genres and styles of music? Shouldn't we now call a 'concert band' that simply because of the instruments in the ensemble rather than by the content of the material being taught to its musicians?

Alex also concurred in our interviews about band directors who are choosing not to embrace the modernization of music education after the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to struggles in the rehearsal room with their current generation of student. She elaborated, "I see many directors who are open to change. I see those who incorporate contemporary pedagogy, diversity, technology, and collaborative music as giving students more autonomy. Nevertheless, some strongly revert to the traditional way of doing things" (Interview 1, March 4, 2024).

Alex's research focus included integrating technology into all aspects of a secondary ensemble curriculum. Her goal at the university level was to give her music students strategies to incorporate "integrative, smart technology" while "creating content based on their teaching needs" into their lesson planning (Interview 1, March 4, 2024). She taught her students how to “leverage technology to practice accountability” as a supplement to the rehearsal. Specifically, she encouraged students to explore several LMS cloud platform options such as Canvas, SmartMusic, and MusicFirst Classroom rather than resorting to the “old, schooled practice logs” to assess student progress.

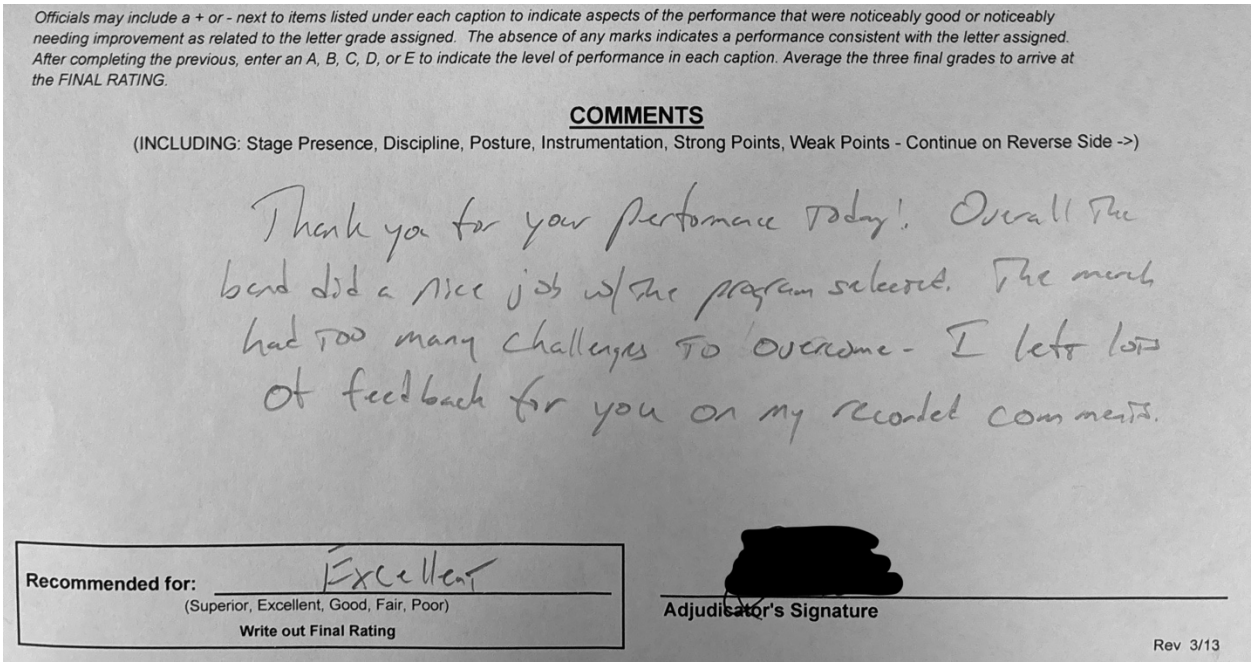
Rehearsal Strategies. The motto of Eagle Heights High School was “tomorrow's leaders today,” which resonated with Joel and helped shape his rehearsal approach for his district MPA

event. Because the majority of his students performed below grade level, he relied on a peer mentoring system where, for example, he would “pair his first chair clarinetist with one of the lower chair kids” instead of providing instruction from a paid paraprofessional to help them with their music (Interview 1, February 21, 2024). He considered it an advantage that almost the entire ensemble was below grade level in technical proficiency, as he could teach them his preferred techniques rather than correcting bad habits from a previous teacher. The thought process behind this method was, “You can have younger players start with good habits, scales, warm-ups, lip slurs, and so forth. Older kids help with whatever they need to get to the fundamental basics of the instrument.”

The reliance on student leadership was also evident at several points during the observed rehearsal for *Quebec Folk Rhapsody*. Toward the beginning of the session, he asks his junior trombone player to play out his harmonic line, saying, "Since we only have one of you, I need a little bit more of your leadership to help with phrasing" (Classroom Observation, Eagle Heights HS, March 7, 2024). In another instance, he encouraged a clarinet student when discussing a *crescendo/decrescendo* sequence towards the middle of the piece, saying, “It is your time to shine. However, you want to interpret it, make it musical and beautiful.” He even acknowledged when one of his section leaders was absent when he stopped at another section of the piece, noting, “I'm losing the eighth notes a little bit in measure 34. I know that's probably because Isaiah is not here today.”

Joel often talked about building individual fundamentals to increase their achievement scores at an MPA event. He was very passionate about “getting them to read music, read rhythms, giving them the fundamentals” while “further guiding them for their practice” (Interview 1, February 21, 2024). He took particular offense to some of the comments the

adjudicators made towards the end of the MPA performance, suggesting that he did not know how to teach these introductory musical comments. Evidence of possible microaggressions and bias towards Joel and his ensemble may have influenced their rating at MPA. As shown in on their evaluation sheet in Figure 4.4, once the adjudicator hard the mistakes during their performance of *Left Right March*, they may have prematurely given Eagle Heights a rating before listening to the final two pieces on their program. Additionally, there was considerably less verbal feedback given to the ensemble on *Yorkshire Ballad* and *Quebec Folk Rhapsody* after they told Joel in their audio comments that he had "too many challenges to overcome" to achieve a superior at this event.


Officials may include a + or - next to items listed under each caption to indicate aspects of the performance that were noticeably good or noticeably needing improvement as related to the letter grade assigned. The absence of any marks indicates a performance consistent with the letter assigned. After completing the previous, enter an A, B, C, D, or E to indicate the level of performance in each caption. Average the three final grades to arrive at the FINAL RATING.

COMMENTS

(INCLUDING: Stage Presence, Discipline, Posture, Instrumentation, Strong Points, Weak Points - Continue on Reverse Side ->)

Thank you for your performance today! Overall the band did a nice job w/ the program selected. The march had too many challenges to overcome - I left lots of feedback for you on my recorded comments.

Recommended for: Excellent
(Superior, Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor)
Write out Final Rating

[redacted]
Adjudicator's Signature

Rev 3/13

Figure 4.4. MPA Adjudicator Comment Sheet for Eagle Heights High School

Another adjudicator belittled Joel at the end of his performance by offering suggestions of what he should do with his concert band, which suggested that the lack of a superior

performance was his lack of teaching skills rather than a combination of factors unique to his school population. Specifically, they instructed him to:

> Spend time every day in fundamentals. You may refer to this as 'warm-up time,' but calling it 'fundamental time' keeps the students more engaged. Honestly, it shouldn't be a time to play a few notes, warm their instruments up, get their reeds wet, and check attendance. Your most in-depth teaching can happen during that time if you focus the energy that way. (MPA Adjudicator Comments, March 13, 2024)

Towards the end of the audio comments, they elaborated on how Joel should improve the sound quality within his ensemble. They suggested to him that he have the students “purchase tuners on their smartphones,” saying that “it's only $3.99 on the app store” and “it shouldn't be a big deal since every kid has an iPhone nowadays.” They then offered more detailed rehearsal techniques by telling Joel to "get off the podium, actually go down the line and stand in front of each student" to check their intonation with an electronic drone machine. Another comment consisted of "suggesting to parents to purchase better quality flutes" because "intonation doesn't happen without good tone. Students can't play in tune if they can't play in good tone." Further, they mentioned in the audio comments that pushing private lessons "gets the students to listen to themselves, which will elevate the maturity of their sound."

Conductor Lineage. When discussing the diversity of band works on the MPA list, Joel acknowledged that he did not consider the composer's background when selecting his concert program. He attributed this to him “not being exposed to music from minority composers” during his undergraduate degree program (Interview 1, February 21, 2024). He went into more detail by admitting that “from undergrad, I mainly only played music from composers like John Mackey and Percy Grainger.” When asked about his opinion of the lack of diversity on the state

MPA list, he recognized that the options are “overpopulated with White composers, and it seems like minorities aren't as involved in the MPA selection process.” Alex also offered an opinion regarding the selection process of state MPA lists, saying that “If we're not asking whose music is and is not being played, whose music is not being considered, and what composers are not being brought to the table, then what are we doing as a profession?” (Interview 1, March 4, 2024). She also suggested that the band directors who “play safe” with their MPA program selections are often the result of “a culture where they were in an ultra-competitive group” (Interview 2, March 18, 2024).

Despite this, Joel continued to program concert pieces from more traditional composers. His justification primarily “depended on the program he came from in high school and college, which, therefore, dictated how he programs for his ensembles” (Interview 2, March 11, 2024). He admitted that during his degree program, the symphonic band conductor, who also taught instrumental methods, came from a traditional military band background and taught his students according to this method. Also, Joel's university, despite being nationally ranked based on its focus on teaching a diverse student body, lacked any summer enrichment opportunities for conductors to learn about more contemporary works by BIPOC composers. Efforts were being made to address these concerns with the recent school of music hires in the band department. However, Alex questioned whether “some directors are embracing change authentically, or more so doing it only on a token level” (Interview #1, March 4, 2024). Due to the county's lack of high school bands, his pre-service internship was conducted at a more affluent school with a high percentage of middle-class White and Hispanic families.

EHHS Theme 3: Student Needs. Joel recognized that one of the significant obstacles to success at Eagle Heights was meeting the economic and socioemotional needs of the students in his ensemble. Student needs accounted for almost 20% of the coded segments within this case.

Student Investment. According to Joel's accounts, the previous band director had attempted to start a parent booster association to offset the operating costs of the band but was unsuccessful in maintaining stability, which led to him folding the organization shortly after being hired by the school. As such, he was primarily responsible for providing all the classroom materials for his ensemble, which created problems in terms of enrollment.

The lack of available instruments prevented most students at Eagle Heights from joining the band. Specifically, the students struggled with "purchasing mouthpieces and reeds, let alone quality instruments," which they felt was the main culprit in "limiting their education and affecting their MPA rating" (Interview 1, February 21, 2024). Figure 4.5 shows the makeshift system for signing out instrument mouthpieces, which allowed the advanced band students to share instruments with beginners, who did not perform at MPA, based on class period. When asked how practical this approach was to a student's continued interest in participating in band, he told me that "his biggest problem was that more kids wanted to participate, but he didn't have instruments that worked." Therefore, having the students check out mouthpieces and sanitize them after each rehearsal was his only economical solution to keep them in the class.

Figure 4.5. Instrument Mouthpiece Checkout Procedure at Eagle Heights High School

Joel discovered within the first few weeks of teaching band at Eagle Heights that:

> Funding is the biggest factor to success. If you are a typically low-funded school, and the band program isn't super well-financed, it affects instrument repairs. It affects class materials and every other aspect of preparing for an MPA event. (Interview #2, March 11, 2024)

When asking Joel about resources within Paradise County to help improve his MPA scores, he was disgusted by the inequality of district support towards more affluent schools getting more instruments, more para coaching staff, hosting more competitions, and regional ensemble opportunities. Specifically, he questioned how "depending on the area of the county, PCPS doesn't prioritize the quality and equity of band education in its schools" (Interview 1, February 21, 2024). Alex questioned whether the current structure of MPA success and the

inequality of evaluation results was more rooted in "gatekeeping" than most ensembles' goals. Her notion regarding the MPA further stated:

> The concept of MPA assumes that every program has access to the required music on the list. It assumes that students can play at the levels of repertoire based on grade, that there's funding to go to MPA, and that their administration supports their band participation. (Interview 2, March 18, 2024)

Understanding. Of the four case studies, Eagle Heights had the highest number of special needs accommodations proportionally to the student body. Moreover, the added pressures of being in the country undocumented, which was the case for many of Joels' students, caused great anxiety and pressure that carried over into their academic progress. In his special needs course, Mike emphasized the "labels-free approach" to his students when they would eventually teach in their own classrooms (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). He needed to introduce future music educators resources “whether for the classroom or simply to break stigmas and stereotypes in general,” which included examples of successful musicians with various diagnoses.

Preparing to teach many English-learner students, such as those in Eagle Heights, was also a considerable focus of Mike's college course. He recognized that "English learners might have to take additional study skills classes, which often prohibit them from joining a band program" (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). Joel felt his strength in teaching at this school was his familiarity with the student population. He felt he could "put himself in their shoes being from the same demographic, participating in an ELL program, living in government housing, and dealing with culture issues outside of school" (Interview 2, March 11, 2024). With that in mind, Joel designed his band program to meet his students' needs “given all of the extrinsic factors inhibiting their growth.”

Joel reflected on what the MPA experience meant to his students. He mentioned several times that he was proud of his students for the adversity they overcame, the technical challenges of their concert program, and the language barrier, which became a cultural factor in their success at the performance. He remembered how he created a safe space where his students could "share ideas, thoughts, and ideas while coming together to do one thing, which is band" (Interview 2, March 11, 2024). He credited their excellent rating to their constant work ethic, emphasized as a characteristic of Hispanic culture. He ended our interview sessions by saying "All that I care about, I don't care if the kids aren't so good. We'll get there! And I'm going to help them get there. I want them to come into my rehearsal, have a good time, and walk out learning something about music."

EHHS Theme 4: Rapport. Establishing rapport with the students at Eagle Heights was another central point of Joel's first year as the band director. It also accounted for about 15% of the coded segments.

Student Expectations. Joel was adamant about students knowing his expectations, from rehearsal etiquette to practice habits to knowing how to solve their problems without direct instruction. Particularly with MPA, he embraced the experience as a way for his students to put on a good product, thereby pushing them to want to practice and be good at what they do" (Interview 2, March 11, 2024). During the rehearsal that I observed, Joel reminded his ensemble about "speaking to the ink that the judges want to hear" when discussing a problematic rhythmic figure to the alto saxophones in *Quebec Folk Rhapsody* (March 7, 2024). He also warned the clarinet section that "the judges will have the score, so everything I'm looking at, they will be able to tell what we're doing." Toward the end of the class period, he placed responsibility on his

students by telling them, “Don't practice what you know, be consistent with learning the hard parts before our rehearsals.”

Alex expressed concern over the competitive nature of an MPA event, particularly the socioemotional toll that it placed on students. Specifically, she disagreed with directors' efforts to focus on how a judge will grade their ensemble, saying, “When things get assumed about MPA, students get forgotten” (Interview 2, March 18, 2024). In her woodwind techniques class, she would emphasize to her students that “whatever you get on that piece of paper, or that comment tape, it's only one person's opinion.” Part of her philosophy carried over in her assignments as her college students spent considerable time “self-reflecting and strengthening their mentality” through observation in the Paradise School District (Course Expectations, Spring 2023). In the early part of her secondary school teaching career, she mentioned how she was very much like Joel in that the ratings and competitions meant a lot to her. After a few years, she “matured in teaching and started to watch the students' reaction in her ensemble.” The transformation in her rehearsal approach shaped her desire to incorporate more of a progressive music education curriculum through technology, beat making, and composing in the secondary ensemble.

Neighborhood Mentality. Joel conceded that Eagle Heights has recently turned into one of the roughest places to teach in Paradise County. The school accountability report confirmed this trend by reporting a much higher average of teacher assaults, drugs, and weapons on campus compared to the rest of the district. As such, most gifted and talented students zoned for the school often transfer to nearby charter or private schools. Fueling the flight of academically inclined students was a recent state-wide school choice initiative, where any family, regardless of income, could qualify for a voucher to attend a different school other than the one they were assigned based on where they lived. Joel recounted several instances during football season

where gunshots rang out from the parking lot as the marching band returned to the band room after performing their halftime show. The administration regularly called the local police to disperse fights between rival gangs during lunchtime and before/after school.

As a result, many of Joel's students came to his classroom “loosely speaking much slang, cursing a lot in class, and dealing with substance abuse” (Interview 1, February 21, 2024). At the beginning of the school year, this mentality affected him as it sometimes “put a damper on the learning environment” in producing effective rehearsals. He further explained that “the culture at Eagle Heights heavily dictates what the students find interesting and what they think is cool.” To solve many of the behavior issues in his rehearsals, Joel would spend considerable time in one-on-one conversations with students, attempting to “know them on a personal basis as human beings” and further explore why they didn't put much effort forward in his ensemble. Most of his students had transportation issues and could not take public transit or afford an Uber ride home from after-school rehearsals. Several others were responsible for taking care of younger siblings, which took away from time to practice at home. Finally, he discovered that the neighboring Spanish communities did not support symphonic music, unlike popular genres like Bachata and Reggaeton.

Mike also agreed that “school and neighborhood culture is a big deal to a band program” (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). He further elaborated on the lack of community support:

> As students rise in grade levels, they may not have older siblings or neighbors telling them 'Band is going to be great' or 'In the future, you may be doing this for a career.' It's less engrained into the fabric of a school like this, which creates a consideration of relevance.

Joel chipped away, little by little, at the core of the culture problem at Eagle Heights, which was the lack of a caring, relatable adult figure in his students' lives. His teaching style involved “coaching students to be better people in the long run” and not approaching the podium as a traditional band conductor, focusing on the competitive aspect of music. Both Alex and Mike agreed that this student-centered approach was the way of the future in teaching band at the middle and high school levels. Alex acknowledged that the pressures on MPA should never be compared to everyday life situations that students bring to school. She added that “for such a superficial thing as an MPA rating, we put tremendous weight on its future implications while controlling a student's mindset about being in music” (Interview 2, March 18, 2024).

Alex brought up several points about her experiences as a band director at a large inner-city school district, similar to Joel's, and the struggles she faced in schools that mirrored Eagle Heights. She lamented how she was so focused on getting high ratings with her bands that she lost sight of her purpose in teaching music for student enjoyment and discovery. At length, she would discuss the number of students she lost due to her ensembles “being too serious” and “not having fun with their friends” due to the pursuit of MPA perfection (Interview 2, March 18, 2024). Much like Joel, her key to happiness teaching at the secondary level was “letting go of the completeness” and “finally listening to the students to find out what they needed” in music education.

Summary of Case 3: Joel, Eagle Heights High School

Eagle Heights High School highlighted challenges Joel faced due to insufficient administrative support, limited access to quality instruments, and accommodating students with academic and social needs. Joel struggled with recruitment, funding, and advocating for his programs' needs. Due to these challenges, the ensemble's lack of instrumentation impacted its

performance rating at the district MPA, leading to concerns about equitable comparisons with more affluent schools. Joel emphasized the importance of reinforcing musical and technical training with his students in the absence of a middle school feeder program. He recognized the importance of addressing the economic and social needs of his unique population of English language learners and special needs students. He aimed to create a supportive environment in his rehearsal room despite his frustration over the unequal district-level support for lower SES music programs. He set clear expectations for behavior and performance and encouraged student accountability while embracing the resilience of their home lives. Joel welcomed the impact of the neighborhood culture as he worked to build trust and connections with this band program.

Case 4: Evan, George Washington High School

Evan was a 26-year-old Hispanic male who teaches band at George Washington High School in Magnolia County. Unlike the previous three cases, Evan was the only director with a split assignment, working at multiple schools throughout the day. Due to the lack of enrollment, he taught six elementary school music classes throughout the district in addition to his secondary workload. Like Joel, he is in his first year at the school and recently completed his bachelor's degree in music education. His primary instrument was percussion, and he indicated that he had little prior experience teaching at any level before his current job assignment. As shown in Table 4.17, Evan indicated having more familiarity with the social norms of middle-class society, whereas he indicated an unfamiliarity for aspects of a wealthy society.

Table 4.17. Evan's Intake Survey Results

Question	Response
Lower Income/Poverty Class	
I know what food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card.	Disagree
I regularly attend hip-hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concerts.	Strongly Disagree
I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, the internet, or a smart device.	Somewhat Agree
I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours notice.	Somewhat Agree
I know how to obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost.	Strongly Disagree
Middle Class	
I considered college my best choice for a career path in life.	Strongly Agree
I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a "step-up" model in the future.	Strongly Agree
I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above.	Strongly Disagree
I know how to "be my own boss" and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction.	Somewhat Agree
I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons.	Strongly Agree
Higher/Wealthy Class	
I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance.	Somewhat Agree
I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal.	Strongly Disagree
Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is vital.	Strongly Disagree
I have the means to send a child to a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state.	Strongly Disagree
I owned an instrument that was considered "professional level" before attending college as a music major	Strongly Disagree

Evan's University Professors

Like Joel, Evan took woodwind and brass methods with Alex, but has communicated regularly with Mike, as the new undergraduate music education coordinator, about his expertise in progressive music education. Their intake survey results from case one align very similarly, except for Evan having more familiarity with low-income scenarios.

George Washington High School (GWHS)

George Washington High School in Magnolia County, with a state rating of "B" for overall academic achievement, was a small rural school with around 410 students enrolled in grades 6-12. It was also the smallest school in the current study. According to their school accountability report, over 75% of students identified as White, and a majority reported being economically disadvantaged, qualifying them for several state-run programs for child development. The school qualified for the highest tier of Title I grants for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). Their distinction was based on the school's Black students and those with special needs not showing proficiency in English, math, or science for six consecutive years, despite only representing about 15 percent of the school population. Since COVID-19, the graduation rate of George Washington has dropped more than 20%, putting them as one of the lowest performing schools in their district and the state. As part of their school improvement plan, a significant focus has been placed on raising attendance rates through truancy interventions and increasing the number of dual certification certificates offered in skilled trade careers.

While the school has shown a steady decline in enrollment and academic progress, the one area that Washington High constantly highlights is the school band. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the county considered the band program one of the finest in the state. A

school tour revealed several trophies and recognitions from regional and national competitions, including a 1988 state marching band championship plaque. However, within the last decade, residents have migrated from the town to bigger cities with more job opportunities. As such, financial support for the band has dropped significantly, and the program has received the lowest average ratings of the four cases, scoring a Good for the past eight years at their district MPA. Table 4.18 shows the recent scores from the previous five years of MPA events for George Washington, noting their lack of participation in 2022. Despite having the least diverse population of the four cases, Table 4.19 shows that one of the three pieces selected for the 2024 district MPA was composed by a White female. Like two other cases, Washington was grouped into Class E according to the state MEA rules and regulations and performed all three works at a Grade 1 level, considered the least difficult concert program in my study.

Table 4.18. Recent Scores for George Washington High School at MPA

Ensemble	2019*	2020*	2022*	2023*	2024
Concert Band	Good (III)	Good (III)	Did Not Participate	Good (III)	Good (III)

*denotes previous band director

Table 4.19. 2024 MPA Concert Program for George Washington High School (Class E)

Title of Piece	Composer	Grade Level	Composer Demographics
Activity March	Harold Bennett/Clark	1	White Male
Atlantis	Anne McGinty	1	White Female
Omega One	Larry Clark	1	White Male

Using nine different artifacts, I notated 472 codes in my analysis in this case. Table 4.20 shows the percentages of frequencies for the coded statements at George Washington High

School. Overall, pride accounted for the most significant code segments at 30%, while All Lives Matter represented 29%, borderline success at 22%, and engagement at 19% of the coded segments. The following section provides detailed excerpts from each highlighted theme.

Table 4.20. Prominent Themes and Codes for George Washington High School

Code	% of Material Coded
Pride (30%)	
Community Pride	11%
Administrative Support	9%
Educational Resources	7%
College Band Director	2%
Progress	1%
All Lives Matter (29%)	
Conservative Values	11%
Trailer Park Kids	10%
Labels-Free Approach	7%
Think for Themselves	1%
Borderline Success (22%)	
Conductor Accountability	10%
Musical Decisions	8%
School Improvement Plan	2%
In Service	1%
Best Practice	1%
Engagement (19%)	
Earned Not Given	9%
Making Change	8%
Nervous	1%
Communication	1%

GWHS Theme 1: Pride. The pride in the George Washington High School band throughout Magnolia County was evident throughout my field observations, various artifacts online, and my interviews. It also accounted for over 30% of the coded segments.

Community Pride. The band program has a glorious history, as mentioned previously. I noted several examples of the town supporting the ensemble in my field observations. Several administrators and faculty at George Washington were former members of the band. Evan pointed out that having the teachers "recognize the hard work that his students put into a performance since they're alumni of the program" (Interview 1, February 20, 2024). Figure 4.6 captures an image of a poster at a local burger restaurant during the 1980s when the marching band was at its peak membership. During my visit, several residents recalled how they were either performers in the band or had children or grandchildren who participated in the program over the past few decades. The burger shop owner was also a flute player in the photo and talked at length with a few other patrons about her fantastic experience traveling to competitions and dating her future husband, who played in the drumline. Another program alumnus, a local gas store clerk, raved about the battle of the bands that used to take place with rival schools within the county during the football games.

Figure 4.6. Image of George Washington High School Marching Band in the 1980s

Evan also acknowledged the amount of pride that residents in Magnolia County shared with his band, saying that "for many years, the band has been the pride and joy of the school" (Interview 1, February 20, 2024). Alex also concurred that recent trends have reimagined school bands into "more community-based ensembles" (Interview 1, March 4, 2024). Joel further explained that "the school has traditionally looked to the band for school spirit." He told me a few stories about how the school constantly requested the ensemble to play for community events, sporting events, and competitions. Because of the high-performance demand, Evan felt pressure to produce a high-quality ensemble to satisfy their loyal supporters. He described how Washington High was vastly different from his own high school experience, saying:

> At my alma mater, I never had the football team come to us and request songs at the games. Typically, band kids were overlooked, or that cliché of being made fun of due to the stereotypical image of a music program (Interview 1, February 20, 2024).

Despite the community pride in the Washington band, economic shifts nationally have indirectly led to an overall decline in the band's enrollment and performance quality. As with most public schools in America, funding is tied to certain taxes or legislation passed on a state level. Over the past two decades, Magnolia County has lost many residents as a younger generation left to pursue better opportunities in some of the bigger cities in nearby counties. The primary economy there was agriculture, which has not been as lucrative with recent global trade initiatives to outsource crops from Mexico and overseas. With many farms and processing plants closed, most of the county became qualify for government assistance for food, housing, and medical needs. On a school level, Washington has become a 6-12 grade institution, while other schools in the district have consolidated further into K-12 centers. As such, course options were much smaller than traditional high schools. Evan only had two band classes on his course load: a middle school band and one for high school students.

Administrative Support. Due to its financial struggles, administrative and financial support has been extremely limited to maintaining Washington's status as an elite band program. These struggles have also led to a massive teacher turnover. Evan was the sixth band director to work at Washington in the past four years and the 13th overall since their state championship season. The previous director was a certified math teacher but operated the band because the school had trouble getting a music specialist to work there. Evan noted how the turnover of teachers created a "demographic and cultural survival of talent" in keeping students involved with the band and preventing it from dying in the name of consolidation (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). Alex also mentioned how the "lack of continuity in Title I band pipelines" due to teacher turnover may have a profoundly negative effect on the long-term stability of a program (Interview 1, March 4, 2024). Mike also commented on high teacher turnover in a program by

saying, “a school that has consistent turnover, the value and importance of the ensemble may not be seen as important" (Interview 1, February 19, 2024).

The obstacles created by a lack of administrative resources resulted in major impacts on the success rate of the band program. Mike explained how distractions such as academic remediation, insufficient instruction materials, and pullouts for testing and counseling could be a “detriment to highly effective rehearsals” (Interview 2, March 30, 2024). Evan further explained that not having the support to purchase standard teaching materials, such as tuners or class metronomes, “diminished the rehearsal techniques” he was trying to instill within his ensemble. (Interview 1, February 20, 2024). For their MPA concert program, Evan had to borrow music from other band directors in other districts due to the need for more funding to purchase their own copies. In addition, he paid for some of the music from his personal bank account.

During the classroom observation, multiple students entered and exited the rehearsal for reasons such as going to the restroom for extended periods, a few who were called to the counseling office, and one who openly asked Evan if they could study for a chemistry test rather than play their instrument in class. Several others needed to be more engaged in learning any musical concept. When a trumpet student refused to play the Ab Major scale during their warm-up, Evan said, “What's the deal? You told me that you knew this yesterday” (Classroom Observation, George Washington HS, March 1, 2024). While the trumpet student continued to play blatantly wrong notes, another student played constantly out of turn by banging on a practice pad rather than playing actual music with the rest of the band. I noted several instances where Evan asked different students in the rehearsal to stop texting and on their phones rather than playing their instruments.

Educational Resources. With a declining pool of property tax revenue, Washington High felt the pinch of providing basic needs for its students to gain academic achievement. Of the four case studies, Evan needed to gain more knowledge about the grants behind the federal Title I program and how it would benefit his band program. However, he constantly talked about how his ensemble's long term budget requests were "financially obtainable" from the school board (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). Despite having the lowest economic demographic of the four case studies, he charged $75 per student for band fees, which covered minor instrument repairs, supplies such as reeds and valve oil, and a few printed band pieces to play over the school year. This was the highest amount requested by a director in my study without the assistance of a booster program to help offset expenses.

Admittedly, Evan noted that most of his students could not afford to pay the fee and that he often took money from his pocket to purchase things like uniform polo shirts and field trips. To add to the difficulty of raising money, he expressed his displeasure with the school using all fundraiser proceeds on behalf of the school to support all organizations equally. This meant that Washington High had the authority to use a portion of the band's money toward the needs of other clubs' and athletic teams' needs. Despite this, Evan has been able to finance a major goal: to send his students to regional honor bands. He further proclaimed:

> They can attend regional honor bands, which hasn't been done in a long time. One of my high school students attended an honor band at a major university in the state. It was a big deal to his family because they had never been to such a large place. A few middle school students also went to another band clinic in the neighboring state. It fuels them to want to be better and influence their friends to work hard and get better. (Interview 1, February 20, 2024)

The rehearsal facilities at Washington High were also the subject of the declining school band program. Figure 4.7 shows the condition of the school's main rehearsal room. The paint from previous decades was peeling significantly and desperately needed repair. The carpet had several holes and tears, exposing the wood underframe and open staples, often cutting students' backpacks when they set them on the floor. Work orders to replace the carpet and repaint the walls have been in place for five years. However, the school used its limited maintenance budget to replace its HVAC unit and the outer doors with modern security latches, part of a state-wide grant program to harden school buildings against active shooters. When asked about his opinion regarding the degraded facilities, Evan replied, “At the end of the day, we still bring light to the positive aspects of the school, despite what our room looks like” (Interview 1, February 20, 2024).

Figure 4.7. The Rehearsal Room at George Washington High School

GWHS Theme 2: All Lives Matter. A major concern for the band at Washington High was the acceptance of progressive cultural trends into the program. Many parents, faculty, and community members felt it would dilute their tradition of excellence and reputation within the county. Also, the unique challenges of living in a rural area affected their rehearsal preparation for their district MPA. It accounted for over 29% of my coded segments.

Conservative Values. Magnolia County, much like a lot of rural parts of America, leaned heavily conservative politically. Evan talked at length about how the community has felt "attacked for being in a rural setting," which meant having a different set of values than accepting the current social ideals of the more progressive big cities (Interview 1, February 20, 2024). The portion of the state where the county sit had former plantations that were once filled with enslaved people from the pre-Civil War era. Through the mid-20th century, the Ku Klux Klan had a heavy presence in the area until it disbanded in the 1970s. Recently, there has been a growing movement to preserve the Confederate statues and monuments in the county in order not to erase the area's history. Considering calls for increased diversity, equity, and inclusion in America, the residents in the community felt threatened that their history would be taken away in the name of social progress. Evan spoke on the fear of his students losing their culture, saying "The White kids in my school specifically, they don't have a sense of identity. They don't know what to believe in because they were never part of the bigotry past. They are a bit lost on what they should think and how they should perceive life as a conservative" (Interview 1, February 20, 2024).

Mike related well to the students at Washington, saying that despite "growing up in a poor rural area, his neighborhood was pretty safe" (Interview 2, March 30, 2024). He further elaborated that "the biggest distinction growing up" was the safety of a small-town environment

such as Magnolia County, compared to other Title I areas in urban cities. Despite being poor, Mike never felt unsafe walking to school or was afraid of classroom violence that plagues many lower SES schools in bigger cities. Evan also concurred that his school has significantly fewer problems with school discipline due to the community's conservative values. When discussing the school culture, Evan mentioned “There are no gangs at George Washington. I connect it to the entire school being one big community group. They understand that a gang is just a group of individuals who belittle or diminish people” (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). The school accountability report also confirmed that Washington had the lowest percentages of suspensions, assaults, weapons, and drugs on campus compared to the other cases in my study.

The small-town atmosphere created continuity for the students at Washington, which was noted in several points in my interviews with Evan. While the general student population lacked the motivation to graduate with a diploma, Evan's students were considered the brightest on campus. He was proud of the fact that “most students in my band were A/B honor roll students" while also being “very popular amongst friends” (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). He contributed this to everyone “knowing each other from kindergarten through graduation,” unlike the bigger cities where “students come from many different places and don't know each other.” Family structure was also a common theme between his students and academic success. Mike, reminiscing on his childhood, felt that “a common characteristic” in lower SES environments were students who “lived in one-parent, often violent, home lives” for much of their schooling (Interview 2, March 30, 2024). Despite being separated for some time, he credited his upbringing with both of his parents for guiding him to go to college.

Trailer Park Kids. When asked about preparing band directors to work in situations like Washington, Alex admitted that “there is no amount of coursework, field hours, or practicum

that could prepare a teacher for a Title I school" (Interview 1, March 4, 2024). High-paying jobs were almost nonexistent in Magnolia County. As such, a proportional number of students at the school lived in trailer parks, apartments, extended-stay motels, or temporary housing such as recreational vehicles (RVs). Transitional housing and food insecurities have often contributed to the demoralizing of Evan's students achieving success in music. He described them as "impoverished children who don't have means to feed themselves" (Interview 1, February 20, 2024). He says many of his students "live in shacks off dirt roads…. Most of my students tell [him] they are hungry, starving, and haven't eaten since the free school lunch the day before."

Having access to a place where students could practice their instrument at home also became a difficult barrier for Evan to overcome in preparing his ensemble for success at MPA. In the classroom observation, a percussionist kept banging on a practice pad throughout the rehearsal, which disturbed the entire class. Evan did not ask the student to go into a practice room or play softer so that the ensemble could listen to the pitch during the warm-up scales. When asked about this, he replied, "Their home life situation prevents most of them from being able to practice outside of class time" (Interview 1, February 20, 2024). Mike shared a similar background as an orchestra director on a poor Indian reservation in the southwestern United States before transitioning to the college level. He gave several concerns that plagued him in preparing his school ensembles for MPA events:

> We had parents flagged in our system who attempted to steal school-owned instruments to sell at pawn shops. That made it impossible for students to practice at home. Many lived in temporary housing. Plus, many parents worked opposite shifts to help with bills, meaning that when my kids got home from school to practice, someone usually slept while another was getting ready to go to their job. (Interview 2, March 30, 2024)

Evan also related to the environment where his students are growing up. As someone who came to the country undocumented, he was forced into one of the many migrant camps along the northern Mexico border, operated by local non-government organizations and faith-based groups. While waiting to cross into America, he attended makeshift schools, usually in large tents, with someone teaching fellow migrants basic English and math while using drumming as his joy and normalcy to his prison-like childhood. He often talked about not having food to eat and dealing with the "gangs and cartels" who would "govern the camps and recruit teenagers to work for them" in the drug trade (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). He used his childhood struggles to show his students they could get through the harsh realities of their home situations. While at Washington, his goal was for his students not to "repeat the cycle of poverty" but instead think critically for themselves and become better people in the world beyond their small town (Interview 1, February 20, 2024).

Labels Free Approach. Evan focused on creating a colorblind, labels-free classroom where every student would be treated equally and with respect. Throughout the MPA concert cycle, he fought to convince his ensemble that cultural progress "shouldn't be treated as a form of victimization" towards White students (Interview 1, February 20, 2024). It began with the selection of his MPA concert program. He was very passionate about "not programming music simply because of the sexual preference or ethnic background of the composer." His knowledge of quality band music came from his former university band directors, where he played primarily traditional band works of Percy Grainger, Gustav Holst, and Paul Hindemith. In terms of more "contemporary music," Evan felt that compositions should only be added to the MPA required to list "if state band directors will receive it and are highly programmed by different ensembles" (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). In Mike's special needs course at the university, he focused on

"breaking stigmas and stereotypes" in music learning (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). In his special needs course, he advised us to respect students who "have different cultural, ethnic, political and religious backgrounds from their own" (Course Expectations, Mike, January 20, 2024).

The concert band at George Washington only had three students of Color, consisting of two percussionists and a trombonist who chose not to play an instrument and sat in the corner during the rehearsal. It was evident during the observed rehearsal that those students did not perform with the same passion and purpose as the White students in the ensemble. There may have been instances of possible microaggressions towards a Black snare drummer when Evan called them out for "getting softer while slowing down" during the first/second ending of *Activity March* (Classroom Observation, George Washington HS, March 1, 2024). Rather than allowing the student to correct the mistake, he further critiqued them by saying, "Your hands are coming in behind the beat," while tapping the exact stroke he wanted the student to play on the podium. This explanation took more than 6 minutes of the class period. After the band replayed the same passage, Even again stopped the ensemble to yell at the same student over the dynamic and sticking concern.

I consider this to be a possible microaggression because no other student was called out during the rehearsal for making musical mistakes, though there was substantial evidence of wrong notes, intonation, and articulation mistakes in that piece and *Atlantis*. During their district MPA, however, adjudicators marked down major deficiencies in those areas, with minimal comments towards the same percussion student on *Activity March*. Though perhaps not intentional in this instance, Mike emphasized the importance of not "othering" students from "different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds" (Interview 2, March 30, 2024). Alex also

gave her insight on not singling out students in negative ways during a rehearsal. She spoke about “not berating them by yelling, ‘Why aren't you practicing your part?’” (Interview 2, March 18, 2024). In her methods classes, she wanted her music majors to understand why they should not resort to “calling kids out one by one” to demonstrate that they know their music. She cautioned that sometimes directors “dock points because students didn’t practice” when they do not know the outlying reasons for being unprepared for class.

GWHS Theme 3: Borderline Success. One of the major downfalls of the George Washington Band program was its acceptance of borderline success regarding musical maturity and instrument proficiency. This acceptance accounted for almost 23% of the coded segments for this case.

Conductor Accountability. Due to the lack of teaching band instrument pedagogy, student accountability was not evident, leading to substandard rehearsals and, thus, the lowest MPA rating among the four case studies. Mike attributed teacher turnover in schools like Washington to “feeling unprepared on managing stress while handling multiple responsibilities” when operating a high school band (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). Alex cautioned her students in the Woodwind Methods class about first-job expectations by stating:

> They have this vision of the wonderful band program they went through in high school. However, the real-world hits, which go to a program with no instruments, no music library, no access to instructional resources, haven't had a superior in several years. (Interview 1, March 4, 2024)

Evan admitted that he was unprepared to teach high school band without the vast resources he was accustomed to in college. With his primary instrument in percussion, it was rare that he had to play band instruments for a performance beyond a class assignment. His

training in woodwind and brass was limited to his courses with Alex and another professor while in the pre-service program. When he first accepted the position, he tried to compile a list of private instructors who would come to tutor his students. However, he discovered no private teacher would “drive over an hour each way from the city just to teach one or two students a week” (Interview 1, February 20, 2024). With no other choice, he had students come after school to sectionals where “he, along with his students, could learn their instrument together” in what he called “brainstorming lessons with each other” to figure out how to produce quality sounds.

Musical Decisions. Having future educators teach students to become independent learners was a cornerstone of Mike's special needs course. He justified his approach by helping the burnout of new teachers who “expand so much energy micromanaging every music decision” from the podium (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). Evan's lack of conducting knowledge showed at different points of his rehearsal. One student kept asking him to clarify what he meant about getting their flute in tune, and Evan replied, “You should learn how to do that on your own; you're in high school” (George Washington HS, March 1, 2024). Another student was confused after he told the class to write in a decrescendo in the middle of *Activity March*. Evan responded, “If you wrote that in your music, you probably wrote it wrong because I overlooked it this morning, and I'm going to correct it once and for all.”

The comments towards Evan were stern, but justified during the MPA performance. During *Activity March*, he was called out for not focusing on teaching his ensemble how to listen for the correct pitch. The adjudicator commented, “It looks like the ensemble is playing the same note, but it doesn’t sound the same. You need to teach them how to adjust other than by pulling on mouthpieces” (MPA Adjudicator Comments, George Washington HS, March 8, 2024).

They continued throughout the performance, critiquing Evan during *Omega One* on teaching issues such as “double-checking fingerings to ensure the ensemble is playing notes accurately” and “highlighting the score so that dynamics and key changes aren't missed as you conduct.” Towards the end of the program, comments were made that questioned whether Evan knew how to rehearse a concert band. They encouraged him to “listen to as many professional and military band recordings as possible” and to “emulate that sound in your ensemble” (March 8, 2024). They suggested Evan keep his ensemble in the auditorium to observe more successful bands in his district, watch videos on YouTube, and do whatever he could to "encourage the students to stay on a positive musical journey." As such, I interpreted these adjudicator comments as rather dismissive and aggressive towards the ensemble’s performance.

GWHS Theme 4: Engagement. With outside influences in their home lives, engagement in the music-making process during the MPA concert cycle was another challenge in creating a high-quality ensemble at George Washington. It also accounted for 19% of the coded segments.

Earned Not Given. Evan struggled with getting the band to work together and understand that “the actions of one person affect everyone in the ensemble” (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). Despite getting a low rating at MPA, he discussed how the experience may have been necessary “for the program's growth, as well as the individual students.” Alex added that “student identity can be so intertwined with the music they love to play” (Interview 1, March 4, 2024). She further elaborated on selecting music to engage students, saying “Often in school bands, we don't consider embracing what the students love. If we are programming music that embraces their interests, it gives students a choice. They will have agency and a voice in what’s happening in their rehearsals.”

Evan however, determined that his students were “ok with mediocrity because they believe that's what is expected of them” and that they do not “value being successful or superior” (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). It was apparent in the rehearsal sample and the MPA performance that several students needed to be more engaged in the music they were playing. I observed multiple instances where Evan had to constantly count off “one, two, ready, go” for the band to begin playing, then having late entrances due to not paying attention to him (George Washington HS, March 1, 2024). The band would get penalized for problems such as “not looking at the conductor showing dynamic contrast.” Evan explained that the lack of trust in the revolving door of teachers “reflects on their instrument and how they treat their musical discipline” (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). Upon reflecting on the concert cycle, he felt confident that in the future, “all of my students can learn at the same pace while pushing forward with critical thinking” (Interview 2, March 6, 2024).

Making Change. For Evan, the key to longevity at George Washington High was changing the community's mindset that diversity, equity, and inclusion in music are not replacing their values and traditions. When he brought up music choice, he gave an example of a predominantly Black show-style band coming for a football game. He saw how the kids “got all hyped over that HBCU stuff” but felt that they were “too White” to ever play those pieces with authenticity (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). Alex cautioned that “programming needs to be done authentically,” and directors should not just say, “Oh, It's Black History Month, let's do some composers of Color!” (Interview 1, March 4, 2024). She emphasized that “students see themselves in composers who are different from them.” Furthermore, she teaches music majors to avoid “disservice to your ensemble by sticking to the standards of band literature” (Interview 2, March 18, 2024).

Summary of Case 4: Evan, George Washington High School

The George Washington High School Band was an ensemble rich in history that was deeply influenced by the identity of Magnolia County. Several community members supported the program, including many of the school's faculty, staff, and former alums. Once an agricultural hub, the area became economically challenged, resulting in decreased school funding. These financial struggles had limited administrative and financial support for the band. Numerous rehearsal distractions and lack of engagement among the students were partly due to inadequate support to purchase essential teaching tools and the poor condition of the rehearsal spaces. The county's conservative values heavily influenced the band program. A resistance to progressive musical trends highlighted the conflict between musical tradition and modernization. Evan attempted to create a rehearsal environment free from stereotypes while promoting equality among his students. However, many challenges remained to preparing an MPA and engaging the ensemble to perform at a high level for rating.

Chapter Summary: Four Cases

The purpose of each case was to highlight the struggles of underserved schools in preparing an ensemble to score a Superior rating at an MPA event. The nature of how bands were rated at this state's MPA events is indirectly based upon school size, which each band director noted as a possible disadvantage based upon the disparity of school funding, instrumentation, and access to instruction. Another concern among the directors was the required performance list of pieces they had to choose for their concert repertoire. Though three of the four directors taught in minority-majority school settings, they all felt the list needed more quality works from underrepresented composers. While the classification system of MPA based on school size and required performance list was meant to be a one-size-fits-all approach to

equity, the challenges of Title I schools create a situation where equality may not always translate to equity. Such concerns included limitations to proper instrumentation, considerable disadvantages in booster fundraising, and the remediation needs of an increased number of academically challenged and special needs students compared to non-Title I Schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS OF CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The purpose of this cross-case synthesis was to determine how high school band directors in Title I school contexts made rehearsal decisions with the existing barriers impacting student achievement at a Music Performance Assessment (MPA). These findings addressed how the economic and socioemotional disparities combine and intersect during each band's preparation for a 30-minute concert for a rating at their respective district-level MPA. In this chapter, I use data from the case studies presented in Chapter Four to better understand how circumstances predominantly outside of regular school instruction created unique challenges for each band director in their ensemble's preparation for MPA. Findings from this cross-case analysis offer answers to how directors in Title I schools navigated through a lack of support in teaching methodologies and cultural relevance.

As explained in Chapter One, Ladson-Billing's (2006) four components of educational debt, *academic, economic, moral,* and *sociopolitical*, were used to frame my cross-case analysis to understand how effective each band director's preservice training was in real-world applications. A summary of each theme identified in Chapter Four, as shown in Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4, represents considerable obstacles that all the band directors faced in preparing their respective ensembles for success at an MPA event. This chapter provides a summative description that compares my findings relative to *cultural appropriation, cultural synchronization*, and *cultural congruence* between all four band programs.

Table 5.1. Summary of Themes Presented in Case Analysis (Tyler)

Theme	Related Educational Debt	Subtheme	Related Cultural Framework	Example Quote
Culture	Sociopolitical	Student Expectations	Synchronization	"Most students are not 100% bought into the program" (Interview 1)
		Student Investment	Synchronization	
		Student Enrollment	Congruence	
Preparedness	Academic	Training	Appropriation	"Their reading comprehension levels are very low. They can't play what they can't read" (Interview 2)
		Informed Musical Decisions	Congruence	
		Cultural Relevance	Congruence	
Financial Support	Financial	Band Funding	Synchronization	"Being a high school band director is essentially being the CEO of a medium sized business" (Focus Group)
		Rebuilding Program	Synchronization	
Instrumentation	Moral	Instrument Repair	Synchronization	"Would you pay money to listen to this program? If not, what can we do as adults to invest in change" (Interview 1)
		Lack of Instrumentation	Cultural Appropriation	

Table 5.2. Summary of Themes Presented in Case Analysis (Chris)

Theme	Related Educational Debt	Subtheme	Related Cultural Framework	Example Quote
Consistency	Academic	Musical Achievement	Synchronization	"MPA gives us the same validity as other standardized tests and pushes directors to be more accountable" (Interview 1)
		Conductor Philosophy	Congruence	
		Student Consistency	Congruence	
Tough Love	Moral	Neighborhood Mentality	Congruence	"It sounds like tribalism, but we as humans are more inclined to trust those who are more of own likeness or ethnicity" (Interview 2)
		Fear of Failure	Appropriation	
		Just Show Up	Synchronization	
Investment	Economic	Booster Organization	Synchronization	"Get students experiencing Title I band programs as soon as they sign the dotted line as a music education major" (Focus Group)
		Teacher Investment	Congruence	
Representation	Sociopolitical	Student Walk of Life	Appropriation	"Musical achievement in school bands is getting students to connect with pieces on an emotionally higher level of thinking" (Interview 2)
		Composer Diversity	Appropriation	

Table 5.3. Summary of Themes Presented in Case Analysis (Joel)

Theme	Related Educational Debt	Subtheme	Related Cultural Framework	Example Quote
Support	Economic	Smaller Band Size	Congruence	"What if schools considered band as more than an extracurricular or elective? Students need them to graduate, but counselors aren't pushing students to say 'Hey, you should take band'" (Interview 1)
		Administrative Support	Synchronization	
		Teacher Burnout	Synchronization	
Fundamentals	Academic	Expectations	Appropriation	"I wish I had a better music ed pedagogy course. Some type of preparatory course where I can learn how to order buses, complete paperwork, basically the stuff beyond just teaching music" (Focus Group)
		Rehearsal Strategies	Synchronization	
		Conductor Lineage	Appropriation	
Student Needs	Sociopolitical	Student Investment	Synchronization	"If you fail, that's fine. It's ok to make mistakes. But how are you going to break out of that failure in that mistake and make it better next time" (Interview 2)
		Understanding	Appropriation	
Rapport	Moral	Student Expectations	Synchronization	"An Integral part of Eagle Heights teaches not only musical concepts, but it also brings students together in a safe space" (Interview 2)
		Neighborhood Mentality	Appropriation	

Table 5.4. Summary of Themes Presented in Case Analysis (Evan)

Theme	Related Educational Debt	Subtheme	Related Cultural Framework	Example Quote
Pride	Sociopolitical	Community Pride	Synchronization	"The children don't know what to believe. The world tells them that their traditional conservative values are wrong and that they should change their ways even though they have done nothing wrong" (Interview 1)
		Administrative Support	Congruence	
		Educational Resources	Synchronization	
All Lives Matter	Economic	Conservative Values	Appropriation	I don't believe that music should be chosen based on a composer's gender or race or background. It should solely be based on the art" (Interview 1)
		Trailer Park Kids	Congruence	
		Labels Free Approach	Appropriation	
Borderline Success	Academic	Conductor Accountability	Congruence	"In my secondary methods class, we were expected to teach each other. But us not knowing how to teach made it difficult for us to learn" (Focus Group)
		Musical Decisions	Synchronization	
Engagement	Moral	Earned not Given	Appropriation	"I try to connect education to things they can relate to, and it really helps them to understand that they're not alone in working towards a better life" (Interview 2)
		Making Change	Appropriation	

Table 5.5 shows comparisons between each theme according to Ladson-Billing's (2021) theory of culturally relevant teaching, indicating the effectiveness of the instructional methods of all four band directors compared to what they learned from their professors. The methodologies taught on the university-level illustrate the effectiveness of instruction given by all four music professors to prepare teachers for Title I school environments. Conversely, the extent of novice-level rehearsal techniques displayed by each band directors and early-career experience levels may have played a role in their effectiveness to prepare their ensembles for a successful MPA performance.

My findings show that the sociopolitical debts Tyler and Joel incurred in their programs were their most significant barrier to successful teaching at a Title I school. Both cases featured teachers who did not represent the dominant ethnicity of their ensembles and often discussed the difficulty in relating to school culture. Chris struggled most with the academic debts at Memorial High. Despite having the most resources available at this school, his wind ensemble did not perform on par with other band programs within their classification as defined by the MPA rubric. Finally, Joel talked most about the financial debts his ensemble encountered in recreating the Eagle Heights band program after a long absence from the school curriculum. When comparing each educational debt among all the cases, the academic themes were the most substantial overall set of barriers that the directors faced when preparing their ensembles for MPA. The sociopolitical themes were the second major concern, though Chris did not consider this as much of a factor as the other three directors. Obtaining financial support was the third biggest obstacle across all cases. Evan revealed the worst budgeting situation for any of the bands.

Table 5.5. Comparison of Themes from Within Case Analysis

Type of Debt	Tyler's Themes		Chris's Themes		Joel's Themes		Evan's Themes	
Academic	Preparedness	25%	Consistency	44%	Fundamentals	30%	Borderline Success	22%
Financial	Financial Support	20%	Investment	17%	Support	35%	All Lives Matter	29%
Moral	Instrumentation	16%	Tough Love	25%	Relationships	15%	Engagement	19%
Sociopolitical	Culture	39%	Representation	14%	Student Needs	20%	Pride	44%

Note. % = percent of coded sections for each theme within each case.

Figure 5.1 presents a summary of how each theme from Chapter Four (the outermost circle) were organized into one of Ladson-Billings (2006) four educational debts (center of the circle). The data from 3,116 coded segments allowed me to illustrate a comprehensive view of the struggles band directors from Title I schools face in preparing their ensembles for MPA. From those coded segments, I identified 16 themes to examine the most common challenges among all cases (the intermediate circle). The different shadings represent the categories of coded data from each type of educational debt, with the size of the "pie pieces" representing their prominence or proportion to the rest of the categories of concerns addressed by the directors and their university professors. The next four sections present the themes using the four educational debts as a framework.

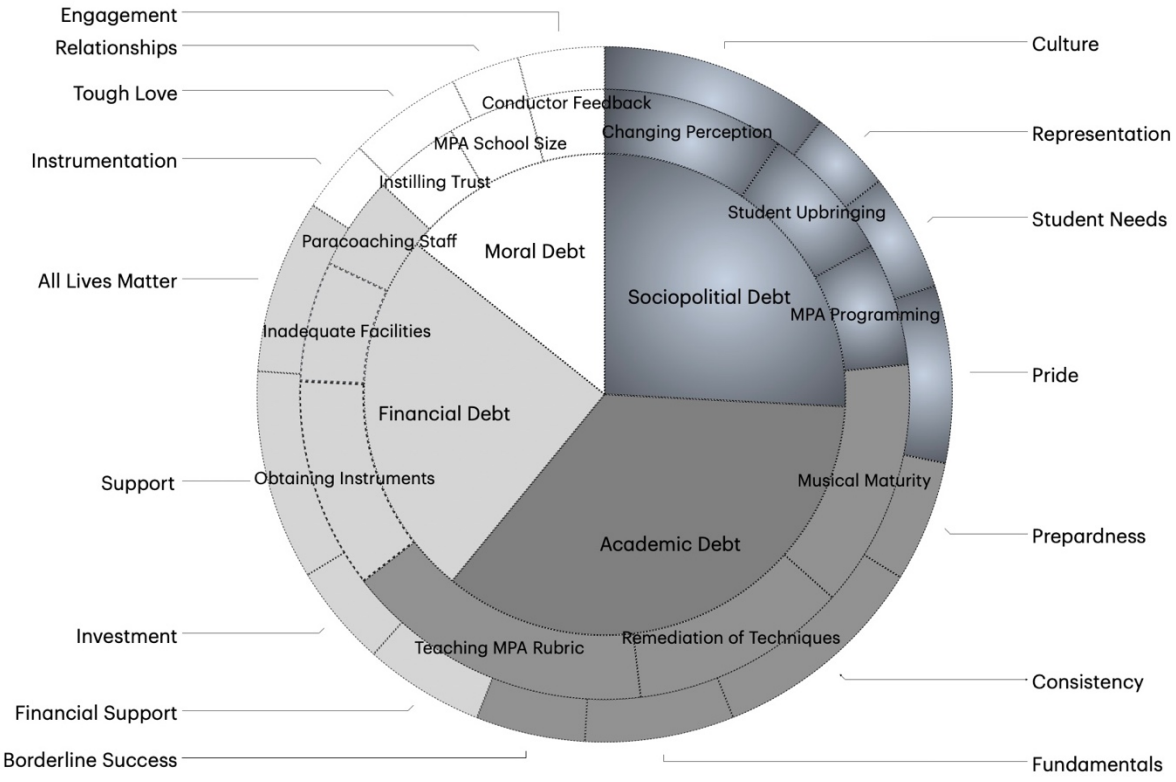


Figure 5.1. Barriers to MPA Achievement Across the Case Studies

Within the initial themes of culture, representation, student needs, and pride, common sociopolitical challenges for highly effective rehearsals included changing the perception of performing symphonic music, understanding the upbringing of their students, and addressing the lack of diversity in programming music for MPA events. Within the themes of preparedness, consistency, fundamentals, and borderline success, common academic remediation issues among the ensembles included development of music maturity and tone quality, technical instrument facility such as articulation and intonation, along with getting each ensemble to comprehend the terminology of the MPA rubric. Themes of financial support, investment, support, and all lives matter were seen as common shortfalls in proper budgeting for a high school band program. They included obtaining instruments for those who couldn't rent one, adjusting to inadequate facilities for concerts and rehearsals, and lack of access to paracoaching staff for private lesson and masterclasses. Finally, themes of instrumentation, tough love, relationships, and engagement revealed a need for the directors to reflect more on conductor feedback, develop strategies to instill more trust in their students, and advocate for alternate classifications besides school size for MPA events.

Academic Debt

Ladson Billings (2021a) determined that students in low SES schools would only catch up academically to wealthier schools if they experienced drastic improvements to curriculum and funding. Within these cases, the difference in academic debt between band programs at these four Title I schools and their more affluent neighboring districts were evident in the state's 2024 District MPA events. Many of the comments recorded during their performance evaluations identified issues that largely stem from insufficient funding, lack of student knowledge of concepts on the assessment rubric, understaffing for instrument coaches, and non-ideal

instrumentation, more so than student interest or desire to achieve. Additionally, all classroom observations showed fundamental deficiencies in performance of their MPA concert pieces. These fundamentals and other areas in the area of academic debt that need to be improved are (a) maturity of sound through intonation and balance/blend, (b) teaching to the rubric, (c) remediation of technical proficiency on instruments, and (d) the disconnect between music education professors and Title I band directors. These areas are addressed below.

Maturity of Sound Through Intonation and Balance/Blend

For each band program in my study, intonation issues were problematic, particularly on the slower tempo pieces. The balance and blend of all four Title I bands were also a significant concern to the judges. Each director explained that these issues were heavily influence by their limited instrumentation. Each adjudication artifact highlighted several instances where students were not playing with characteristic tone quality and played wrong notes throughout their MPA program. Each band, except for Memorial High, was harshly criticized for not preparing their ensembles through warmup exercises to develop listening. Evan spent the least rehearsals addressing the technical facility of playing notes in tune with his band. Tyler and Joel showed evidence of basic intonation instruction, but failed to develop better sound quality due to their lack of learned instrument pedagogy. By contrast, Chris was the most successful in teaching his ensemble to play in tune and with correct instrument timbres. He was also the only director who actively used the official MPA rubric during rehearsals and in the planning stages for future years.

Tyler, Joel, and Evan attributed these comments to the lack of resources at their respective schools to purchase new instruments or send their current inventory out to a repair shop. They also were unanimous about the need for more financial resources to effectively

recruit and retain professional para coaches to come to their schools for small group tutoring. Evan had a complicated circumstance with this school, located more than an hour away from the nearest city with adequate repair facilities. Tyler and Joel both reported having a district-level grant to replace aging instruments. Still, they were waiting several months for their fine arts coordinators to approve the process, which would allow them to receive replacements and be on par with other schools in their district regarding having adequate numbers and quality of instruments for their students. Memorial High was the only school with a complete inventory of working instruments. They were also the only school that reported having a paid staff come to the school for private lessons and small group sectionals using funds from a booster program.

In their respective college courses, each of the professors took different approaches to teaching rehearsal techniques to music education majors. Suzy, who was Tyler's conducting professor, also taught music education majors all the woodwind and brass instruments with the assistance of three graduate assistants who were former high school band directors. During my classroom observations of his college course, George focused heavily on the technical considerations of brass instruments, including using advanced alternate fingerings for tuning tendencies. At Alex and Mike's university, instrument techniques classes are taught primarily by studio professors, who oversee the teaching of individual instruments to music majors. Alex provided evidence in her course syllabus and student samples of YouTube playlists of professional musicians playing excerpts from various band method books to demonstrate proper playing technique. Though Mike did not teach a course specifically on instrumental technique, he discussed differentiating instruction to various abilities found in a typical band class.

Teaching to the Rubric

All cases reported severe deficiencies in school-wide reading comprehension, as noted in their school accountability reports. Additionally, school improvement plans at Memorial and Eagle Heights relied heavily on Title I funds for English learning resources for their growing Hispanic populations. The lack of reading comprehension at each school may have influenced why each respective ensemble may have struggled with the terminology in the MPA rubric. As such, students were penalized for aspects of their performance that they did not comprehend in the rehearsal nor demonstrated on stage. Each director also admitted that, beyond the economic concerns, fear of failing at an event like MPA is one of the primary reasons why their enrollments are lower than the typical high school band.

Each band director attempted to apply their unique approach to teaching their students how to understand concepts within the MPA. To address the need for more grade-level reading, Tyler tried to simplify the terminology through constant references throughout the rehearsals. Joel scaffolded the rubric terms by giving definitions and having the students play them in context with their MPA program. Evan only used vague references to musical concepts throughout the rehearsal cycle but could not demonstrate mastery through my observations. Chris was the only director who actively used the official rubric in rehearsals but noted how "students in our ensembles with 504 or IEP plans are not accounted for" when giving out MPA ratings (Focus Group, April 19, 2024).

In contrast, each professor was adamantly against spending much of their class time teaching students how to interpret an MPA rubric for assessment. Suzy felt that band directors with limited instrumentation should be "encouraged to use flex band pieces or incorporate minor arranging of parts to fit their students' needs" (Focus Group, April 19, 2024). George talked

about only having 15 weeks to incorporate as much material as possible. He suggested that most music majors learn about the rubric once they reach their internship. Mike, however, brought up the MPA rubric during the second half of his special needs course so that directors could learn how to make modifications based on a student's disability. Finally, Alex did not discuss how band directors should interpret the MPA terminology; instead, she focused on giving resources in her techniques classes to improve an ensemble's overall performance quality.

Remediation of Technical Proficiency on Instruments

As with many Title I schools, their administration teams did not support academic remediation for band in the four cases based on their unwillingness to provide instructional supplies or encouraging students to sign up for the class. Memorial was the only case that had a middle school feeder band that would send students with some proficiency on their instrument. Even with this advantage, Chris lost many more talented students to a newly built school and the many charter and private schools in his district. Central and George Washington High Schools were recently transitioned into 6-12th grade centers based on enrollment. Because of this, Tyler and Evan were responsible for training their beginning band students and needed recruitment capabilities outside of their schools to get students to join the program. Joel's situation was the most challenging because none of the 6 middle schools zoned for Eagle Heights had a music program. He was solely responsible for running a 9th grade beginning band, as opposed to the other programs that had students with some experience before they got to high school.

At the university level, each professor mentioned that their job was to give music education majors the basics and to teach them about ideal situations as much as possible. George was the most consistent in setting up scenarios where pre-service teachers had to adjust to situations like the ones each director in my study faced daily. Suzy, however, chose a more

overarching approach to introduce her students to rehearsing an ensemble, with the idea that they would pick up specific methods in teaching Title I students in other courses in the degree program. She also mandated that her students go out into Title I elementary and middle schools to give instrument lessons, thereby giving them experience in working with students from those contexts. Mike did not address instrument techniques specifically in his courses but discussed modifications to address learning disabilities within the rehearsal space at length. Finally, Alex used her techniques classes to provide students with technological resources to supplement their basic understanding of instrument facility.

Disconnect Between Music Education Professors and Title I Band Directors

As shown in Figures 5.2 and 5.3, I evaluated each participant based on how their teaching and rehearsal methods were effective in their respective classrooms. I used a wording system with "students mastered musical and technical concepts for rehearsal," "students somewhat grasped musical and technical concepts," "students moderately grasped musical and technical concepts," or "students had difficulties learning musical concepts" by the band director or university professor's name, visualizing their effectiveness in addressing the academic remediation needed in lower SES school bands to be successful at an MPA event.

In Figure 5.2, there is evidence of a disconnect between the level of instruction during the preservice teaching course and real-world application within a Title I school band. An enormous comprehension gap appeared when teaching the specific terminology of the MPA rubric, both in the university setting and with Tyler's failed attempts at Central High School. Chris's approach to teaching fundamentals using the rubric terminology was the most effective in teaching Title I students. Tyler needed help grasping concepts of teaching musical maturity and basic technical skills to his ensemble despite excellent instruction from his professors. Suzy's instructional

methods could have been more effective than George's in all three concerns raised by the band directors.

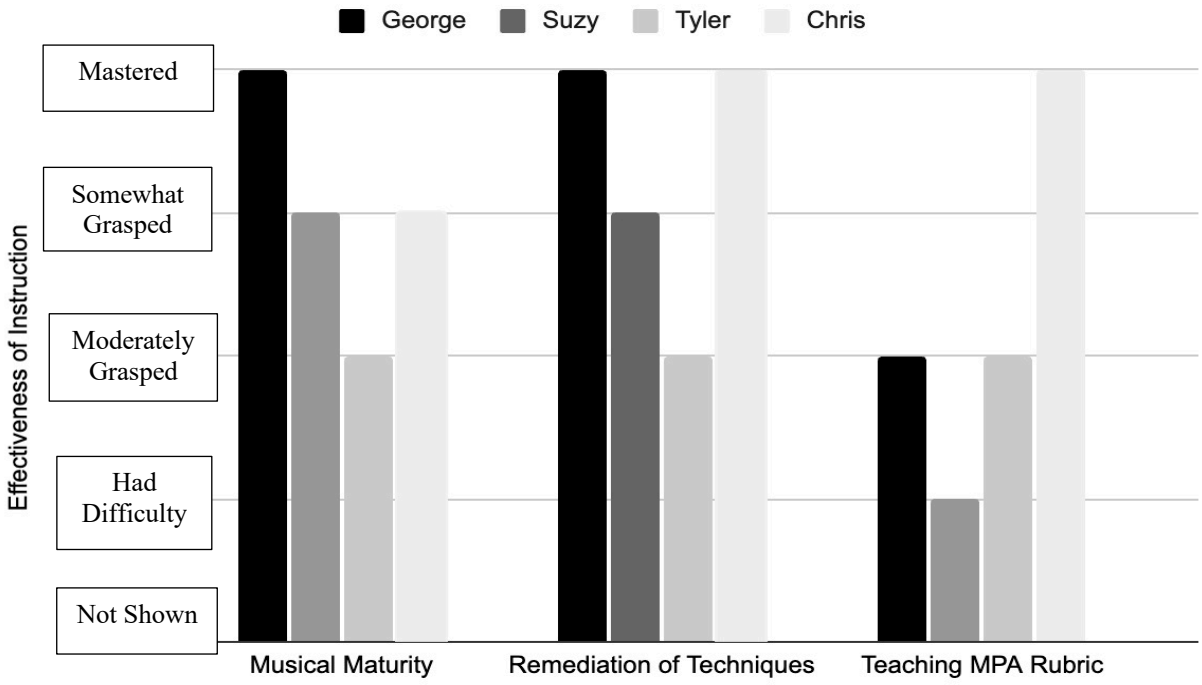


Figure 5.2. Comparison of Academic Debt as Taught in College Methods Classes vs. the Need for Training Experienced by Band Directors at Central and Memorial High Schools

Figure 5.3 shows that Joel and Evan relied much more on what they learned in their undergraduate coursework than Tyler and Chris. Alex and Mike consistently taught their preservice teachers effective remediation techniques in lower-income schools, which Joel used as the basis for his rehearsal style at Eagle Heights. Much like Figure 5.1, neither of the participants discussed teaching or learning about the MPA rubric during their degree program, which led to both directors scrambling to learn how to achieve success at their respective MPA events. Also, though Alex was more in-depth than Mike due to his course focus, teaching their students aspects of musical maturity needed to be more evident through their course observations and interviews.

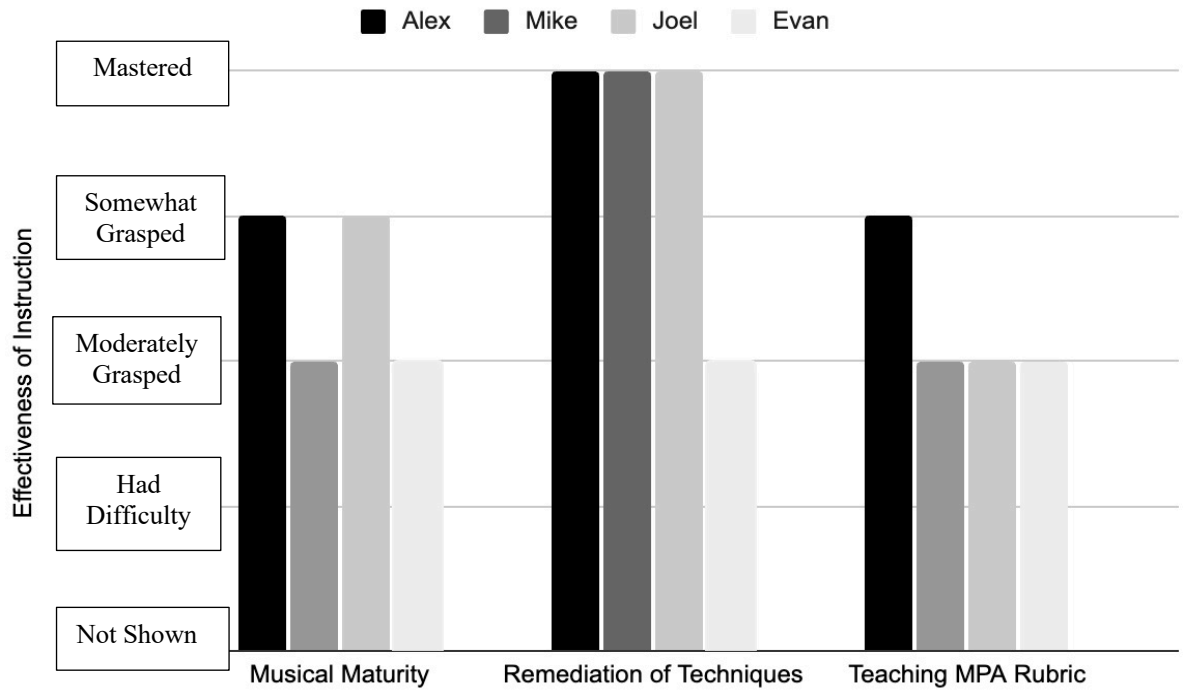


Figure 5.3. Comparison of Academic Debt as Taught in College Methods Classes vs. the Need for Training Experienced by Band Directors at George Washington High Schools

Economic Debt

The second set of barriers revealed in the data from all four Title I bands were related to the current economic debt due to their financial disparities. Ladson Billings (2006) questioned how "funding inequities map so neatly and regularly onto the racial and ethnic realities of our schools" (p. 6). Throughout my investigation, each director told stories about unequal access to instruments and instructional coaching, unstable housing, food insecurities, along with a lack of transportation to help their students succeed in preparing an MPA program. None of the respective school districts wanted to increase spending to get their band programs on equal par with more affluent schools. These financial concerns contributed to each director being underprepared when taking their ensembles to MPA for a superior rating. The specific concerns, which I describe below, include (a) needing to obtain instruments without proper school funding;

(b) inadequate facilities; (c) lack of financial resources for instructional staff, private lessons, and honor bands; and (d) a disconnect between music education professors and Title I band directors.

Obtaining Instruments Without Proper School Funding

Taken as a group, the four cases showed that access to instruments was one of the most prominent factors leading to lack of students who enrolled in band classes. Chris was the only director who reported having a complete instrument inventory for students to check out for a small cleaning fee. Tyler and Evan had considerable issues with getting their schools to approve major repairs, thereby being stuck with instruments that needed to be functional for rehearsals. Joel's situation was the worst of the four schools. Despite growing enthusiasm to join the band at Eagle Heights, his administrative team nor Paradise County schools were willing to help him get replacement instruments. All schools reported having at most one or two students owning their instruments. For the available school-owned instruments, leaking pads, moldy cases, and stuck slides desperately needed maintenance.

Though the school provided instruments, Chris leaned on his band booster association to pay for his repair and replacement costs, which Memorial did not provide. Without the same financial resources, the other three directors used unconventional methods to get more students to participate in their programs. Tyler put several students on percussion instruments, noting that it was "much more cost-effective to [provide] drumsticks and a practice pad than a flute or a trumpet" (Interview 2, March 5, 2024). Joel had the students share mouthpieces during each rehearsal and sanitized them for the next class. Like Tyler, he also had almost 45 instruments needing maintenance, but his school would not give him a budget to fix and get them in the hands of his students. Evan had some basic instruments but needed higher quality brass, such as

F-attachment trombones and double horns, which are essential to play most high school-level band works.

At the college level, Suzy was the most involved in providing her students with instrument resources during her methods courses. Her university partnered with a national instrument manufacturer to provide instruments for future band directors to practice teaching. Her preservice students also attended one class period to help provide grants and low-cost options for underfunded school bands. During her methods class, Alex was also instrumental in providing information about applying for such grants as Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation and sponsorships with major instrument retailers. George did not explicitly mention getting instruments through grants or special programs. In our focus group session, he was very interested in learning more about the Title I grants and "knowing what the money can and cannot be used for" in music education (April 19, 2024). Finally, Mike did not discuss instrument access, as his course did not focus specifically on band students, but all music education students working with special needs musicians.

Inadequate Facilities

The lack of proper facilities kept all four schools at a disadvantage in preparing their ensemble for performing on a theater stage. None of the four directors had an adequate school auditorium to rehearse or perform concerts. As shown in Figure 5.4, most directors were forced to perform their concerts in the school gymnasium. Evan, as shown in Figure 5.5, held his performances at a local church across the street from Washington High. The school opted not to request capital funds for a proper building but spent part of the school's general funds as a donation to the church for the use of their facilities. As such, scheduling regular rehearsals in these facilities presented unique challenges such as acoustics, stage set up, and moving

equipment from their normal rehearsal rooms. For the other cases, each district chose not to invest in performing arts facilities, blaming the lack of student enrollment. However, more affluent Paradise, Charlie, and Luther County schools have multiple ensemble rooms and a fully functioning theater for concerts.

Figure 5.4. Example of Concert Facilities at Eagle Heights High School

Figure 5.5. Church Performance Space for George Washington HS Concerts

At the college level, the professors spent little time discussed the lack of facilities as a barrier to success in scoring a superior at MPA. Suzy only briefly explained that the lack of access to facilities may contribute to being unprepared to perform at such events. George talked at length about using his rehearsal room as his safe space for students to come and practice throughout the school day. Still, there was no mention in his syllabus talking about how the lack of facilities may affect the sound quality of a concert band performance. Alex and Mike did not provide any evidence of how they adjusted to facilities to achieve success with their secondary ensembles. Also, neither provided examples in their provided course artifacts on preparing for the sound difference between a theater stage versus a gym, as was common in the school where their music education graduates landed their first jobs.

Financial Resources for Instructional Staff, Private Lessons, and Honor Bands

According to records by the State Music Education Association, none of the schools had representation in the 2024 All-State Band. Additionally, only Memorial and Eagle Heights successfully auditioned students into their district-level honor bands for 2023-24. Much of this stemmed from the need for more instructional coaching or private lesson options for low-income schools. Paradise County used a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to hire retired band directors and professional musicians to come to schools and provide masterclasses and remediation based on instruments. However, due to the lack of oversight, most of these coaches scheduled themselves to work in the more affluent schools to recruit private lesson students, rather than focusing on Title I locations like Joel's band. Because of the distance from a population center, Evan found it challenging to get assistance to recruit paid tutors to his county without also needing to fund mileage and gas.

All four professors acknowledged that access to resources was the most significant concern of first-year teachers and their success in lower-income schools. In her methods courses, Suzy mandated that each student spend a minimum of two hours volunteering for a local non-profit organization providing free band instruction for low-income elementary schools. George also worked to place students in observations at Title I schools while using their secondary instruments to teach students without access to private lessons. Mike also had each of his students spend a considerable time at a music program with a high level of special needs students, relying on “the experience of paraprofessionals and a child’s IEP study team” to develop specific accommodations (Interview 1, February 19, 2024). Finally, Alex provided music education majors with technology-based solutions, such as using SmartMusic and virtual

coaching sessions with professional musicians as a way for students to get expert knowledge on their secondary instruments.

Disconnect Between Music Education Professors and Title I Band Directors

As shown in Figures 5.6 and 5.7, I evaluated each participant based on how their methods worked to develop and control the operating costs of a Title I school band. I used a wording system with "director demonstrated mastery knowledge with budgeting, fundraising, and acquiring instruments for their program," "director somewhat demonstrated knowledge," "director moderately demonstrated knowledge," "director had some difficulties operating a functioning budget," or "director had no control over the financial matters of their band program."

Figure 5.6 shows major discrepancies between the economic challenges Tyler and Chris encountered compared to George and Suzy's approaches to preparing teachers during the preservice experience. The largest gap between the professors and band directors was the discussion of how to adjust to inadequate facilities. George and Suzy seldom discussed advocating for proper rehearsal space within their courses compared to other teaching concepts. Tyler and Chris, however, found that not having a dedicated performance space at their schools played a role in their lack of success at MPA. Tyler also needed help incorporating many ideas about providing sectional coaches and purchasing instruments through non-traditional means for his ensemble, which both professors lectured about in their courses.

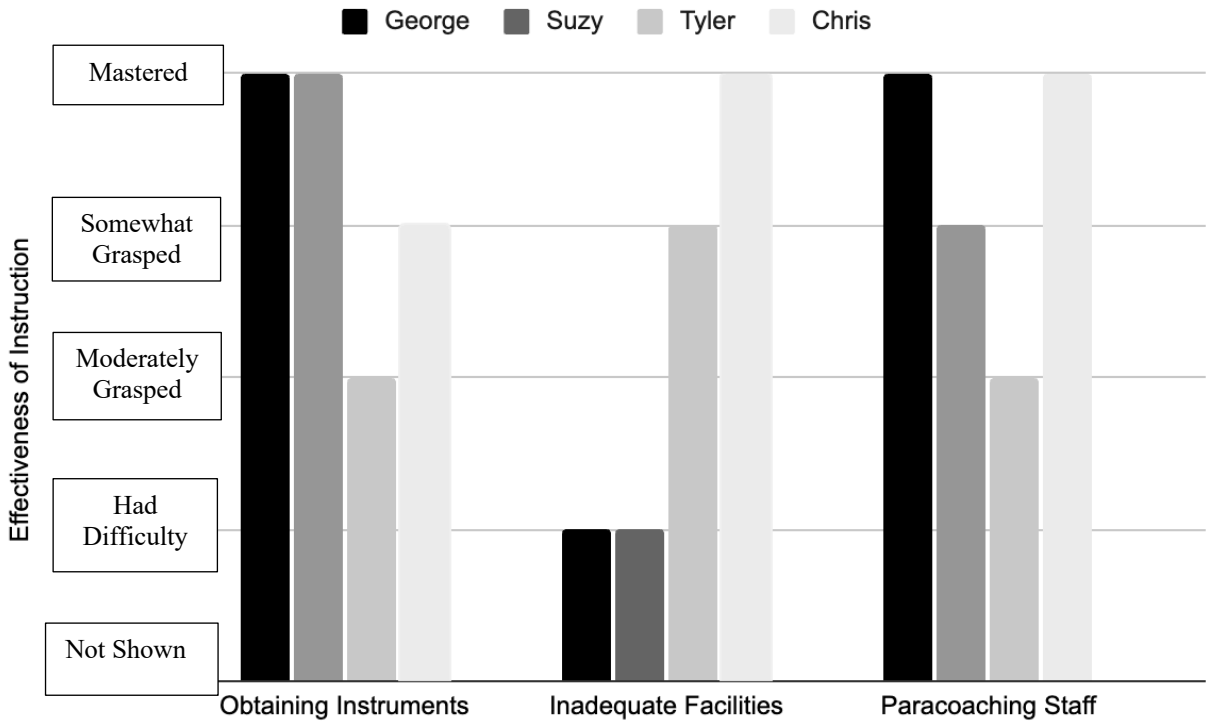


Figure 5.6. Comparison of Economic Debt as Taught in College Methods Classes vs. the Need for Training Experienced by Band Directors at Central and Memorial High Schools

In Figure 5.7, Joel and Evan struggled with implementing most of Alex's suggestions during her methods courses regarding grant writing and using virtual resources to assist with instrument coaching for low-income students. However, like the other professors, Alex and Mike spent little time talking to music education majors about rehearsing in non-traditional spaces. Additionally, though Mike's course dealt primarily with special needs students, minimal specifics were given about how to gain access to music-specific paraprofessionals to implement remediation and accommodation among band students. This had a resounding effect on Joel as he often failed at getting his Spanish-speaking students to understand musical terminology and how to apply it in performance.

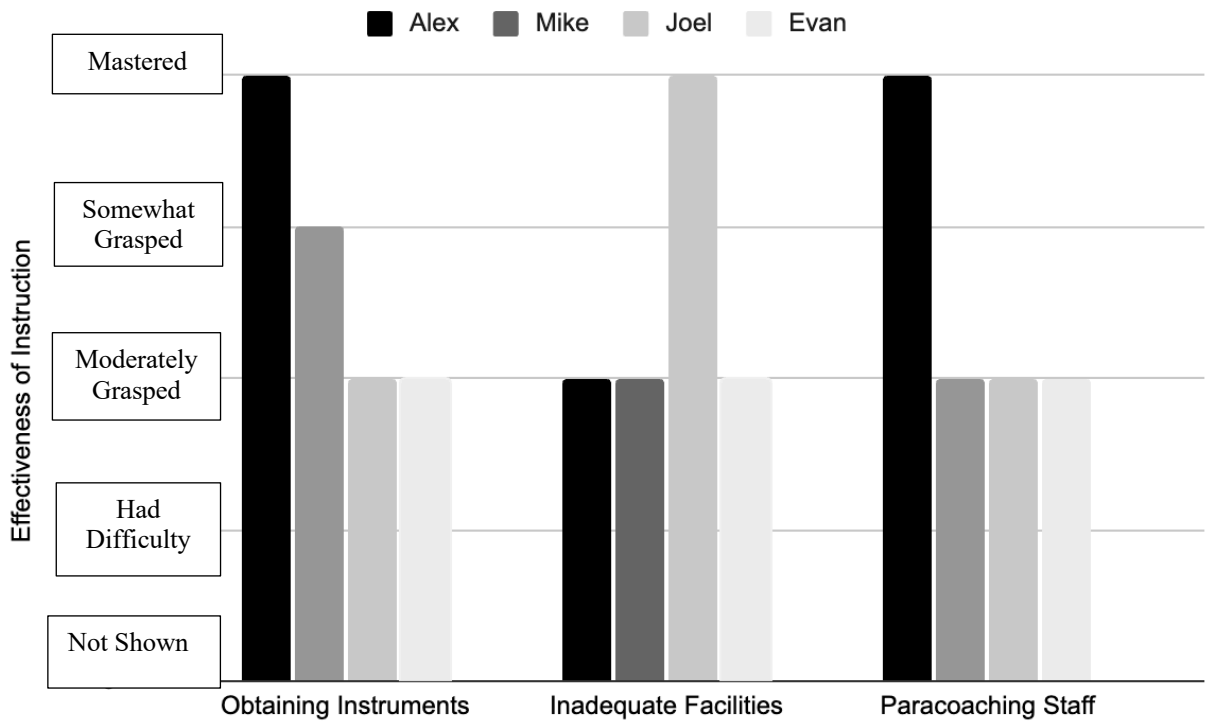


Figure 5.7. Comparison of Economic Debt as Taught in College Methods Classes vs. the Need for Training Experienced by Band Directors at Eagle Heights and George Washington High Schools

Moral Debt

The third set of barriers touched on the moral debt that the students carried with them as they prepared an MPA program without many of the tools needed to be successful in these performances. Ladson Billings (2006) referred to the moral debt in education as “the disparity between what we know is right and what we actually do” (p. 8). Each school district grappled with the notion of "recognizing the moral debt" that is owed to its lower-income student populations, where People of Color were the majority in almost every case. Additionally, despite the shortcomings of each of my cases (with regard to moral debt), the performances of each ensemble were evaluated alongside those of affluent schools with more resources. This created a situation where being equal in evaluation did not translate into being equitable for the ensembles,

who didn't all have the equal financial means to prepare for a successful concert. The discussion that follows below includes issues related to moral debt, including (a) instilling trust between students and teachers, (b) school size in MPA classifications, (c) MPA conductor feedback, and (d) disconnect between music education professors and Title I band directors.

Instilling Trust Between Student and Teacher

Each band program suffered from constant teacher turnover, which created instability among students in establishing trust and rapport with any of the directors in my study. This also contributed to students not signing up to take band classes at each of the four schools, which is also typical in Title I situations (Isbell, 2023). As such, each director struggled with forging genuine connections with their students, perhaps due to them focusing more on the performance pressures of MPA than establishing relationships. Chris used a tough-love approach to motivate his students to believe in themselves. This may have backfired, as seen in my observations and evaluation comments, as much of the ensemble needed more confidence to play their concert program at a high level. Joel incorporated much of Alex's teachings by implementing a more student-centered approach to gain trust. It was evident that, as the concert cycle progressed, the students were more attentive and understanding that he was learning to be a teacher while helping them work on their performance skills. Tyler and Evan used more of the gentle, friend-like approach, which was not universally well-received by their students, some who felt that their genuine interest in their progress was fake and that they were just waiting to transfer to a more established program.

In her college methods classes, Suzy constantly discussed involving the students in the rehearsal process with her examples of inclusion and diversity in the wind band repertoire. Her student work samples also included examples of how band directors should think more about the

student needs within their future ensembles. Alex also talked at length about how she encouraged band directors to think about the student experience and how "the closer you get to being relatable to your students, there becomes an instant 'You see me! You understand me!'" (Interview 2, March 18, 2024). George used his secondary methods class to give scenarios where future teachers must develop methods within rehearsals to develop trust in their students. Mike spent much of his course providing future teachers resources to help mainstream students into the band rehearsal.

School Size in MPA Classification

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the state's MPA classifications are based on the overall school population. Each school's category determined the difficulty level of music the ensembles in my study were required to perform for assessment. Tyler, Joel, and Evan applied for an exemption and were successfully able to be evaluated in "Class E," which is reserved for exceptional circumstances where the program could not prepare a concert program according to their original assigned classification. The Class E option was only available through the end of the 2023-24 school year as an accommodation to help transition through the COVID-19 pandemic. Chris's band was placed into Class B based on their school's large overall enrollment.

Each director discussed the unfairness of using school size to determine how they were rated at MPA. Instead, each participant suggested improving the system to make performance evaluations more equitable. Joel felt that lower-income schools should be classified based on their Title I designation, thereby putting schools with similar economic resources on equal footing. Tyler also suggested that schools should be able to perform at a lower classification to account for teacher turnover and program size, along with income verification. Evan was content with the current system, as he felt that any changes, whether choice in pieces to perform, or

having open classification, may still result in some schools getting a low rating for situations outside of their control. Finally, Chris has been vocal about eliminating the performance list requirement and allowing directors to choose their pieces for assessment, regardless of genre.

All four professors were passionate about addressing the inequality created by using school size as the sole factor for a district MPA rating. In their previous careers as secondary music teachers, they were free of such rules in selecting their MPA concert programs. George agreed with Chris that directors should be "trusted to choose whatever pieces they want" for assessment (Focus Group, April 19, 2024). Suzy also suggested that the sight-reading portion of an MPA event should be replaced with a 30-minute clinic given by one of the adjudicators explaining the rationale behind their rating to the ensemble and giving them specific ways to improve their score. Alex was, perhaps, the most vocal about eliminating the required performance list, which features almost exclusively White male composers, and allowing directors to choose pieces that better represented the culture of the ensemble. Mike also questioned the morality of training bands to perfect the technical aspects of the three MPA pieces for most of the spring semester, thereby creating a negative student experience.

MPA Conductor Feedback

In each case, the comments left by judges at MPA were particularly brutal towards the directors, more so than the comments for their ensembles. Tyler and Evan were called out at several points during their programs, questioning their ability to rehearse a concert program effectively. Tyler was very distraught with the sharpness of his evaluation comments after receiving a poor rating. All three adjudicators blasted him on lack of instrumentation, balance, and tone quality issues due to poor quality equipment. Evan was also very defeated by his rating, explaining that scoring higher would have been tough due to the instability of directors at his

school. Chris, whose ensemble was the most prepared for the assessment based on their rating, was criticized for his lack of musical interpretation and articulation miscues. Joel's evaluation comments, however, were the most positive and encouraging. During the *Yorkshire Ballad*, the judges mentioned how they see the work that he has put into the fundamentals of the ensemble, but they needed to go further to play with musical maturity.

Alex attributed many of the flaws of an MPA performance to the "delicacy of the moment on stage" by student ensembles and how, unfortunately, directors must "be vulnerable to resiliency of criticism" when hearing MPA critiques (Interview 2, March 18, 2024). George, in particular, was critical of the "lazy judging" who unfairly criticizes bands that did not have full instrumentation for the MPA-required list of band works (Interview 2, March 1, 2024). Mike encouraged his students to understand the process of obtaining feedback from judges and better monitor individual student progress through journaling and formalized assessments. Suzy discussed in other classes how MPA could be positive in "giving accountability to" ineffective teaching (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). She lamented the dominance of MPA over several months of the curriculum. Further, she brought up the mental toll directors face when "exposed to different people's opinions and how they would improve their ensemble" without knowing all of the circumstances (Focus Group, April 19, 2024).

Disconnect Between Music Education Professors and Title I Band Directors

As shown in figures 5.8 and 5.9, I evaluated each participant based on their understanding of the moral bias and providing strategies to overcome these obstacles for student success. I used a wording system with "director was able to master making adjustments to account for the moral issues concerning a Title I school band," "director was somewhat able to make adjustments," "director was moderately able to make adjustments," "director was seldom

able to make adjustments," or "director did not demonstrate enough control to make adjustments."

Figure 5.8 illustrates continued gaps in dealing with the morality issues that may hinder achievement at an MPA event for low-income students. Chris best understood how to adjust his music selections based on the ensemble's classification. And unlike the other directors, he used his evaluation comments as a building tool to improve the quality of his musicians. However, while pushing the ensemble to correct their musical mistakes, he may have diluted the trust given by his students through his aggressive teaching style. Tyler did not get his students to trust him enough to learn effective performance techniques. He needed help to adjust his teaching style based on his instrumentation to achieve success at his district MPA. Also, many of the comments made by the clinicians verified the lack of proper rehearsal techniques noted throughout my observation.

By contrast at the college level, George spent almost every class teaching music education majors how to establish trust with their future programs. He was passionate about making music in the classroom, resonating with several successful university alums. As shown in Figure 5.8, Chris and Tyler struggled with transferring what they learned in college to their job situations. Suzy spent a good portion of her conducting classes, running mock rehearsals, and conducting feedback sessions with her students. Still, many of her techniques were not used during my observations with Tyler or Chris. Also, George and Suzy chose to refrain from discussing the MPA classification process or how to prepare a concert based on their parameters. They both felt that those would be better suited for the internship semester, where preservice teachers would collaborate with their mentor teacher more directly.

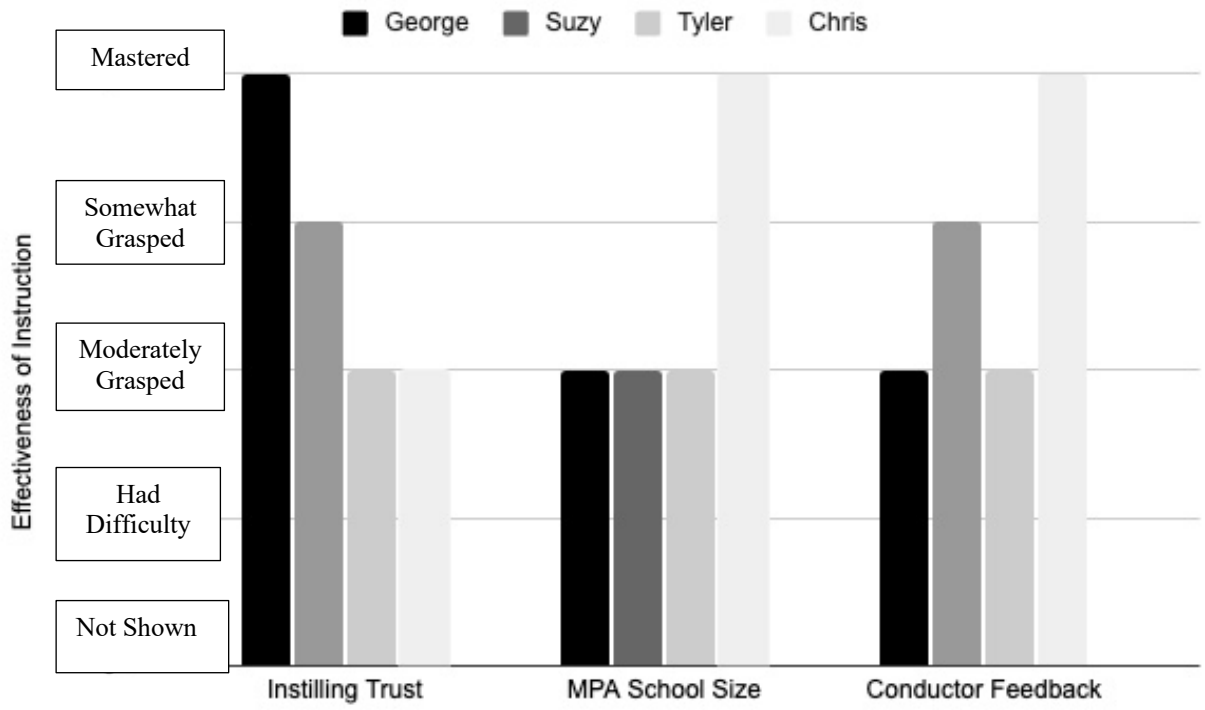


Figure 5.8. Comparison of Moral Debt as Taught in College Methods Classes vs. the Need for Training Experienced by Band Directors at Central and Memorial High Schools

Figure 5.9 reflects the more philosophical approach that Alex and Mike's school of music took in educating music teachers holistically. Constant emphasis was placed on removing the psychological barriers. Title I students participate in a high-quality school band. Instilling trust with students was a primary focus for each professor's courses. Alex relied on her experience in teaching underserved students in the inner city to implement technology as a method to bring access to professional-level instruction via virtual means. Mike, meanwhile, emphasized inclusion, mainstreaming, and student-level decision-making in music education. In terms of preparing their students for MPA, Mike felt that his specific courses should focus more on academic equity in the rehearsal space than spending much time on interpreting MPA rules and procedures. He did, however, spend the second half of the semester implementing methods of assessment using rubrics like the one for a district MPA. Alex focused more on getting her future

teachers to consider the mental health of school band students when designing an MPA concert program to make it more of a positive experience.

These ideals made a considerable impact on Joel's rehearsal approach. Of the four band directors, he best implemented more mutual respect, where his students felt they had an equal stake in preparing a successful MPA performance. As a result, his evaluations were the most positive and encouraging among all cases. Though still very blunt in the miscues they heard, the judges recognized that Eagle Heights was driven to get superior in the future with more consistency. On the other hand, Evan admitted to being unfamiliar with the entire process of MPA, from concert programming to the justification of how his school was rating so poorly. Though he attempted to gain the trust of the Washington High band, he needed to be more confident in establishing command on the podium. This and his lack of pedagogy to correct mistakes heard during his MPA performance created an environment where his musicians did not take him seriously.

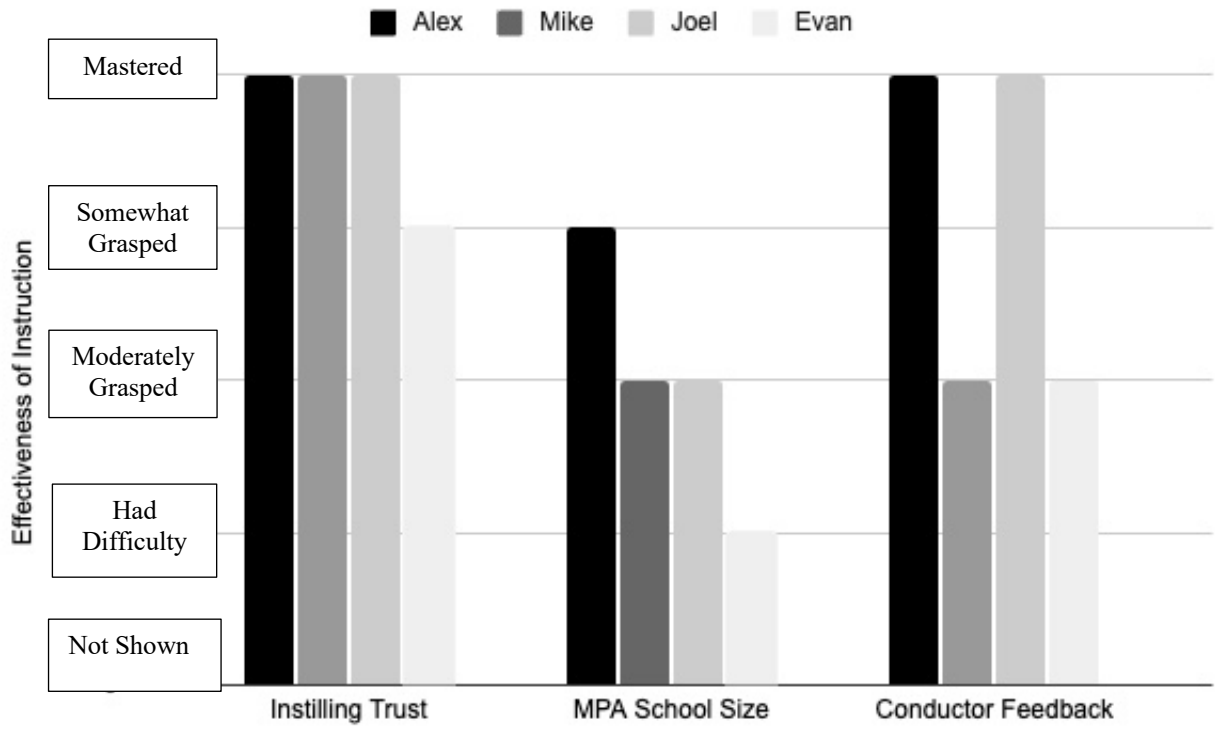


Figure 5.9. Comparison of Moral Debt as Taught in College Methods Classes vs. the Need for Training Experienced by Band Directors at Eagle Heights and George Washington High Schools

Sociopolitical Debt

The final set of concerns addresses the sociopolitical debt, or specifically, the stigmas that Title I school bands encounter as they attempt to set themselves on even par with their wealthier counterparts. Ladson Billings (2006) shared concerns over "the degree to which communities of Color are excluded from civic processes" (p. 7). The MPA process in the state is overwhelmingly geared towards traditional White genres, composers, and musical customs, as discussed in previous sections. Each participant experienced many challenges, including lack of diversity, in their concert programming. Additionally, three of the four band directors needed help finding support to operate a high-quality concert band in communities that favor musical styles that more reflect their culture. Finally, each participant shared their unique challenges of teaching different ethnicities from their own. The specific concerns on the sociopolitical debt

included (a) changing the perceptions of concert bands in low income communities (b) relating to the upbringing of the students (c) the political ramifications of MPA programming and (d) the comparison between courses taught in college versus the need for further training by band directors.

Changing the Perceptions of Concert Bands in Low Income Communities

Getting their surrounding neighborhoods to embrace symphonic music played by the band was one of the greatest challenges for every band director. In each case, their schools prided the marching band for either the competition aspect or for supporting a winning football team, but thought very little of building a quality wind band for MPA. Tyler was the most affected by the apathy towards playing his MPA program. Due to their lack of technical skill, he was forced to program works that the kids felt could have been more exciting and relatable. Chris struggled to get his counseling staff to place students in the correct ensembles to better balance out his wind ensemble and his symphonic band, which may have been a factor effecting their rating at MPA. Evan and Joel were also unsuccessful in gaining interest from the parents and community leaders, who did not want to hear their bands play anything other than the school fight song, pep band tunes, and drum cadences.

Before moving into college teaching, George and Alex successfully grew concert band programs within low-income communities. George had a similar first job as Evan, building a rural school band with many BIPOC students into one of the top-performing programs in the state. As a testament to his secondary teaching legacy, several leading musicians in professional and military bands started with him as their middle or high school band director. Alex thrived in more inner-city neighborhoods, where students gained interest in music by integrating music of their culture into her curriculum while also preparing her ensemble for performances that

received Superior ratings throughout her career. Mike advocated for directors to find creative ways for students with disabilities to participate, welcoming an often-forgotten segment of a school's population into music classrooms. Finally, despite her internship placement in an inner-city school, Suzy had little professional experience teaching in a Title I school before moving into a collegiate position.

Relating to the Upbringing of the Students

Based on their intake surveys, each band director appeared to be most aligned with living a middle-to-upper middle class lifestyle, but little alignment with the lifestyles reflected in their typical student's home life. Relating to their students' struggles was a considerable challenge in preparing underserved students for an MPA event. In three of the four cases, there was evidence of teacher-student tension in their rehearsals. Mike's theory on middle-class teachers trying to assimilate poor students into their lifestyle may be the point of hostility in band classes. He further suggests that teachers should avoid the "White savior syndrome" when teaching poor children in an attempt to "privilege their own ethnicity and culture" (Interview 2, March 11, 2024). George also weighed in regarding a typical first job by noting, "If you understand the culture, the community, the problems, and the potential of a program, you're on better footing than those who don't" (Interview 2, March 1, 2024).

Four participants talked extensively about how they could relate to a Title I band student. Chris shared his story of being the product of a mother who abused drugs and eventually fell into a foster system. Alex and Mike were in one-parent households at various stages of their lives. Evan indicated having the poorest living conditions as a migrant child in the South. They all stated that they had experience through less traditional means than outright purchase or rental

plans. Joel was familiar with low-income food subsidy programs. They also successfully taught by not "othering" students or constantly reminding them of their deficiencies.

The Political Ramifications of MPA Programming

The MPA-required song list was a major point of contention for all the band directors. Many pieces were out of print, they felt it needed more variety among the classifications, and attempts to add new works to the list were arduous. Also, virtually the entire list comprised White male composers, in contrast to the trend for conductors to program wind band pieces that reflect a more diverse and inclusive movement. Evan and Joel performed or conducted less than five band works from underrepresented composers during their preservice training. Both explain that through their conductor lineage, they only knew of the traditional repertoire to program for their students. Chris, however, recognized that change in the music selections would only happen if enough people wanted more diversity on the list. George went further and suggested that the MPA list should include pieces that touch on both “the diversity of gender, ethnicity, but also diversity of sound quality” (Focus Group, April 14, 2024).

Tyler and Evan felt that diversity shouldn’t matter in selecting music to program for MPA. Evan thought it might create a “Black Lives Matter versus All Lives Matter moment with ethnicities we don't program” (Interview 2, March 6, 2024). Alex contradicted him by emphasizing in her classes that “representation matters” and that “opening the conversation to every director” about which pieces should go onto the list would go a long way in satisfying the most people (Focus Group, April 14, 2024). Suzy constantly informed her classes about selecting music so that as many students as possible feel they have a voice and a connection to what they are playing. Her approach included choosing a diverse range of conducting samples from underrepresented composers. Mike spent the beginning part of his course giving listening

exercises to his students of professional musicians and composers who identified as having either a physical, socioemotional, or cognitive disability. The goal was to break the stigma surrounding who could write great music for school ensembles.

Disconnect Between Music Education Professors and Title I Band Directors

As shown in Figures 5.10 and 5.11, I evaluated each participant based on their understanding of the social and political ramifications of keeping the MPA performance list majority White, while providing strategies to program more inclusive pieces for a diverse student population. I used a wording system with "director was able to make mastery level adjustments to program more diverse band works to address the cultural relevance concerns of a Title I school band," "director was somewhat able to make adjustments," "director was moderately able to make adjustments," "director was seldom able to make adjustments," or "director could not able to make adjustments."

The core foundation of bridging the sociopolitical gaps in Title I music education between director and professor was more aligned in Figure 5.11 than in Figure 5.10 in terms of music programming and changing the perception of symphonic music in lower-income communities. Alex and Mike's university is tailored to meet the needs of first-generation and underrepresented students. Most of the students in their school of music came from Title I high schools in Paradise County and seemed eager to work in the local area after graduation. Joel and Evan are products of this district, which may have given them an upper hand in dealing with the underlying social issues of poor children. Chris also graduated from a Title I high school in Charlie County, where George and Suzy's university is located. Throughout my investigation, the directors from Title I backgrounds displayed more success in getting students to buy in to learning concert band music than those who did not.

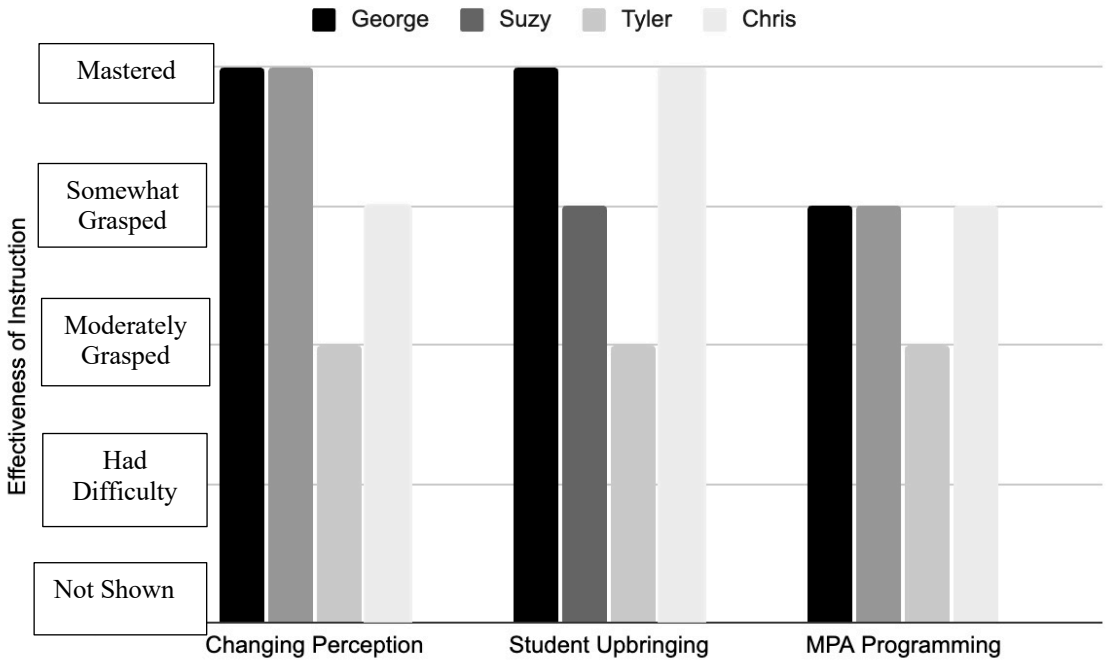


Figure 5.10. Comparison of Sociopolitical Debt as Taught in College Methods Classes vs. the Need for Training Experienced by Band Directors at Central and Memorial High Schools

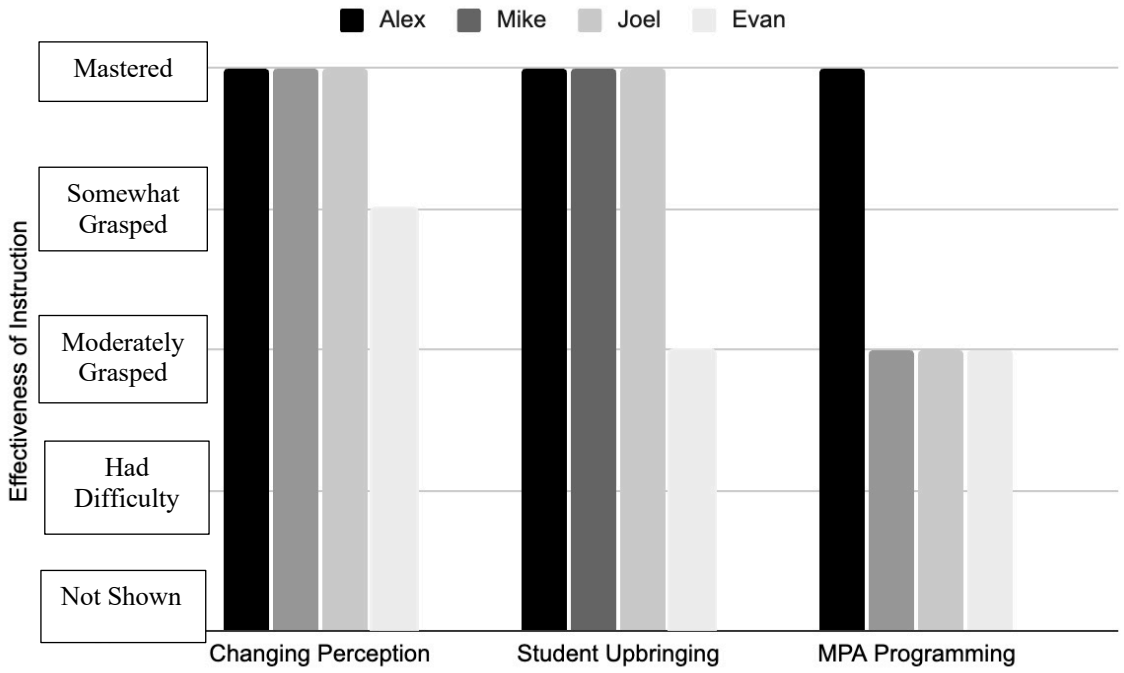


Figure 5.11. Comparison of Sociopolitical Debt as Taught in College Methods Classes vs. the Need for Training Experienced by Band Directors at Eagle Heights and George Washington High Schools

George did not grow up in this environment but had some experience teaching in an underserved rural school in the early part of his career. His professional experience helped shape Chris into one of the most successful Title I school band directors in the state. Suzy and Tyler, however, had little personal or professional experience with low-income students before their current positions. As such, Tyler was very inconsistent in trying to create change at Central High while programming music on their ability level for achievement at MPA. Finally, while all the cases spent considerable time preparing for their assessments, Mike focused more on best practices for programming music to achieve success with special needs students at MPA compared to the other professors, which may include disclosing accommodations to adjudicators on the evaluation form.

Synthesis of Cross-Case Findings

The primary purpose of my cross-case analysis was to explore the similarities among cases with regard to academic, economic, moral, and sociopolitical debts. This helped me better understand the emergent themes from my within-case analysis. Synthesizing my findings allowed me to point out commonalities in each band program's preparation for their district MPA. I wanted to know why some Title I school bands were more successful at a Music Performance Assessment than others, and to explore how future band directors might implement successful rehearsal and programming strategies from my research to address barriers to low-income schools being successful at MPA events.

Educational debt emerged as a major theme throughout my within-case analysis. Ladson Billings (2006, 2021b) believed that misusing cultural appropriation, congruency, and synchronization over several decades created academic, economic, moral, and sociopolitical debts in education, disproportionally impacting students of Color. Using the high school band

directors as my unit of analysis (including MPA evaluation comments, rehearsal techniques, and reflections on preservice instruction from their university professors), I used cultural relevance to describe the implications for each stakeholder in their school band context. The use of replication logic across the four cases revealed 12 common barriers in preparing their ensembles for a successful performance at MPA (Yin, 2017), each of which fall into one of the types of educational debt.

Academic Debt

The academic debt placed upon the students at each school illustrated an apparent lack of understanding of music terminology, note reading, or the technical facility of their instruments on a high school level, as required by the MPA rubric. Additionally, none of the directors relied on having a traditional middle school feeder program to enroll musicians who could play their instrument at grade level. Their MPA evaluation comments revealed that each band failed to control intonation and balance issues. In almost every case, limited instrumentation and inadequate repair resources are attributed to poor ensemble tone quality and timbre. Though a focus on instrument techniques with music education majors was a focus at the university level, limited emphasis was placed on connecting with their students to teach the terminology within the MPA rubrics, which was crucial for their assessment. A possible reason was the poor reading comprehension scores at each school, where directors tried various methods to scaffold theory and terminology with little success.

Economic Debt

The economic debt of each school revealed financial imbalances that resulted in unequal access to instruments, insufficient facilities, and a lack of instructional resources. Limited repair budgets forced three directors to rely on unconventional methods to provide enough instruments

for their class rosters. This included sharing mouthpieces, borrowing from other schools, or makeshift adjustments like duct tape to cover leaks in brass instruments. The other concern was the lack of a proper concert facility in which to perform while preparing for MPA, with these events usually hosted in school auditoriums. Three schools use their main gymnasium as their performance space, while Evan was required to use the local church across from his school. This lack of facilities hindered each school's ability to prepare their ensembles for listening across an ensemble in such a space, a factor in each director losing points on their evaluations.

Moral Debts

Each director faced their school's moral debts, which accumulated from frequent teacher turnover, a focus on equality versus equity in MPA classification, and justification of evaluation feedback based on factors outside of their control. Generations of trust issues from BIPOC students in lower-income neighborhoods created hostility towards directors in three of the four cases. Each tried a variety of methods, from tough love to family-friendly approaches, to connect with their students, but were met with minimal success. Another point of contention was the MPA classification based on school size. Every director felt their rating was lowered because they were compared to more affluent schools with similar enrollment. Finally, the evaluation comments mainly focused on their superficially beliefs about an ensemble rather than evaluating what they were hearing and giving actionable feedback, which instead often overlooked their school's social challenges and emotional toll on them.

Sociopolitical Debts

Finally, the sociopolitical debt was evident in the lack of BIPOC composers on the MPA-required performance list. While preparing their concert program, each director faced incredible challenges overcoming stigmas and establishing parity with wealthier programs in their districts.

With the unintentional favoring of White composers on the list, it was difficult for directors to program diverse music as part of their MPA assessment. As such, parental support for a high-quality concert band was almost non-existent at all of the schools. All professors expressed frustration over not including underrepresented composers on the state MPA list. Adding diversity and inclusion became a contentious issue with more established schools that felt that music should not be considered simply because of gender, ethnicity, or political affiliation.

The four band directors I interviewed shared a common purpose of changing the mindset of students performing symphonic music at a district-level event. Throughout my study, I realized that the visions for their respective programs included more than just achievement and high MPA ratings. The 12 common barriers for cultural relevance illustrates that each director's instructional design was heavily predicated on the socioemotional needs of their students while addressing various financial and instructional challenges in promoting a positive rehearsal culture. They were most interested in using concert bands to instill confidence and compassion in their students. Each director deeply cared more for their students' physical and mental well-being than their instrument facility. However, in each case, the instructional design and concert programming for MPA was prioritized over attempts to address the socioemotional needs of their students while navigating the financial challenges of a low-income school. This discovery reinforces the importance of Ladson-Billings's theory of cultural relevance in understanding how a positive band culture was fostered at each school.

Summary of Chapter 5: Findings of Cross-Case Analysis

This chapter used Ladson Billings's (2006) four pillars of educational debt to compare how contextual issues impacted the four band directors in preparations for their bands' Music Performance Assessments. My cross-case analysis focused on identifying effective rehearsal and

programming strategies that could help future band directors at low-income schools achieve superior ratings with their ensembles. My findings showed that each director's instructional design was heavily predicated on the socioemotional needs of their students while addressing financial challenges in promoting a positive rehearsal culture. Additionally, each major theme was cross-referenced between the content taught by each university professor and how the band directors applied that content in real-world teaching contexts.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

This multiple explanatory case study investigated the preparation of underserved school band programs for Music Performance Assessments and how their band directors were prepared to handle the challenges of teaching band in Title I schools. While extensive studies have noted the inequality between poor school bands and more affluent ensembles, few qualitative studies have focused on the band director and their music education professors' priorities during their preservice training as the unit of analysis. This was beneficial to understanding rehearsal techniques and concert programming for such an ensemble, as well as how each Title I school band program navigated the financial and social challenges to prepare for their performance assessment.

The four cases were explicitly chosen due to their similar Title I status and recent trends in their Music Performance Assessment (MPA) ratings, hoping that I would uncover similarities in the findings (Yin, 2017). Given their unique circumstances, I hoped to offer researchers and current and future band directors a better understanding of preparing an ensemble for long-term success at these performance assessment events. Each band director took extraordinary efforts to overcome challenges of access, insecurity, and remediation to close gaps in musical achievement for a superior rating at MPA. In this chapter, I summarize my findings for each research question presented in Chapter One. Then, I present the implications and limitations of my case study, focusing on recommendations for rehearsal strategies, university partnerships, district initiatives, legislative policies, and future research opportunities. By considering my research implications,

state and local education boards may begin to adequately address the long-term debt of music education in Title I schools.

Summary of Findings in Response to Research Questions

Research Question 1A: What Were Band Director Perceptions on the MPA Process and the Steps to Achieve Success?

Overwhelmingly, setting the state MPA classifications based on school size was considered unfair to each band director. Findings from my study revealed several instances in which ensembles from more affluent schools of equal size scored a higher rating in all four district MPA events. Furthermore, having school size as the major indicator of distinction between schools may have ignored the SES disparities, such as the difference in available resources to develop a high school band (Seipp, 2021). Each band was severely affected by the lack of available musicians and instruments to program many of the selections on the required performance list. Additionally, Central and Washington High Schools, despite having 7-12th and 6-12th grade enrollments, respectively, were officially counted as the smallest ensembles in their district MPA events. In review of the evaluation comments, the adjudicators apparently expected that each ensemble had equal opportunity to recruit students into their program and, therefore, should be graded accordingly by school size.

Mastery-level performance to score a Superior rating would require access to resources often unobtainable by a Title I school (Collins, 2022). Each indicator of a Superior rating included the word "consistently," the meaning of which is left up to the evaluators. My interviews revealed that the key to success at an MPA event was the maturity of individual sound quality. Several professors admitted that improving tone quality and intonation would require supplemental investment in instrument pedagogy outside of the regular band rehearsal by the

student. However, three of the four cases needed more access to private or professional level coaching and additional school-based music staff compared to wealthier schools, thereby disadvantaging them in developing a characteristic sound (Miller, 2023). To offset the financial burden of hiring staff, professors attempted to teach their students through technological innovations such as Zoom sessions with professionals and YouTube playlists of problem-solving videos to help with instrument-specific questions. As seen throughout my observations, each director lacked knowledge of advanced-level instrument pedagogy to teach their students beyond the basics.

The MPA performance requirement did not account for director turnover, which might have hurt the preparation of Central and Washington High's performances (Miller, 2023). Like many Title I schools in the United States, the revolving door of teachers created further instability in cultural synchronization, in this case being a musical activity that students rely on as their safe space (Gorski et al., 2023). Each band director in my study has been employed at the current school for less than two years. Central and Washington High saw multiple band directors hired in the middle of the school year, which resulted in a lack of consistently effective rehearsals during the MPA concert cycle. I observed in each rehearsal the students' hesitation to trust each director to help them improve the technical skills of their instruments. Additionally, there was a sense of disconnect within each respective program for the ensembles to learn their concert music for MPA.

Research Question 1B: To What Extent Were Rehearsal Strategies and Music Selections Culturally Relevant to an MPA Performance?

The current edition of the state MPA required performance list leaves band directors with few options for selecting diverse pieces that fit their school's culture. The list frustrated each of

my participants. Each university professor prided themselves on regularly programming symphonic music from underrepresented composers. They also worked at universities where many of their music education students were first-generation and identified as being non-White. Despite their progressive nature, each institution had little success influencing the state MPA board to update their list to reflect the growing repertoire of diverse composers. Based on their school size classification, each director followed requirements for minimum difficulty levels for the pieces they chose. Most of the available works represented White composers, leaving the directors with few options for picking music appropriate to or relevant to the majority culture of students in the ensemble during their concert program selection (Hess, 2021). Joel and Evan struggled with developing a rehearsal plan that engaged students to learn at a high level. Each admitted that they needed to familiarize themselves with pieces written by diverse composers and, therefore, never programmed them with their high school bands. All participants, except Evan, conducted an ensemble with mostly BIPOC musicians.

The grading scale for MPA ratings assumed that students received proper instruction at their grade level to perform the piece accurately (Wesolowski & Wind, 2019). The rubric did not account for the unique circumstances in which each director had to remediate basic instrument fundamentals to perform the required pieces for rating. Each band director, attempting to create uniformity, encountered several students who struggled with reading comprehension, language barriers, analytical interpretation, and special needs accommodations (Martin, 2021). The band directors went to great lengths to develop instrument pedagogy in their rehearsals to address these issues, with little success. As is common in communities experiencing generational poverty, the directors could not rely on parental support to help their students with music theory comprehension or mastering their instruments outside of the band room (Davila & Linares,

2020). Three of the four cases performed a program consisting of Grade 1 or Grade 2 pieces. Despite playing pieces at a much lower difficulty level than bands at bigger schools, none of the bands in the four cases scored a Superior rating.

Significant financial barriers, specifically in acquiring instruments for students to play, kept each Title I ensemble in my study from catching up to affluent peer groups. None of the bands had the resources to outfit students with the instruments needed to perform the pieces they selected for their MPA assessment. Additionally, each of the ensembles had fewer than five students who could rent or purchase an instrument on their own to practice at home. Two schools had some expensive woodwind instruments like oboes and baritone saxophones, but only Memorial High owned a functioning piccolo, bassoon, and bass clarinet. In contrast, more affluent schools in the area are able to offer students a "home" baritone or tuba, while keeping another set of school instruments in the rehearsal room for the students to use. In each Title I case, a lack of equipment inventory was a barrier to allowing band members to practice outside of class (Noguera & Syeed, 2020), and even when the school did own instruments, many of them were in desperate need of maintenance, without the necessary repair budget to get them working and into the hands of students.

Research Question 1C: To What Extent Did the Student-Teacher Relationship Within Title I School Bands Contribute to the MPA Performance?

The lack of training in culturally responsive pedagogy and strategies for teaching in Title I school contexts was evident throughout my study. Alex was the only professor who tied their music education courses directly to the challenges of teaching in an underserved school. The other three instructors, instead, focused on giving their students a basic overarching view of classroom expectations, with the understanding that they would learn site-specific strategies

during their final internship. As such, each director needed additional preparation to meet the socioeconomic challenges of their current teaching assignments. Specifically, needing to understand the realities of their students' home situations played a considerable role in creating a disconnect during the MPA concert cycle. Chris credited his success more to his experiences after his preservice program than to what he learned in his music education classes. Tyler, being a White male unfamiliar with lower income backgrounds, had the most difficult time trying to relate to the predominately Black and Brown student culture of Central High School.

Lack of classroom management training during preservice teaching also contributed to unstructured rehearsals, disengaged students, and ultimately, teacher burnout during the MPA concert cycle. None of the music education courses provided specific strategies for working with the typical behavior concerns in low-income environments (Henninger, 2018). As a result, each director instituted different methodologies to gain better discipline during rehearsals, with limited success. Chris' tough love approach failed to grab his students' attention, leading to the lack of motivation to perfect their music for a better MPA rating. Tyler and Evan used the opposite approach and attempted to be more approachable, using a father figure approach, but their students responded by undermining their classroom expectations (Avcioglu, 2017). Joel's band, however, exhibited the most student buy-in throughout my observations. He incorporated the best use of cultural congruency in recognizing that his students needed to learn music at their own pace while getting them to learn to love symphonic music as much as the dominant genre of their culture.

Finally, a lack of a program structure that meets the needs of low-income students might have contributed to lower enrollments in each of the four Title I school bands. Time commitment for students outside the regular school schedule was a concern in all four cases (Kong, 2023). All

the band directors required after-school rehearsals, which were graded, but none of the schools provided extended bus service for extra extracurricular activities. Also, older students were often required by their families to work part-time jobs after school or were responsible for taking care of younger siblings, creating significant barriers to their full participation in band. Paradise and Charlie Counties, however, offered students a discounted monthly pass that they could use to catch the city-operated transit system before and after school. Several directors also discussed food insecurities that many of their students faced during rehearsals, which likely contributed to their lack of focus in playing their instrument, which is shown throughout the literature as a barrier to learning across all areas of schooling (Schwartz & Rothbart, 2020). Unfortunately, the state educational commissioner recently chose not to renew a federal grant that would have given free breakfast, lunch, and dinner to every student within the four counties, regardless of qualified income.

Research Question 1D: To What Extent Did Undergraduate Music Education Courses Prepare Future Band Directors to Teach in Title I Schools?

Each band director agreed that their preservice training was focused too much on the "ideal," and not enough on the "practical" side of public-school music education. Most of them felt that additional training to teach in a Title I school setting would have been easier navigate challenges in that type of context, including preparing groups for MPA events (Kajikawa, 2021). None of the course syllabi from the professors featured a unit or lecture that specifically addressed teaching in a low-income school. In my observations, George was the only one who invited successful band directors from Title I schools to speak with his secondary methods class. The professors did acknowledge that more discussion is needed in this area, but due to a lack of time over the semester and the amount of material to cover, they would not be able to go into

specific job situations. Recent job trends, however, found the majority of first-year teachers from both universities holding jobs in some of the state's poorest areas.

After graduation, continuing education opportunities focused specifically on teaching music in Title I schools were virtually nonexistent for teachers in all four of the cases. Each director taught in a district where most schools qualified for Title I funding. However, MPA results over the past few years indicated that Superior ratings were disproportionately awarded to non-Title I band programs. All participants advocated for increased district-level funding to better prepare younger teachers for the challenges of teaching in low-income schools. Despite this, Alex and Mike's university did not offer professional development opportunities for future and current band directors to gain valuable rehearsal strategies beyond what was taught in their undergraduate degree program. By contrast, George and Suzy recently coordinated an annual summer band director symposium where local teachers spend a few days learning trade secrets for musical achievement. However, those sessions are not specifically geared toward teachers from low-income schools.

Each director also felt that there needed to be more opportunities for preservice practicum training in Title I schools before graduation. Outside of the required coursework and limited observations at local schools, only some options were available for podium time, small group instruction, or childhood development training before completing their internship. None of the universities required their music education students to take an intro to psychology or child development course to graduate, a critical component of understanding the brain development of poverty students. Such courses provide new teachers with a deeper understanding of children and the factors influencing their learning. Also, the final internship semester consisted of only 15 weeks of clinical classroom experience, which each director felt needed to be expanded to gain a

grasp on operating a band program. The professors did make every effort possible to add to the degree program without burning out students from such a heavy course load. During her methods courses, Suzy required students to volunteer two hours a semester to a local non-profit group that provided free instrument lessons at underserved schools. At both universities, students were encouraged to spend at least a portion of their pre-internship at a Title I school, exposing themselves to situations similar to those that they are likely to encounter during their first teaching job.

Research Question 2. What Recommendations Could be Made for Assessing Title I School Band Achievements at MPA?

Suggestions from my participants formed my discussion of the barriers experienced in the MPA process, and how low-income schools were hampered from achieving similar success at the events compared to wealthier band programs. Based on these findings, three recommendations to close the opportunity gaps for a superior rating at MPA are as follows: (a) eliminating the classification of schools based on school size; (b) eliminating the required MPA performance list; and (c) providing more financial support for band directors who teach in Title I schools to promote longevity within programs experiencing social and economic challenges.

Suggestion 1: Eliminating the MPA Classifications Based on School Size. A point of contention revealed how the cultural synchronization of determining MPA ratings based on the enrollment of the entire school might have contributed to the widening gap between poor and wealthy band programs. As such, the participants unanimously depicted the state's MPA classification system as biased and unfairly punishing schools without the financial or administrative support to perform at these events. Everyone agreed that the band director should decide which classification would best fit their students' abilities. Determining a school's concert

program based on overall enrollment of the school did not consider possible reasons why the ensemble membership did not proportionally match school enrollment. External factors such as teacher turnover, lack of administrative support, schoolwide remediation programs, and funding inequalities caused lower income bands in each case to perform with several musical deficiencies, as noted by the evaluation comments.

Suggestion 2: Eliminating the Required Performance List. Several participants recommended the reimagining of the district-level MPA concert experience to better promote a positive, non-competitive music experience for students. Under their proposal, the state would eliminate the MPA-required performance list and, instead, allow each director to program an MPA concert to reflect their students' instrumentation and cultural needs without penalty. During our interviews, none of the professors recalled being limited on the pieces they selected for MPA in other states. In turn, each director felt that requiring certain band pieces over others created a gatekeeping approach to music education. Allowing ensembles to perform "flex band" arrangements, where instrumentation can be changed depending on available personnel, was favored among participants in my study. Also, eliminating the sight-reading portion of the assessment and providing a mini-clinic run by the adjudicator would not unfairly grade an ensemble based on their lack of music reading skills.

Suggestion 3: Provide More Financial Support. Finally, the participants suggested that districts provide additional program funding to directors who accept teaching contracts in Title I schools. All the band directors felt unappreciated by their school-level and districtwide administrative teams. Each professor also acknowledged that the need for instruments in low-income programs is a significant detriment to student enrollment. To close the opportunity gaps presented throughout my findings, large-scale grants would be awarded to underserved programs

to provide small group tutoring, purchase instruments, uniforms, and sheet music. The focus group session also addressed each district's music teacher turnover rate by offering a financial salary incentive to keep quality educators from transferring to more affluent schools. Specifically, an additional stipend for teaching in Title I schools, negotiated by a local teacher union/organization would also go to those who teach in these environments to encourage more veteran teachers to remain in lower-income schools for longer tenures.

Implications

Findings from this multiple case study provide several implications, including a revamping of university music education curricula, academic restructuring on a school level, district-level music education initiatives, and legislature priorities to provide a culturally responsive music education for all students, regardless of background.

University Level Implications

My study has three implications for university professors who prepare music education majors to teach in underserved schools. These findings call attention to the importance of schools of music to prioritize curriculum that prepares preservice teachers to instruct and administer an underserved school band, summer professional development opportunities, and forming partnerships with local Title I schools.

Curriculum. Exposing preservice teachers to instructional methods that incorporate diversity and inclusion prior to the internship is well documented to have success in the longevity of a band director in a Title I school (Powell et al., 2020), and prepares music teachers to work in low-income schools. Master-level teachers in these types of ensembles understand the socioemotional challenges of students more so than those unfamiliar before working in that environment. They support music-making through student-centered pedagogy and apply a safe

space within their ensemble in rehearsal. However, those preservice teachers who did not grow up in low-income neighborhoods must make conscious efforts to learn about the underlying circumstances of their students' home situations. Tyler, for example, often felt defeated as he described his daily rehearsals at Central, noting how this job vastly differed from preservice experiences. As such, he was forced to use paid leave to visit other teachers in his district to gain an idea of structuring his program for limited success. We should give all students the opportunity to learn from highly effective teachers by exposing them to the realities of teaching in a school with students living in poverty.

All four professors proclaimed that insufficient time was given during preservice training to issues related to teaching in a Title I school. This is consistent with many major universities in the US that lack training in culturally relevant pedagogy throughout the preservice experience (Edgar, 2019). While each institution discussed having diversity and inclusion in some courses, implementing cultural synchronization needed to be improved throughout their degree programs with the needs of the local job market (Martin, 2021). For example, instrument pedagogy courses such as woodwind and brass techniques were condensed to one or two courses to learn how to play and teach every wind band instrument in schools. Finally, only 20-30 hours of field experience in schools were required of preservice teachers before their final internship, with almost none required in a Title I school. Addressing these components to the music education curriculum would be beneficial in preparing students for their realistic first job assignment after graduation.

Professional Development. The limited course offerings for Title I classroom-specific pedagogy from both universities failed to prepare teachers for the realities of a typical first teaching job. Each professor endorsed enriching their current curriculum with more opportunities

for students to glimpse into the dynamics of teaching in underserved communities. As such, this underscored the need to plan professional development opportunities for current music education majors, along with recent graduates of their programs. Joel and Evan talked about needing more podium time in a classroom before their internships and how it made them unprepared to teach at their current assignments. This is consistent with research that specifies how educators learn more about themselves through exposure to marginalized cultures in music education (Isbell, 2023). Neither university offered a dedicated conducting symposium to help train recent graduates wanting to perfect their rehearsal techniques. However, George and Suzy's university started an instrument-based clinic as an educational performance opportunity for band directors that features some of the country's leading practitioners. Through summer sessions, teachers can go further in-depth with site-specific concerns while having leading experts offering tips and tricks to help develop underserved band programs thrive.

Partnering with Title I Schools. Each professor agreed that their education curriculum should include more opportunities for students to observe Title I school bands to gain a more realistic view of a typical first teaching job. George grappled with whether sending students to more affluent schools with more stability would be better than a lower-income program with less experienced teachers and various social challenges (Miller, 2023). To address these concerns and bridge the gap between theory and practice, universities should partner with underserved schools to provide a dedicated residency program for preservice teachers. Leveraging available resources from instrumental technique classes, along with the existing partnerships from corporate music dealers, would establish a teaching lab for music majors to hone their skills in conducting and small group teaching. These labs would serve as invaluable training grounds, allowing preservice

teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world situations while receiving mentorship and guidance from experienced secondary teachers before their final internship.

In exchange, underserved schools would expose preservice teachers to invaluable cultural awareness and social-emotional training, preparing them for the unique challenges of working in a Title I school (Hawkins-Jones & Reeves, 2020). This relationship would benefit music education majors by providing them with increased practical experience and empowering low-income band programs with much-needed resources and support. Title I lab schools could foster a deeper understanding of the complex social, cultural, and economic factors that impact student learning and achievement in an ensemble. Furthermore, this allows future band directors to develop empathy and cultural competence and embrace educational equity versus equality. Finally, universities can address systemic inequalities in music education and advance an agenda to close the opportunity gaps in musical achievement at MPA events.

School Level Implications

While my suggestions for continuing education could apply to both the university and the school level, findings from my study add three implications specifically geared toward school-based administration teams. First, I encourage school counselors not to take students out of band classes due to academic remediation in other subjects. Second, low-income schools should better promote the accomplishments of their band programs on their websites and social media platforms. Third, schools should allocate a portion of the ESSA budget to purchase instruments and provide instructional coaches for Title I schools.

Scheduling Remediation for Non-Band Subjects. In each case, BIPOC students scored considerably lower in all metrics of their schoolwide annual yearly progress (AYP) reports than White students (Baker-Bell, 2020). Also, few ensembles in the state with a majority comprised

of students of Color scored a Superior rating at their district MPA event. When considered together, a school's inclination to provide support services for another subject by pulling students out of band takes away ensemble instructional time from the student. Chris and Joel experienced another impact of the school scheduling instructional supports during band, reporting that they got pushback from their counseling departments over an attempt to level their classes based on ability. The rationale was that students required additional reading and English learner courses to improve the school's AYP scores. The relationship between ethnicity, academic proficiency, and MPA assessment ratings raises essential questions about access and opportunity. These trends indicate the need to address the barriers faced by BIPOC students excelling in their school band. Before removing students from activities such as band, counselors should consider the social-emotional ramifications that could discourage student musicians who already face systemic barriers to success.

Using Technology to Promote the Program. Throughout my research, it became evident that none of the cases maintained an active, dedicated social media presence. Instead, my initial access to each band's performance history was limited to YouTube recordings uploaded by parents on their accounts. Also, none of the programs demonstrated a significant presence on popular platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, or X. Official school pages provided scant exposure beyond athletic accomplishments and parental reminders, failing to showcase the success of their music ensembles. My findings were consistent with research that suggests minimal exposure to the success stories created within a low-income school translates to a disbelief that Title I bands could thrive on par with wealthier peers (Givens & Nasir, 2019). Band directors in underserved schools should advocate uploading their concert footage and content

creation, with proper editing and considerations for student privacy, onto official school communication platforms.

By creating more social media content, underserved schools can showcase a wide variety of student talent while engaging with the local community to seek financial sponsorships from businesses. Finally, social media encourages community engagement with the band program. It may enable a Title I school to challenge stereotypes and change perceptions of performing symphonic music in addition to popular genres. It could further change the narrative that socioeconomic status dictates artistic interpretation and achievement in music. They can redefine the narrative surrounding Title I bands by amplifying their voices and serving as a catalyst for change through targeted outreach.

Budget Allocation and ESSA Funds. Throughout my research, a common barrier across the cases was the need for more quality instruments and expanded budgets to pay the salaries of para coaches to give small group instruction to their students. These obstacles hindered students' access to effective music education, impacting their academic achievement and technical development. My findings concluded that the MPA process, while intended to evaluate ensemble achievement, evaluated affluence and ability to conform, without regard for socioeconomic background. Because of their unique challenges, Title I bands came away with a negative experience – one based on their academic underachievement and subpar technical development during their concert cycle (Wesolowski & Wind, 2019). The shortcomings of each ensemble, specifically the lack of quality instruments, likely contributed to lower ratings at MPA. Joel and Evan were singled out for not teaching their students how to play with proper tone quality, but they needed to find a way to bring professionals to their schools for masterclasses as examples of a characteristic sound on each instrument. Tyler's ensemble performed with several broken

instruments, which affected intonation, timbre, and balance. Therefore, I suggest dedicating a portion of a school's ESSA allocation to purchasing band instruments and paying for instructional coaches at Title I schools, thereby catching them up to more wealthy schools.

The passing of the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) provides an opportunity to address these challenges by allocating federal funds to support music education in Title I schools. Specifically, ESSA affords flexibility to schools in determining how to allocate these funds to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality music education. The law prioritizes the targeting of resources toward schools with the highest concentration of poverty, much like the four cases in this study. It also encourages innovative approaches to improving student outcomes, such as the student-centered approach taught by Mike and Alex. Finally, this grant encourages low-income schools to use evidence-based interventions. Most importantly, for all of the cases, ESSA funds can go directly towards purchasing quality instruments for an MPA event. It can also go towards hiring instructional coaches to remediate poor instrument technique. Through ESSA, Title I band programs could have a promising future through a more equitable experience at district MPAs.

District Level Implications

Findings also illustrate the importance of school districts creating funding opportunities for Title I school bands to succeed at district MPA events. Every band director recognized that access to instruments, instructional staff, and fundraising mechanisms develop essential support systems for highly effective rehearsals. District level implications include the need to (a) provide professional development in grant writing for the performing arts, (b) hire paid substitutes for early-career teachers to collaborate with mentors in their district, and (c) consider funding

opportunities for its students to participate in regional youth ensembles and university sponsored honor bands.

Grant Writing Supports. Low-income performing arts programs nationwide need help securing the necessary funding to sustain their activities and initiatives. Findings in this study imply that school districts should take proactive measures to provide comprehensive training in grant writing fundamentals. These trainings should focus on identifying arts-specific funding sources, conduct thorough needs assessments to pinpoint specific challenges, and navigate the grant application process. Grant writing has the potential to fill the critical financial needs of Title I school bands by gaining access to essential resources that would otherwise be out of reach. Such examples include musical instruments, instructional staff, and professional development training, which are shown to have needs for improvement in this stud. Moreover, they allow underserved schools to expand their course offerings, recruit a larger portion of their student body into music electives, and significantly impact their communities.

With this increased funding, Title I schools can enhance their quality of instruction and cultivate a positive educational experience for students. Alex dedicated several classes to discussing available grants for low-income school programs. Despite this, each band director needed more guidance and resources to pursue grant writing opportunities for their programs effectively. Furthermore, none of the four cases indicated the availability of specific external arts funding on their district websites. However, apart from Magnolia County, some band programs received an annual budget to purchase a "big ticket" item every year, such as a tuba or a marimba. Tyler was fortunate in that the previous director at Central qualified for a substantial grant to purchase new percussion equipment. His fine arts coordinator also allocated a one-time budget to purchase basic supplies to operate his ensemble for MPA.

Provide Substitutes for Mentorship Opportunities. My research findings highlighted significant obstacles that Tyler, Joel, and Evan faced while transitioning from preservice teachers to practitioners. My observations uncovered numerous challenges as they grappled with classroom management, curriculum development, and student engagement while preparing for their district MPA. While assigning a mentor teacher has proven effective in supporting the professional growth of new teachers, the demanding nature of their course load and the lack of joint planning periods restrict the time available for collaboration and problem-solving (Bautista et.al, 2021). I suggest, therefore, that fine arts coordinators allocate paid leave for collaborative learning between mentors and first-year teachers in Title I band programs. These designated days would prioritize activities to enhance rehearsal techniques, engage in reflective practices, and receive targeted feedback from mentors.

Through regular mentorship sessions, new band directors could leverage the expertise and insights of more experienced teachers, acquire new instructional methods, and build confidence in their teaching ability within the context of Title I band programs. Unfortunately, Tyler had to utilize his sick days to visit another band director in Luther County due to the absence of a formal mentorship program in this district. Similarly, Chris has long advocated for more opportunities to connect with younger teachers in Charlie County to mitigate burnout caused by the social challenges of teaching in a Title I school. Moreover, George and Mike agreed that, in their experiences, the support and guidance provided through teacher mentorship increases job satisfaction and improves retention rates for new teachers. They further recognized the importance of retaining talented educators in Title I schools to maintain stability in those ensembles and improve long-term program outcomes.

Fund Extension Activities. Participation in a regional youth ensemble, All-State band, or university-sponsored honor band is considered a prestigious accomplishment for most high school musicians. In each case, the band directors viewed successful auditions into these ensembles as crucial for improving the reputation of their own programs. However, findings revealed that access to these opportunities was severely limited for students in all four Title I bands unless they received financial support from their directors. This finding aligns with existing research, which highlights disparities in audition opportunities for low-income students of Color (Shah & Coles, 2020). Auditioning for these events often requires professional coaching, which may only be feasible with the financial means to afford private lessons. This lack of resources audition preparation support resulted in fewer students from these disadvantaged backgrounds accepted for membership in honor ensembles.

Tyler and Evan noted that the structure of such auditions often favors students from affluent backgrounds. Travel costs associated with these events were prohibitively expensive for families with limited resources. Also, most of these events were organized by non-profit organizations that lack sufficient budgets to provide financial aid to underserved students. To address the costs of participating in these events, it would be appropriate to allocate a portion of their school's Title I activity funds, provided through the ESSA Act, to increase participation in educational activities. For example, funds would go towards guaranteeing that a minimum of two musicians per Title I school would receive financial assistance to participate in a district-sponsored honor band, regardless of audition results. For Title I students, schools could pay the registration fees and travel expenses for participation in these audition-based festivals. By removing the financial obstacles, Title I schools can nurture talented musicians within their

ensembles. Ultimately, implementing school-level scholarship assistance may remove the barriers within the learning environments of underserved bands.

Legislative Level Implications

At the time of this writing, no significant pieces of state legislation specifically call for funding school-based arts programs. As such, the first policy implication is the need to institute a statewide referendum, which would prioritize supplemental funding of performing arts ensembles in every Title I school. Second, I would advocate for establishing bonds for districts to renovate or rebuild theater halls in each school in the state, so that students in all schools can rehearse and perform in adequate facilities. Third, I would suggest that MPA assessment scores be included in a school's improvement plan, thereby giving administrators the information they need to improve an area of their school curriculum.

Statewide Referendum for Performing Arts. My study uncovered significant achievement gaps between Title I school bands and their more affluent neighboring districts. While efforts are underway to address the disparities between low-income and affluent schools, there is a clear need for an innovative approach from state lawmakers, as supported by prior research (Stroumbos, 2023). Therefore, there is a need to implement a statewide referendum for music education as a promising solution to address the educational deficits faced by Title I school music programs. Joel and Tyler would have benefitted directly from having a state-level funding source to increase their enrollments by purchasing enough instruments for students to play. Evan could use this resource to bring instrument coaches to his school for private tutoring. At the university level, increased funding would enable a school of music to advance culturally responsive teaching by hiring more faculty and offering additional courses in childhood development and topics related to helping students overcome obstacles related to their academic

success. This would ensure that future educators are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of students in Title I schools.

A referendum would involve allocating additional state funding to supplement music education courses, prioritizing Title I schools. This initiative would support instrument purchases, hiring qualified private instructors, and providing professional development opportunities for ensemble directors. It would directly address the resource inequalities addressed throughout the findings of this study, and provide low-income students with the tools needed for success at MPA events, while showing that the state promotes equity and inclusion by ensuring that all students, regardless of background, can participate in high-quality music education in their schools. Educators, policymakers, parents, and community members must work together to advocate for the future of music education. Through this initiative, Title I schools can make a meaningful impact on students' lives while promoting educational equity.

Theater Halls in Every School. Each case faced significant challenges due to inadequate facilities. Specifically, the schools in the study were among the few in their districts without dedicated theaters or concert halls. This issue is prevalent among Title I bands, who frequently perform in alternate locations like gymnasiums, unlike their counterparts in affluent schools (Cyan, 2021). During their MPA performances, each band struggled with hearing intonation issues and balancing across the ensemble. This was a byproduct of not practicing in an appropriate performance space. State legislatures should provide bonds to build or renovate concert halls at low-income schools to address this issue. These bonds offer a viable solution for underserved schools to access substantial capital, which would otherwise be challenging to secure without a high local tax base (Winglicki, 2020).

There are many benefits to Title I schools using bonds to build a proper concert hall for their performing arts. First, bonds are repaid over several decades, which spreads out the overall financial burden. It represents a long-term investment in music education infrastructure, which can yield long-term benefits for underserved students. Second, high-quality facilities can greatly improve the music-making experience, increasing student engagement and academic outcomes. Schools in underserved areas can receive the necessary funds to ensure that their students have the same quality of education as affluent band programs, which was a major concern in MPA achievement outcomes. Finally, state-of-the-art facilities can help attract and retain talented teachers in Title I schools. Findings of this study align with the notion that band directors are more inclined to effectively work in schools with resources to support their programs (Shaw, 2017).

MPA Scores and School Improvement Plans. Chapters One and Four highlighted instances where school systems neglected to support low-income bands because those budget allocations were not required in order to receive Title I funding (Armstrong, 2023; Grogan III, 2022). Tyler, Chris, and Joel openly criticized their administration teams for not considering MPA and its concert preparation integral to the school's mission and values. None of the schools in my study included MPA results in their accountability reports. Despite efforts to promote positive cultural awareness among staff and students, improving band programs was not seen as a strategy to reduce habitual truancies while increasing graduation rates. Additionally, no recommendation for ensemble-wide improvement at MPA were provided by principals, suggesting that the band programs in these cases were not as valued as the core subjects.

Finally, findings imply that the inclusion of MPA ratings in accountability reports should be mandatory. Measurement tools, such as the rating scale within Music Performance

Assessments, are vital in developing a school's priorities for student success. MPA ratings would establish school-level benchmarks for progress over time, allowing administrators to set improvement goals similar to core subjects. They offer insights into ensemble performance tendencies, enabling personalized feedback and strategies to improve struggling students' instrument technique and musicality. With proper support structures in place, MPA assessment could provide a measure for administrative teams to guide long-term strategic planning and growth. It gives band directors in underserved schools justification for budgetary requests by demonstrating specific areas of need supported by assessment data. It also communicates the curricular value of the performing arts to parents, school boards, and the surrounding community.

Limitations of the Study

While my findings uncovered essential implications for the future of music education in Title I schools, the study had several limitations. First, I confined my data collection to one state within the southeastern United States. Further, I used only one teacher within each of the four counties to evaluate the effectiveness of conducting rehearsals in underserved schools. When interpreting the findings, no case scored a Superior rating at their district MPA. As such, each director who participated in the study could have given rather negative perspectives of teaching at their schools. Inclusion of several other low-income band programs within the state who regularly produce successful results at this event could have provided more different perspectives. Nevertheless, within my study, I applied several methods to ensure the validity of each director's statements. The initial intake survey was designed to gauge their knowledge of typical home life situations of lower-income students. Each director assisted in the collection of accountability reports, MPA evaluation comments, and scheduling classroom observations.

These artifacts and my interviews allowed me to triangulate comments made by the directors and professors to draw conclusions about effective rehearsal strategies during the MPA concert cycle. These steps were used to alleviate the effects of this limitation.

Second, I relied primarily on self-reporting participant testimony to describe their experiences teaching in a Title I music program. During data collection, I was granted access to observe two of the four professors in their classes. However, due to privacy laws, I could not conduct fieldwork during normal school operating hours, as it would have directly involve interacting with minors, which would violate my IRB protocol. Therefore, each director sent me a video sample of their rehearsal as opposed to me observing them in person. As such, they could submit a sample of their best rehearsal instead of gaining a more authentic experience in their rehearsal rooms. My interviews with each professor focused on only one of the courses they teach within their school of music. Additionally, each taught different portions of their music education degree programs. Future studies should consider comparing effective teaching methods between professors who taught similar courses at universities.

Third, I only used results from high school MPA assessments as the context for the study. The state music association operates events for bands, choirs, orchestras, and modern bands. Classification is further broken down for middle and high school students. As such, the instructional practices and fundraising expectations may differ for other performing arts ensembles compared to the high school band. Most districts in the state begin band instruction in sixth grade, which would have those ensembles perform an MPA event at a grade level two or below based on ensemble experience. Further research should focus on the differences between Title I middle and high school bands and their achievement gaps with wealthier programs.

While numerous steps were taken to account for authenticity and trustworthiness, I could not exclude my role as an active practitioner with extensive experience working with Title I school bands. My previous experience with culturally relevant practices led me to connect with the cases and their outcomes, which could have altered my perceptions and interpretations of the data (Miles et al., 2020). During the data collection process, I maintained a reflective journal, which consisted of "reactions of participant responses" and instances of "increased reactivity" in my research (Patton, 2015, p. 700). I regularly consulted education faculty members and former band directors about my study design, survey administration, and interview questions. A final mitigation to personal biases was that the study design was influenced by previous research on the achievement gaps in lower-income schools (Henry, 2019; McGonigal, 2020; Pollard, 2021).

Recommendations for Further Research

Findings of this case study were consistent with previous research regarding the achievement gaps among Title I school bands at MPA events (Groulx, 2010; Chipman, 2004). This suggests that low-income schools perform at a lower success rate at MPA due to the need for culturally responsive teaching practices in ethnically diverse schools. As such, I recommend further research that continues to explore the intersection of cultural relevance and musical achievement, providing further insights into practical strategies for supporting underserved school bands.

Specifically, researchers could conduct studies comparing successful rehearsal strategies in Title I band programs across teacher ethnicities. Inconsistencies in teaching practices can arise when preparing low-income students for music competitions based on a band director's cultural background. Another possibility would be to examine how various funding mechanisms within different states contribute to the success rate of Title I bands at MPA-type events. This would

illustrate how access to resources complements the achievement rate of such ensembles. Finally, researchers should consider an investigation into the programming of band music by diverse composers in relation to the ethnic demonography of a secondary school band. Exploring cultural relevance in high school band literature may uncover a determining factor in the recruitment and retention rate of BIPOC students.

Conclusion

This study revealed relationships between the resources available for underserved school bands and their rating results at a Music Performance Assessment (MPA). Four high school bands experienced barriers to success that stemmed from the misuse of cultural appropriation, congruence, and synchronization. While extensive studies have highlighted the opportunity gaps between underfunded school bands and affluent school band programs, only some have focused on the band director's preservice training experiences. By examining rehearsal techniques, concert programming, and the navigation of financial and social issues within Title I school bands, this study offers valuable insights into preparing such ensembles for district assessment. Through this research, I hope to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and strategies employed to prepare an MPA concert program within low-income schools. By implementing these recommendations, state and local education boards could better support Title I school bands in the US, addressing the longstanding inequalities in music education.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INTAKE SURVEY

1. I know what type of food products I can and cannot purchase with a government food assistance card. (L)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

2. I regularly attend a professional orchestral, wind band, musical theater, or operatic live performance. (W)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

3. I considered college to be my best choice for a career path in life. (M)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

4. I regularly attend a hip hop, electronic, Spanish, or pop concert. (L)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

5. I can easily maintain social stability for a month without online media platforms, internet, or a smart device. (L)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

6. I know how to physically move to a new location with less than 48 hours' notice. (L)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

7. I know how I can obtain a band instrument without going through a music store credit check or having the money to purchase one at retail cost. (L)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

8. I understand the process of renting a band instrument from a music dealer and how it can help a student upgrade to a “step up” model in the future. (M)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

9. I know the procedures for ordering in a restaurant that is considered "casual" and above. (M)

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

10. I can properly set a table for a seven-course meal (W).

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

11. Owning a vacation home, Airbnb, rental property, boat, or recreational vehicle (RV) is important to me (W).

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

12. I know how to “be my own boss” and start my own business through the legal channels of my local jurisdiction (M).

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

13. I have the means to send a child into a private school, including taking advantage of school voucher programs in my state (W).

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

14. I know how to register my biological child (or hypothetical child) for a youth music ensemble, performance competition, or private music lessons (M).

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

15. I owned an instrument that was considered “professional level” before attending college as a music major (W).

    a. Strongly Agree
    b. Agree
    c. Somewhat Agree
    d. Neither Agree or Disagree
    e. Somewhat Disagree
    f. Disagree
    g. Strongly Disagree

16. What is your ethnicity?

    a. White/Cucasian
    b. Black/African American
    c. Hispanic
    d. Asian
    e. Multiracial/Other

17. What is your highest level of education?

    a. Bachelor's Degree
    b. Masters Degree
    c. Doctorate degree
    d. Other Professional Degree

18. What is your age?

19. What is your gender?

    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. non-binary/third gender
    d. prefer not to say

20. What is your current teaching position

    a. Title I school band director
    b. University music education professor

21. State the current number of years you have taught in your current role (as university professor or title I band director)

22. State the number of years you have taught in a Title I School (put “0” if Non Applicable)

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW #1 QUESTIONS (TITLE I SCHOOL BAND DIRECTORS)

1. Are you aware that you teach in a Title I school? What makes this a Title I school?
2. Can you tell me about your ensemble and how it fits into your school vision?
3. What is the financial commitment that families need to make to participate in your ensemble? What does this cover in terms of the financial support of the program?
4. To what extent are opportunities available for your students to get private lessons, audition into youth and honor groups, along with solo/ensemble opportunities?
5. How is the school district helping to provide for basic instructional materials for your band?
6. How are you addressing students who enroll in your band program that may not be on "grade level" in terms of instrument proficiency?
7. To what extent do you feel that the cultural background of your students play a role in how they perceive their school band?
8. What is the process for your students' acquiring instruments for your ensemble? Is there a protocol in place in case a student cannot accord an instrument or supplies?
9. In your opinion, what extent do your students value being successful in your band program? What does that look like in your opinion?
10. Do you feel that they can transfer that success to other academic areas of school?
11. In your opinion, what is the biggest fear your students have about performing in front of people? Why do you think they have this fear? And do the deficiencies of funding or instruction play a role in this fear?
12. Can you describe in detail your process for preparing your ensemble for an MPA event?
13. What are your opinions regarding the diversity of composers on the MPA required reading list? How does this play a role in your concert programming for assessment?

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW #1 QUESTIONS (UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS)

1. Can you tell me about your course offering and how it fits into the overall music education curriculum of your school of music?

2. Can you tell me about your choice in course textbooks and other materials?

3. What is the "real world application" that your students need to take from your course?

4. To what extent do you feel that students are prepared to teach in a Title I school band program after their music education experience?

5. What current trends are you seeing with music education, and if possible, can you describe it in the context of teaching secondary band?

6. To what extent do you feel that school bands should be culturally relevant to teaching a diverse student population? If you were to conduct an observation at a secondary school, what would a culturally relevant rehearsal room look like?

7. What percentage, in your best guess, of your course is dedicated specifically to teaching band students in Title I public schools? Can you give examples of your curriculum where students are learning to teach in this environment?

8. Do you feel that this amount is sufficient for your students to be prepared to teach in these types of schools? If not, what suggestions would you make for students to gain that knowledge?

9. What may be some reasons why underserved students are not enrolling into school band programs at the same rate as more affluent students?

10. What is your opinion on the diversity of the required MPA selection list for band? What is your opinion on how pieces are selected to be on the list from underrepresented composers?

11. To what extent are topics such as grant writing, and other external funding sources for secondary band remediation discussed in your class? Do you feel that your course is the specific place to discuss these topics? And Why?

12. Do you feel that there should be a separate course dedicated to teaching music in Title I schools? Or should this concept be equally ingrained into multiple courses in the music education degree program? Explain why?

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW #2 QUESTIONS (TITLE I SCHOOL BAND DIRECTORS)

1. What is your idea of "musical achievement" by a secondary school ensemble? Can you describe your process of obtaining musical achievement with the specific pieces you are programming for your upcoming MPA event?

2. What is your opinion regarding the concept of a required MPA event and how it has affected your ensemble specifically?

3. To what extent has this type of performance contributed to the administrative and financial support from your school?

4. To what extent has this type of event contributed to recruitment and enrollment of BIPOC students into your program?

5. Your rehearsal video showed several instances of "tough love" displayed towards the students. Can you explain your thought process behind this method of motivation towards your students?

6. To what extent does a teacher having a similar upbringing contribute to establishing rapport with students from low-income environments? What would you say to a director who doesn't share those same traits working in this environment?

7. Within the state's MPA rubric, the difference between a Superior rating and a Excellent to Good Rating is often the ability for the ensemble to "consistently" display accuracy of musical concepts (such as tone quality, intonation, etc.) compared to "usually" or "sometimes". To what extent is "student understanding" of the MPA rubric terminology discussed in terms of teaching your ensemble? Can you give examples of how students are learning to use the MPA rubric to prepare for a successful performance?

8. To what extent do you feel that an adjudicator should take into account factors other than school-size to determine an ensemble rating at a MPA event? Can you describe some of these factors and your rationale behind them?

9. To what extent are cultural perceptions of playing in a band discussed in your school? To what extent do you feel this is important to the overall success of a secondary band program?

10. What might be some challenges for directors at Title I schools in conducting highly effective rehearsals for this type of event? And how are some of these challenges addressed in your rehearsal techniques to help them succeed?

11. In your opinion, what do you think adjudicators are looking for in a "superior" ensemble? Can you give your rationale for this opinion?

12. To what extent do your students understand the musical terminology on an MPA rubric? What teaching strategies do you have in place to help with student mastery of these concepts?

13. How have you addressed your student's "Fear of failure" throughout the MPA process?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW #2 QUESTIONS (UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS)

1. What is your concept of musical achievement by a secondary school ensemble? Can you describe your process of training band directors to obtain musical achievement with the specific content you are presenting for your course?

2. What is your opinion regarding the concept of a required MPA event and how it has affected band education in schools?

3. Within the state's MPA rubric, the difference between a Superior rating and a Excellent to Good Rating is often the ability for the ensemble to "consistently" display accuracy of musical concepts (such as tone quality, intonation, etc.) compared to "usually" or "sometimes". To what extent is the MPA rubric terminology discussed in terms of teaching student ensembles in your course? Additionally, what methods are being taught to educate future band directors on the tools to address these terms to prepare a future ensemble for a successful MPA performance?

4. To what extent is your experience teaching in a Title I school? Can you describe some of your challenges in this situation and what strategies worked for you to achieve musical success?

5. What is your experience adjudicating an ensemble at a MPA type of event? Can you describe some of the key aspects you look for in a "superior" band?

6. To what extent do you think that systemic "deficiencies" among social groups in our country contribute to the success rate of school bands at an MPA event? Can you give some specific examples and rationale?

7. To what extent does a teacher having a similar upbringing contribute to establishing rapport with students from low-income environments? Can you provide a rationale? What advice would you say to a director who doesn't share those same traits working in this environment?

8. What might be some musical challenges for directors at Title I schools in conducting highly effective rehearsals for this type of event? And how are some of these challenges addressed in your course to help them succeed?

9. To what extent do you feel that an adjudicator should take into account factors other than school-size to determine an ensemble rating at a MPA event? Can you describe some of these factors and your rationale behind them?

10. To what extent are cultural perceptions of playing in a school band discussed in your course? To what extent do you feel this is important to the overall success of a secondary band program?

11. To what extent does the type of music played within a school concert band contribute to the participation of BIPOC students in their ensemble?

12. A frequent comment given to Title I bands at MPA is their lack of instrumentation, which may lead to a lower score at these events. To what extent are strategies taught in your course to help directors with instrumentation concerns for a MPA event?

13. To what extend does strategies for band directors who lack resources such as quality instruments, private lesson, etc.?

APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. If you were on the state board for choosing new music selections for the MPA required list, what would be your criteria for adding these pieces?

2. All of you mentioned that the idea of placing bands into categories based on "school size" was not fair. However, other states that consider other options such as "band size" often find similar concerns such as economic, academic, and social disparities. If you were on a committee recommending changes to bring about more equity towards schools who have different resources than others, how would you classify schools to achieve a "fair assessment"?

3. If you were on a committee at your university to revamp the music education curriculum to specifically educate future directors to teach students of lower income schools, what types of courses would you add or take away from your current university's curriculum to address the needs you brought about during our two interview sessions?

4. Based upon your responses during the interview sessions, what suggestions would you give the school district you either teach at, or where your university is located, to address the high teacher turnover rate in Title I schools?

5. What suggestions would you give the same school district to better support band programs in Title I schools? And how could they be implemented through district policies?

APPENDIX G: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY of SOUTH FLORIDA

APPROVAL

February 14, 2024

Alfonzo Kimbrough
[redacted]

Dear Mr. Alfonzo Kimbrough:

On 2/13/2024, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY006705
Review Type:	Expedited 5, 6, 7
Title:	Reducing the educational debt in Underserved School Bands
Approved Protocol and Consent:	• Title I School Bands - Social-Behavioral Protocol- Version 020124.docx; • Title I School Bands- Social-Behavioral Adult Consent- version 020124.pdf; Approved study documents can be found under the 'Documents' tab in the main study workspace. Use the stamped consent found under the 'Last Finalized' column under the 'Documents' tab.

Within 30 days of the anniversary date of study approval, confirm your research is ongoing by clicking Confirm Ongoing Research in BullsIRB, or if your research is complete, submit a study closure request in BullsIRB by clicking Create Modification/CR.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Your study qualifies for a waiver of the requirements for the documentation of informed consent for the survey, interview and focus group as outlined in the federal regulations at 45 CFR 46.117(c).

Sincerely,

Gabriela Plazarte
IRB Research Compliance Administrator