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Student voice and choice in modern band curriculum development

ABSTRACT

The perspectives and experiences of students should be considered first in the process of any significant curriculum reform. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to music education, and educators have a responsibility to design experiences that meet the needs of learners in their classroom. After hearing the individual voices of students in one New York State school district in the United States, the music faculty and authors developed modern band electives designed to increase access to school music and attract a greater diversity of students by race, ethnicity and musical preference. District-level enrolment data demonstrate how these courses impacted the demographic profile of secondary school music by increasing participation rates among racialized student populations. These modern band music classes counterbalanced the disproportionately white and higher SES enrolment in the traditional band, orchestra and chorus, resulting in a school music programme that was more representative of the overall school population.

KEYWORDS

modern band
learner agency
popular music
culturally responsive teaching
diversity
inclusive

Introduction

During my first weeks as a music coordinator at a school district in the Northeastern region of the United States, I (the first author) became troubled by two pieces of information about school music participation at the high school level. The first was not so remarkable – our ensemble enrolment rate was 19 per cent of the overall school population, meaning that 81 per cent of the school population was not participating in the music programme. These numbers were consistent with Williams' (2011) description of 'the other 80 per cent', and – to a lesser degree – Elpus and Abril's (2019) report that 24 per cent of students in the United States participated in ensembles for at least one year of high school. However, this participation rate had once been much higher in our district and was steadily declining over the years. The second piece of information was much more concerning. A white[1] student in our school district was more than twice as likely to participate in the school music programme than a black student. Students who qualified for free/reduced lunch were also significantly less likely to participate in school music. Our district was becoming increasingly diverse over time – both by race and socio-economic status – but our music programme was disproportionately serving our white and also our more affluent student populations. While previous research demonstrated racial and economic disparities in school music participation at the national level (Elpus and Abril 2011, 2019), these reported disparities were not as extreme as those we observed in our own local district. And unlike the statistics presented in the work of Elpus, Abril and others, our students had names, faces and interacted with us every day – it was personal.

The ensembles in our school district were comprised of a concert band of roughly 70 students, a string orchestra of 30 students, a large chorus of 70 students, a select chorus of twenty students, a show choir of fifteen students, and two jazz bands of approximately twenty students each. Students in the select chorus, show choir and one of the jazz bands were chosen through an audition process, while the other ensembles were open to all students. All of the ensembles were electives; however, the state required students to participate in at least one art class (e.g. visual art, music, dance and theatre) as a graduation requirement. While the genres of the ensembles varied somewhat by format (e.g. the show choir and jazz ensembles often performed music in a jazz/contemporary style), all of the ensembles were conductor-led and repertoire was learned and performed using standard five-line notation.

Our district music programme had been facing declining enrolment for at least a decade, and this decrease was accompanied by reductions in human resources, as two positions were eliminated when previous music teachers retired. It was easy to blame school leadership for a weakening programme – and people did – but it was much harder to examine the factors that contributed to this lack of participation, especially among our most marginalized and disenfranchised student populations. The district made a serious effort to ensure that financial costs would not be a barrier to participation, which included (1) purchasing several hundred instruments available at no cost to every student in the district, (2) providing private and small group lessons through the district and (3) ensuring transportation was available to evening concerts for every student who needed it. Still, we had a problem with participation. It became clear that the answer to our participation problem did not lie within the brainstorming power of our faculty, in volumes of music education textbooks, or in peer-reviewed academic journal articles, but rather within the

1. Since we are not aware of how these students were categorized (self-identifying or otherwise), we are adopting the racial language provided by the district. We personally find the language 'white/non-white', 'black/non-black', 'people of colour' reductive, problematic and a continuation of systematic and institutionalized oppression. In an attempt to be inclusive and address issues of race, we suggest that such language creates false binaries, distils cultures into overly simplistic categories and fails to capture and celebrate the nuances of true human diversity.

experiences and perspectives of the students in our school. Therefore, I (first author) suggested that our school district music teachers should partner with university faculty mentors (including the second author) and groups of high school students within the district to examine the reasons why all students, but particularly underrepresented students, decided to participate or not participate in school music. We used this information to design an action plan and examine post-intervention participation rates with the goal of co-constructing a culturally responsive music programme that better served the musical goals and aspirations of all learners in our district.

In our efforts to build a culturally responsive music programme, we had no preconceived notions of how it would look. We did think one option might include adopting teaching/learning approaches in the informal learning vein (Feichas 2010). We also knew of the expanding presence of popular music programmes in schools (Powell et al. 2015) and realized that could be a missing area from our curriculum. Owing to the power that popular music education possesses to be a catalyst for social justice (Narita and Green 2015), we remained open to the option of a popular music programme. Villegas and Lucas (2002: 20) described how a culturally responsive teacher (1) is socioculturally conscious, that is, recognizes there are multiple ways of perceiving reality and that these ways are influenced by one's location in the social order; (2) has affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, seeing resources for learning in all students rather than viewing differences as problems to be overcome; (3) sees himself or herself as both responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change that will make schools more responsive to all students; (4) understands how learners construct knowledge and is capable of promoting learners' knowledge construction; (5) knows about the lives of his or her students and (6) uses his or her knowledge about students' lives to design instruction that builds on what they already know while stretching them beyond the familiar. Our approach was to listen to all stakeholders, empower perspectives of students, engage broader populations of students who might not be in the music programme already and provide a way forward. The authors, while not aware of it at the time of collecting information from/with students, later realized we were embodying the Villegas and Lucas (2002) culturally responsive framework described above. This then led us to design the research questions, purpose and method for the two action research studies, one qualitative and one quantitative, that follow.

Study 1: Student voice in curriculum reform

Purpose and research questions

The purpose of our first study was to understand the reasons why students at the high school decided to participate or not participate in school music electives and ensembles from fourth to twelfth grade. We had a particular interest in understanding the perspectives of those who might have been underserved in our programme. Our hope was that through this investigation, we would determine strategies towards developing a more inclusive, culturally responsive music programme in the school district. Three main questions guided this research: (1) How is student participation in our school district music programme informed by cultural beliefs; (2) What kinds of classes, ensembles and instruments would students like to see included at our school; and (3) Do all students, and particularly underrepresented students, see themselves and their culture(s) represented in our school music programme?

Participants

Participants (*N*=15) volunteered for this research study following an after-school recruitment presentation and varied in self-identified gender and racial/ethnic categories. Eleven of the participants participated in one or more school music ensembles, while four of the participants participated in none. All of the participants were twelfth grade students, who were graduating at the end of the school year. Table 1 presents the participants along with their self-reported race and ethnicities, genders and their school music experience, as recorded by the district registrar. All names are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Methods

The qualitative methods chosen for this study enabled rich understanding of the participants' perspectives. We followed Denzin and Lincoln's (2005: 2) suggestion to observe contextually in 'natural settings, attempting to make sense or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them'. The research took place inside and outside classroom contexts because the goal was to 'collect data in the field […] where participants experience the issue or problem' (Creswell 2007: 37). We aimed through our research to understand the holistic environment of the students (Stake 1995).

A team of two music teachers and two faculty mentors recruited student participants through a large group discussion on 'Race, Culture and Music', held in the high school band room after school one day. Advertising for the event was widely promoted throughout the school building to attract as many students as possible and, in particular, students who might not be participating

Name	Race/ethnicity	Gender	School music experience
Jenny	White	Female	Chorus, orchestra
Maria	Hispanic	Female	Chorus, band, orchestra
Erica	Black	Female	Chorus, band
Peter	White	Male	Orchestra, band
Samantha	White	Female	Chorus, orchestra
Katie	White	Female	Chorus
Daniel	Black	Male	Chorus
Brianna	Black	Female	Band
Emma	White-Hispanic	Female	Orchestra, band
Richard	Black	Male	Chorus
Carla	Black	Female	Chorus, band
Jonathon	White	Male	None
Caleb	Other	Male	None
Stevan	Other	Male	None
Cassandra	Black	Female	None

Table 1: Participants' race/ethnicity, gender and previous school music experience.

in the school music programme. As part of the advertisement, we included an incentive of a raffle at the conclusion of the event. At this discussion, we introduced our team of researchers, explained the purpose of the research study, and shared our overarching research questions. Twenty-seven high school seniors attended and participated in this discussion and provided some of their thoughts about school music that would help shape our interview guide. We took photographs and notes during the discussion.

In the weeks that followed this discussion group meeting, fifteen of the students volunteered to participate in one-on-one semi-structured interviews with a member of the research team. The team conducted the interviews at the students' convenience, often after school or during a study hall period. We audio-recorded the interviews, which were later transcribed and sent to the participants for member checks. All of these data collection techniques were consistent with the ethnographic techniques prescribed by Yin (2003) including classroom and studio/lab observations, field notes, audio recordings, structured and unstructured interviews, informal conversations and collection of artefacts.

After the interviews were recorded, the researchers read the transcripts and discovered common themes across interviews. Our analysis process involved discussions back and forth between researchers following what Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 135) described as 'sorting and defining and defining and sorting'. Ultimately, the themes distilled into two broad categories which will be discussed below.

Findings

Two main themes emerged from the data that addressed all three of our research questions. Many of the participants reported feeling some kind of cultural isolation or 'othering' when participating in the bands, orchestras or choirs. Several students reported a general dislike for the repertoire and style associated with school music, and others explained the music did not coincide with their cultural identities. This held true across racial/ethnic categories, as some of the white participants shared that they felt disconnected from the music of white European classical composers. In addition to these themes – which identified potential areas of concern for our school music programme – some students offered suggestions for classes and ensembles that might reach a greater variety of students, by race and class. Quotations from several participants reflected these overall themes and are discussed in greater detail below.

Cultural isolation

Brianna, a self-identifying black female band student, observed how students of colour seemed to be dropping out of school music ensembles at a higher rate than her white counterparts:

> And with band it's like when you, when you get to fourth grade, it's like everyone, it's like a melting pot, but then as you start to get older, it becomes more white kids. I'm the only black girl, black person in the flute section, Amanda is the only black person in the clarinet section, and then saxes […] okay there's some black people there.

Brianna's observation about the 'melting pot' of students in fourth grade band, which over time became 'more white' reflects trends in the United States (DeLorezno 2012). She also noted how students of colour seemed to discontinue playing certain instruments (flute and clarinet) at a higher rate than other instruments (saxophone). A decline of participation among students of colour was not unique to band. Maria, a student of Hispanic descent, observed a similar experience of cultural isolation in the orchestra setting:

> In the orchestra, I feel like it's more like Asian and white. I mean like growing up here I feel like I'm really […] the only Hispanic who really actually is ever there.

The theme of cultural isolation also extended to the chorus. Erica shared experiences being 'the only black girl in the chamber choir' and the assumptions that her classmates made about her:

> So, we got Elijah Rock, and I was all excited because it sounded really cool. It was for the chamber choir and I was the only black girl in the chamber choir at all, and it was really funny because everyone just turned around and expected, and like asked me so 'how are we supposed to sing this?' And I kind of couldn't really say anything because I never really grew up around gospel music. I like hip-hop and then pop music, so I didn't really do anything in like a gospel church or anything. So, I didn't really know either. I was just as lost as they were.

While the selection of 'Elijah Rock' may be a function of the chorus director's recognition and respect of African American art forms, we should be careful not to assume students will be familiar with, or interested in, styles of music commonly associated with a particular racial category (Hess 2012).

Dislike of school music

Participants also expressed concerns regarding the under-representation of non-western cultures in the school music curriculum. Several students talked about associations between ensembles and racial categories. Sometimes it was the teachers of these ensembles who seemed to place the learned musician (i.e. years of formal school music training) superior to the unlearned musician (i.e. self-taught amateur), which was off-putting to students. Emma, a self-identifying white-Hispanic student in band and orchestra, explained how students may not feel empowered to speak up and may therefore be 'steamrolled' by their music teachers:

> Well, I've been in the Orchestra since fourth grade but I could not read music until I got to High School. I had no idea, [my teacher] like had a panic attack, it was very scary for all of us. […] I think it's really important to understand, for the teachers to understand where you're at and to be honest with the teachers because if they don't know you can't read the music, they're just going to steamroll over it.

Brianna believed that little exposure to classical music at a young age influenced her to 'hate' certain styles of pieces in band:

> I think black kids, we're not necessarily exposed to classical music as other people and uh so when we get to band and we're playing like marches and like different kinds of things like that it's kind of like offsetting and personally like, I hate Sousa marches like with a passion. I hate them. I hate playing them, I find them detestable in every way.

While Brianna was excited to participate in the concert band – even winning awards and recognitions for her outstanding participation – she clearly expressed a disdain for the music of John Philip Sousa and what his music represented in her mind. This is not just a matter of race, however, as students of all racial backgrounds may similarly shy away from the music of Sousa and other staples of band, orchestra and chorus, even the large ensemble tradition as a whole. Jenny, a white female in chorus and orchestra, explained how she felt pop/rock ensembles might attract more students to school ensembles:

> I definitely think that more people would be interested in [pop ensembles] because like I feel like with orchestra and band there is kind of like this stigma, 'Oh you know band plays marches, and like orchestra plays classical music', so I feel like people are more likely to kind of stay away from that kind of stuff. […] If we had that kind of thing with like the guitar, you know, bass and stuff people would be more interested.

However, not all participants expressed a fear or hatred of school music, and one participant reminded us that the traditional school music model already works for many students, including students of colour. Erica, a black female who performed in both the band and chorus, expressed the importance of keeping classical music in the curriculum.

> I just hope that in the future, if things do start to change to let a more blended community of music people into the school, I really hope that the classical era is still staying because that's still a really important part of music history and it's really exciting to play.

Erica later graduated high school and was accepted to a prestigious school of music. Her word of caution against removing traditional school music for the curriculum should be taken very seriously, and a balanced approach that seeks to broaden music programmes may be the most appropriate course of action, especially considering that the teachers in the school district all had a primarily classical background.

Summary of Study 1

The findings above suggest there were institutional habits impeding the affirmation and inclusion of large sections of the school population. The research team considered how student perspectives could be affirmed and included in future plans to correct the systematic oppression that was so pervasive within the school music programme. After closely examining the student perspective the research team designed steps to be implemented, as described below, that were culturally responsive, broke through the oppression, and transformed the music learning context through popular music education.

Study 2: Student choice in new school music electives

Purpose

After reporting the findings of the first study to music faculty in the school district, we arranged to have a professional development workshop on popular music pedagogy and modern band for all eleven teachers in the music department. Powell and Burstein (2017: 244–45) explained that modern band[2] 'has two simple guiding attributes: repertoire and instrumentation' and that the repertoire is 'student-centered first and foremost, reflecting the music that students listen to on their own and with others'. While the size and instrumentation of modern bands are flexible and may adapt to any situation, the typical modern band consists of guitar, keyboard, vocals, drum kit and technology. In the school year that followed this training (2016–17), the school district created two new elective classes titled 'Modern Band' in an effort to increase participation in school music. Therefore, the purpose of our second study was to examine how the implementation of a modern band elective affected the enrolment and diversity of the school music programme. We were also interested in modern band students' experiences with the school music programme and identifications of barriers to access. We used a student questionnaire, together with data collected from the school district registrar, to examine those questions.

2. The term 'modern band' is only capitalized in this article when it refers to the title of a course.

Method

Participants (*N*=35) in the second study were enrolled in one of two Modern Band elective music classes at the high school. Half of the students were in ninth grade, the other half were evenly distributed among tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades and most of those students did not participate in the school's existing ensemble programme (band, orchestra, chorus). No other information about the students was collected prior to the study. The school district's registrar office provided data on the enrolment of students registered for Modern Band at the high school level as well as data for enrolment of existing ensembles (bands, orchestras, choirs) and overall high school enrolment. Data on race/ethnicity and free/reduced-cost lunch services were provided for each of these groups. The research team also developed a survey for current Modern Band students, asking them about their experiences with existing ensembles in the school district and the new modern band course. The survey was administered through a Qualtrics survey link during the final days of the school year. Of the 35 students who registered for Modern Band during the 2016–17 academic year, 29 voluntarily participated in the end-of-year survey. The six students who did not respond to the survey were not present in school on the day that the survey was administered to the modern band classes.

Findings

Demographics of school music

Table 2 summarizes data provided by the district's registrar office for the overall school population as well as existing ensembles (bands, orchestras, choirs) and the Modern Band class. In addition to the total number of students in each group, the table distinguishes the percentage of students of colour as well as the percentage of students who qualified for free or reduced lunch, one measure of socio-economic status for schools and students.

	No. of all students	Students of colour	Free/reduced lunch
School population	807	272 (34%)	494 (61%)
Existing ensembles	145	31 (21%)	59 (41%)
Modern band classes*	35	17 (49%)	26 (74%)
Existing ensembles and modern band classes	172	43 (25%)	81 (47%)

*Eight students participated in both modern band and existing ensembles.

Table 2: 2016–17 Demographic profile.

Enrolment data provided by the district registrar demonstrated that modern band classes greatly diversified the demographic profile of school music groups both by race/ethnicity and socio-economic status. While a white student was still more likely to participate in an existing performing ensemble (band, orchestra, choir), a student of colour was nearly twice as likely to participate in modern band than a white student at the high school. While students of colour represented 34 per cent of the school, they represented 49 per cent of the modern band class. Students who qualified for free/reduced lunch at the high school were also nearly twice as likely to participate in modern band classes than students who did not qualify for these services. Taken together, the enrolment of modern band students plus existing ensembles students resulted in a school music programme that was more representative of the overall school population, both in terms of race and socio-economic status, than the existing ensembles alone.[3]

3. The odds ratio of a student of colour participating in modern band versus a white student was 1.86. The odds ratio of a student qualifying for free/reduced lunch versus a student who did not qualify for these services participating in Modern Band was 1.83. These ratios indicate that students of colour and students of lower SES were almost twice as likely to participate in Modern Band as their white or wealthier counterparts, respectively.

Barriers to access

In our survey, we asked two questions that explored student experiences with existing school music ensembles. One question asked students to identify any school music ensembles in which they currently participated. Twenty of the 29 students (69 per cent) selected 'none', indicating they did not participate in any of the traditional bands, orchestras or choirs that year. Of these twenty students, eight indicated that they had never participated in these ensembles and listed the following reasons.

Question: Why were you not interested in school music ensembles?

- ☐ Skills in the musical category are not up to band standards, and lack of interest
- ☐ Did not want to in a big audience
- ☐ Takes out of school time
- ☐ Did not feel comfortable being on stage
- ☐ Don't like talking to other kids I don't know
- ☐ Wasn't really into music

Figure 1: Responses from students who never participated *in a traditional school music ensemble:*

Of the twenty students who were not participating in existing ensembles, twelve had participated in an ensemble and left the programme. These students provided the following reasons for why they left the programme.

Question: Why did you leave the school music ensemble?

- ☐ I got bored
- ☐ I wanted to start getting ready for college
- ☐ I didn't have any extra time
- ☐ Because I couldn't read the music fast enough to play
- ☐ I switched schools
- ☐ The songs don't make me enjoy music much and the notes make it harder to understand
- ☐ I had a lot of school work
- ☐ I just felt like I couldn't sing as well as everyone else
- ☐ I didn't enjoy the music we sang in chorus
- ☐ I Got kind of bored of it
- ☐ I was not entirely interested
- ☐ Took a break to pursue other electives for my freshman year

Figure 2: Responses from students who left a school music ensemble:

Time, interest and perceived lack of ability seemed to be among the most common reasons for not joining existing school music ensembles or for leaving them. Many of these ensembles required after-school commitments and evening concerts. We believe that this requirement may have been a barrier to access for students who work after school. This barrier may have disproportionately impacted students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, whose income may have been necessary to help support their families. Other students felt as though they did not have the talent required to be in these existing ensembles. Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion within an ensemble programme may be stifled by requirements for students to have a prerequisite knowledge of music-reading skills and years of formal training on an instrument or voice (Culp and Clauhs forthcoming). Conversely, the model of modern band in this high school addressed these factors influencing student participation. The modern band classes required no outside class time, as there were no evening rehearsals or performances. The repertoire of these modern bands was typically selected by the students themselves and did not require prerequisite knowledge of traditional five-line staff notation. Modern band classes in this high school were also marketed to students 'with no prior musical experience', sending a clear indication that there were no prerequisite skills necessary for participation in these new ensembles.

Impact on pre-existing school music ensembles

When ninth to eleventh grade students were asked if they would participate in an existing band, orchestra or chorus the following year, 100 per cent of the students who were already in these ensembles (for clarity, we will call them the 'music' students) reported they would 'definitely yes' or 'probably yes' participate in these ensembles again. While most 'non-music' students[4] were undecided either way, it is worth noting that some of these expressed an interest in joining, or rejoining, one of these ensembles the following year.

4. All students should be considered 'music students' whether they choose to participate in school music or not, and nobody should be labelled as 'non-music'. These familiar labels are used only for clarity in the presentation of these findings.

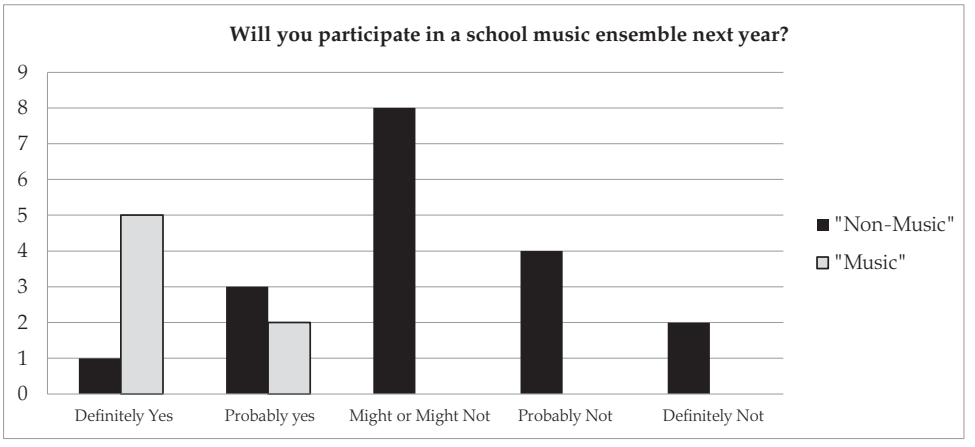

Figure 3: 'Music' and 'non-music' student interest in participating in band, orchestra and/or chorus the following year.

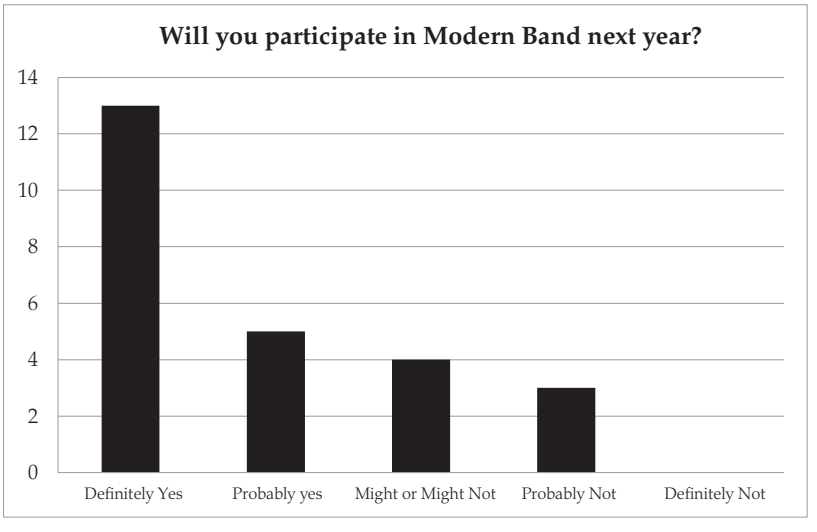

Figure 4: Student interest in continuing with Modern Band.

Re-enrolment in modern band

Perhaps the greatest measure of student interest in Modern Band is their commitment to enrolling in the elective again the following year. Ninth to eleventh grade students who were already participating in Modern Band overwhelmingly reported that they were interested in taking it again next year (Figure 4) and that they would recommend the class to their friends (Figure 5).

When asked *why* they would take Modern Band again next year, nine students reported a sense of enjoyment or fun when describing the class. Some students identified how Modern Band class helps to build confidence, 'Modern Band is a really good learning experience and it helps you build more confidence if you have stage fright or something like that and its [*sic*] a good chance to meet new people'. Another student noted how modern band class focussed on the creative elements of music-making, writing

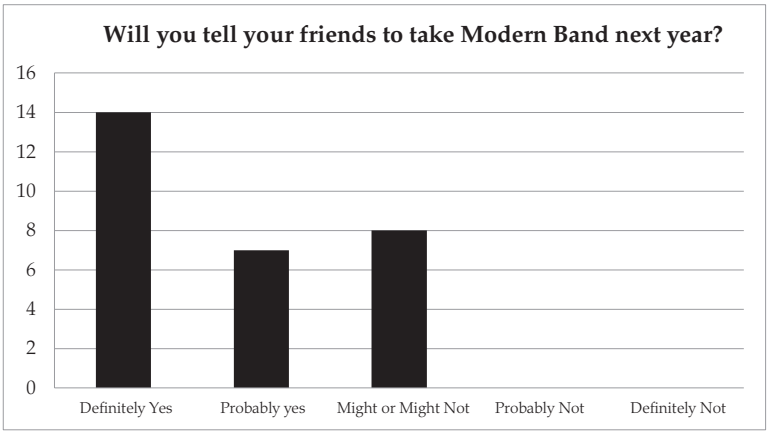

Figure 5: Student recommendation of Modern Band.

simply 'to like, create music'. When asked why they would not take Modern Band again next year, students reported that they needed the credit, they were not 'the greatest at playing instruments' and they wanted to take different electives each year.

Summary of Study 2

The data collected and described in Study 2 demonstrates how a music programme may provide choices to students who might otherwise have been ignored. This school district used this opportunity to correct old habits and institutional barriers that excluded large percentages of students from school music. While objectors to modern band may casually and without evidence express a concern that such programmes weaken enrolment in other existing school music groups (Kelly and Veronee 2019; Powell 2019), this study provides evidence to the contrary. The electives offered in this school district demonstrated that modern band programmes might actually strengthen traditional school music ensemble numbers. None of the music students in modern band classes reported they would be leaving their existing ensembles the following year. Sixty-nine per cent of the modern band students at this school were not currently in the school music programme, but some of these students reported an interest in joining at least one school ensemble the following year. While just three of the 29 modern band students were currently in concert band, eight reported that they might join concert band the next year. While modern band has its own merit, it also introduces students to a variety of performing experiences, including those provided by other ensembles (e.g. band, orchestra and chorus). This is not to suggest that modern band should be used as a gateway to pre-existing ensembles, but rather it welcomes more students into a new culture of school music – one that respects the values and traditions of a variety of musical styles and removes barriers to participation.

Conclusion

Considering both action research projects, (1) student voice in school curriculum reform and (2) student choice in new school music electives, one can see how research informs practice and practice informs research (West 2011).

The manner in which these two action research projects evolved and impacted a school district is a testimony to the importance of grounding research in practice. The fact that this research addresses issues centred on racial/ethnic oppression deepens the importance of the findings herein.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is important work because it can serve to not only address student engagement and motivation, but also to break down institutional barriers that historically marginalize and disrespect people on the basis of race, ethnicity and skin colour (Gay 2010; Lind and McKoy 2016). Popular music education creates opportunities to recognize the diverse ways students learn and experience music and may be considered a form of culturally responsive pedagogy if popular music is defined as the music of the learner (Kastner and Jones 2018; Olesko and Clauhs 2018). Modern band, just one example of how music education can increase access and opportunity, does not involve abandonment of anything musical or of any musical beings.

If we are united as a profession in the vision that public school music education can and ought to serve all students, then we will benefit from future research regarding more inclusive models of music education. There is an existing body of research on culturally responsive pedagogies in music education outside of modern band contexts that could inform this work (Abramo 2017; Bates 2017, 2019; Lind and McKoy 2016; Talbot 2017). Rather than examining ensemble school music cultures, researchers might look into elementary, middle and secondary general music contexts in relation to modern band and/or other areas of culturally responsive pedagogy. Another area might include research on the work of non-profit organizations serving to disrupt hegemonic structures in school music. Lastly, we can turn to non-institutionalized music learning cultures such as those discussed in the Music Learning Profiles Project (Cremata et al. 2017). It is outside the containers of privilege, beyond the confines of schools, and into the lives of individual learners that we might find the keys to inclusivity.

School music culture is changing. The concert/marching band culture rose to prominence during a time in which it was the popular music of the day (Kratus 2011). Similarly, choral and orchestral music aligned to a particular musical style, context and constituency. To honour, serve and embrace the inclusive and diverse cultures of our current pluralistic society, school music programmes ought to rely on engaging students, involving them in collaborative musical opportunities and inspiring their imaginations. The first step to this process is to capture the attention of more students and include their voice and choice in curricular development, as Noddings (2008: 34) wrote, 'An enlightened school would spend time finding out what the students are interested in and providing relevant courses'. Students should not only have a voice in the development of the curriculum and a choice of relevant courses, but they should also be empowered through learner agency in the classroom itself (Doyle 2012; Lacey 2007; Wiggins 2016). Our second study demonstrated that, when offered in conjunction with traditional band, orchestra and chorus ensembles, modern band ensembles and classes can help foster school music programmes that are more representative of the racial and economic diversity of the school. While school music cultures can be stifling and exclusive, the efforts of this school district are consistent with a position statement on inclusivity and diversity issued by the National Association for Music Education: 'Expanding the types and styles of music studied and performed invites more students into music classrooms, helping NAfME and its members realize the mission of promoting the understanding

and making of music by all' (NAfME n.d.). As more school music programmes consider expansions that provide choices for a population with diverse musical goals and preferences, it is important for teachers, school administrators and scholars to listen to the voices of students, as they are equal stakeholders in this work.

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