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## A Phenomenological Study of the Professional Learning Experiences of Music Educators

Allison Bonn-Savage  
abonnsavage14@georgefox.edu

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES  
OF MUSIC EDUCATORS

by

Allison Bonn-Savage

FACULTY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Chair: Karen Buchanan, EdD

Member: Scot Headley, PhD

Member: Susanna Thornhill, PhD

Presented to the Faculty of the  
Doctor of Educational Leadership Department  
George Fox University

in partial fulfillment for the degree of

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

“A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF MUSIC EDUCATORS,” a Doctoral research project prepared by ALLISON BONN-SAVAGE in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

This dissertation has been approved and accepted by:

8/21/18 Karen A. Buchanan Committee Chair

Date

Karen Buchanan, EdD

Professor of Education

8/21/18 Scot Headley

Date

Scot Headley, PhD

Professor of Education

8.21.18 Susanna Thornhill

Date

Susanna Thornhill, PhD

Associate Professor of Education

**ABSTRACT**

This qualitative phenomenological study sought to discover the lived experiences of six music educators in their professional learning. Each of the music educators in this study taught in an Oregon public school and had taken on a leadership role in the 2018 Oregon Music Educators Association (OMEA) conference. This study utilized personal interviews to gather rich descriptions of the unique stories and journeys through professional learning these music educators had experienced. Three significant themes were identified in the analysis process in this study: (a) Participants felt confident in knowing their learning needs for professional growth and were apathetic or resistant to professional learning opportunities offered by building administrators; (b) Participants viewed the observation of other music educators' work as important for their own professional learning; and (c) Participants in this study regarded meaningful professional learning that impacted their work with music students as self-pursued and self-acquired. Implications from this study suggested that music educators and school administrators increase communication and partner with each other to develop professional learning goals and plans that increase music educators' autonomy, ownership, and voice in their professional growth. This study offers suggestions for creative solutions that encourage administrators to re-think the conditions and requisites of required professional learning in order to meet the needs of all of their teachers' professional growth.

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My parents, Mike and Judy Sanders, have supported our family countless times by transporting, entertaining, and caring for our children. Any time we needed anything, my parents were there to support us.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Educators, researchers, policy-makers, and stakeholders in the field of education have long sought to identify best practices for student achievement. Teacher professional learning is emerging as a strong catalyst to positively impact student achievement. Yet research reveals that educators are not always afforded the opportunity to participate in effective learning that could benefit students.

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, and Gardner (2017) identified seven essential elements for designing effective professional learning for educators. They asserted that professional learning is content-focused, incorporates active learning, supports collaboration, uses models of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, offers feedback and reflection, and is sustained in duration. Effective professional learning should also be aligned with district initiatives, allow for autonomy and choice based on educators' needs and specific classrooms, support teacher's work on their practice in positive and constructive ways, and allow educators leadership opportunities as mentors, coaches, or *experts* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). However, barriers to the implementation of effective professional learning opportunities exist, including insufficient time allotted for new skills, pressure to teach mandated curriculum, lack of specific support for teaching English language learners, classroom management issues, and a lack of resources for professional learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Additionally, decisions regarding professional learning approaches, content, and implementation are often made at systematic levels without an understanding of what educators' desire or need (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Disparities and inequities in student outcomes have been identified across the United States educational systems, specifically for students of color and students who live in homes of

low socio-economic status (Gates, 2017). In order to develop systems and practices that support the goals for student achievement and growth, school administrators and policy-makers could increase their understanding of student and community needs. The small school model, piloted by the Gates Foundation to decrease inequities and increase graduation rates, had promising results but its impact was limited by impractical costs (Gates, 2017). However, encouraging insights were gained that have shaped the approach to student achievement and continued growth.

In his address to the Council of the Great City Schools, Bill Gates (2017) stated, “Over time, we realized that what made the most successful schools successful – large or small – was their teachers, their relationships with students, and their high expectations of student achievement” (para. 18). Consequently, policy- and decision-makers in the field of education are shifting the resources and focus from attempting to control the construct of the school to supporting teachers and their effectiveness through professional learning.

Professional learning for educators is most often offered and facilitated by school administrators. School district-driven activities during staff meetings or days devoted to staff professional learning allow time for educators to focus on teaching practices and increasing student achievement outcomes.

Researchers suggested that effective professional learning for educators should be ongoing, discipline-specific, student outcome-focused, and job-embedded, while allowing for educators’ autonomy and voice in design (DuFour, 2015; Guskey, 2017; Learning Forward, 2016). Professional development conferences, guest speakers, and professional learning communities create collegial networks that support continued growth, alleviate isolation, and improve teaching practices which can impact student achievement. Darling-Hammond et al.

(2017) stated that “well-implemented PLCs provide ongoing, job-embedded learning that is active, collaborative, and reflective” (p. 17). Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) can even be created and organized outside of the school setting; the ultimate goal is to support “context-specific strengths and meet context-specific challenges” (Darling-Hammond et al., p. 18).

Professional learning opportunities for educators are tools to improve teacher effectiveness and boost student achievement. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) stated, “Well-designed and implemented Professional Development should be considered an essential component of a comprehensive system of teaching and learning that supports students to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Darling-Hammond et al., p. 24). Professionals in the field of education are continuously searching for ways to close the achievement gap. Professional learning approaches and experiences vary widely; research-based literature can and should inform administrators and educators in the pursuit to discover effective professional learning practices. Guskey (2017) asserted that effective professional learning is a journey with purpose and intent in which the following essential questions must be addressed: “(1) What do we want to accomplish? (2) How will we know it if we do? and (3) What else might happen, good or bad?” (p. 33). By focusing on student learning outcome goals and planning backward, high-quality professional learning for educators can be designed that includes valuable teaching strategies and practices, organizational support requirements, and goal-oriented knowledge and skill learning experiences that will promote educational improvements (Guskey, 2017).

While federal and local policies have been created to close achievement gaps, increase accountability, and address teacher professional learning, there seems to be a growing concern

among music educators. These educators are responsible for meeting curricular goals in music classrooms yet they find little district or building professional learning support for their work (Battersby & Verdi, 2015; Conway, Albert, & Hourigan, 2005a).

Historically, music educators have often looked outside of their schools to professional organizations and to the field of music performance to gain their needed professional learning. A nationwide survey of 277 music educators conducted by Music Educators National Conference (MENC) revealed that although music educators' school districts require, and are usually supportive of professional development, many of the teachers are only partially, or not at all, reimbursed for valuable music-specific opportunities outside of the school building (Conway et al., 2005a). Although it can be difficult for school administrators to find professional learning opportunities that are relevant for their whole teaching staff, research-based professional learning offered to all teachers can include music educators. However, these educators also need content-specific development opportunities that are recognized as the research-based best methods for enhancing music programs in schools (Conway et al., 2005a). Moore (2009) defined professional development for music educators as "the inclusion of institutional and personal professional responsibility for the enhancement and growth in the music teacher's knowledge base and actions towards professional maturity" (p. 320). Music educators have multi-dimensional growth goals for teaching and learning, based on research and best practices in both the field of music education and in the field of general education.

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the experiences of music educators who participate in professional learning. As the researcher, I conducted personal interviews to explore music educators' perceptions of professional learning in which they have participated, the nature of professional learning opportunities that are reported to be of the most and least value to them, details about any opportunities for collaboration in their professional learning, and descriptions of their perceived needs for professional learning. The objective of this study was to gain understanding of the lived experiences of music educators in relation to their professional learning experiences.

**Research Question**

Research Question: What are the lived experiences of Oregon public school music educators who teach in K-12 schools with regards to professional learning?

Using a qualitative, phenomenological research approach, this research sought to discover how music educators experience professional learning. The interview questions stimulated conversations intended to reveal which professional learning experiences have been the most compelling and memorable throughout each teacher's career. Follow-up questions were then asked to gain further insight into each teacher's unique described professional learning experiences.

**Key Terms**

The following key terms are used throughout this study and are important to define for understanding of this research:



*Oregon Music Educators Association (OMEA)*- non-profit organization whose members, consisting mostly of K-12, college, or university music educators, are devoted to the music education of Oregonians (Oregon Music Educators Association, 2018)

*Professional Learning*- collaborative, job-embedded, standards-driven learning for educators to develop new knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to better meet the learning needs of students (Learning Forward, 2016)

*Professional Learning Community (PLC)* – a collaborative team of teachers that are focused on student learning rather than their own teaching. They hold one another accountable for ensuring that students learn, fostering a culture of collaboration, and focusing on the results of student learning (DuFour, 2004).

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

My personal experiences include teaching music in public schools in Oregon for thirteen years, in both rural and suburban school districts. I have experienced a wide range of both school district-offered and self-pursued professional learning. Based on my personal experiences and my passion for leadership and music education, I have been inspired to design this research project for exploration into the lived experiences that music educators have in professional learning. Based on my experiences in professional learning which have lacked in supporting music-specific professional growth opportunities, I have been motivated to understand and gain insight in the professional learning experiences of others in the field of music education. Gathering stories, artifacts, and rich descriptions to develop an essence of the lived experience of the participants in this research project created some limitations and delimitations.

**Limitations.** The sample size for this phenomenological study was small and therefore only represented the views of this small sample. I interviewed six research participants to gather

rich descriptions, collected researcher's notes on my observations of each interview, and gained insight into an artifact that each participant brought to the interview. Each of these contributed to my ability to find themes in the lived experiences of these specific music educators' professional learning. As a reference for determining a sample size for this study, I used the principles of data saturation described by Mason (2010) who suggested the researcher "assure that most or all of the perceptions that might be important are uncovered, but at the same time if the sample is too large data becomes repetitive and, eventually, superfluous" (Mason, p.1).

A second limitation of this study was my potential bias as the researcher. I am a member of the population being studied. From my perspective, professional learning for music educators needs reform. To help guard against my personal bias, I kept a researcher's notebook and monitored, to the best of my control, my subjectivity. Peshkin (1988) described it this way: "By monitoring myself, I can create an illuminating, empowering personal statement that attunes me to where self and subject are intertwined. I do not thereby exorcise my subjectivity. I do, rather, enable myself to manage it-to preclude it from being unwittingly burdensome as I progress through collecting, analyzing, and writing up my data" (p. 20). The goal of this study was to discover the compelling, memorable, or valuable professional learning that music educators have experienced and to reveal any parallels in the experiences of these music educators' professional learning experiences to those in the trends in the field of education.

Finally, the time spent with each participant for data collection was a limitation. I interviewed each participant one time. Each interview lasted approximately an hour, which limited the amount of time for participants to share their experiences. This time frame required precise interview questions with appropriate follow-up probing requests. I took interview observation notes in a researcher's notebook and each participants' artifact provided additional

data. Although a single interview lasting only an hour is not ideal for phenomenology, I believed that data saturation was achieved due to the intentional sampling and efficient interview questions.

**Delimitations.** I delimited this study to Oregon public school music educators who were members of Oregon Music Educators Association (OMEA), and who participated in a leadership role in the 2018 annual OMEA music educators' conference. This delimitation was purposeful because it indicated that these music educators participated in professional activities and learning beyond the requirements of their school district. OMEA conference leaders share a common investment in extended professional learning activities and can offer potentially rich descriptions of their professional learning experiences. These delimitations provided for a limited pool from which to select participants.

My status as a member of the population being studied presented the possibility that I may know music educators in the districts being sampled. To decrease the possibility of subjectivity, I ensured that I did not have a prior relationship with each participant in the sampling process.

As a result of the limitation and delimitations of this study, the results are not generalizable to all other music educators. However, I believe the study provides insight into the essence of the lived experiences that music educators have in professional learning. I also believe other music educators will be able to relate to the experiences of my participants, creating the possibility that the results could be used to inform future professional learning opportunities for music educators.

**Summary**

Professional learning in education has developed into a data-driven, inquiry-based process to increase student achievement. Although best practices for effective professional learning for educators are emerging, professional learning for music educators is handled in a variety of ways in different school districts. Music educators are in a unique position, one that allows for growth opportunities in their overall teaching skills and practices as well as those specific to music educators, including their own musicianship, which may require unique professional learning practices. This study offered the opportunity to explore which professional learning experiences music educators identified as being the most compelling to their own growth.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter begins by examining the trends in teacher professional learning, in both American and global education. Next, the literature review explores experiences and professional learning barriers that specialty-area teachers face. These specialty areas include teachers of music, physical education/wellness, world language, and art. The chapter then explores effective professional learning for boosting student outcomes, such as teacher collaboration opportunities and professional learning communities. The final section investigates the implementation of effective professional learning practices specifically for music educators, including the use of technology to create virtual professional learning communities for support, collegiality, and collaboration.

Professional Learning is “the collaborative, job-embedded, standards-driven learning that school-based educators engage in to develop the new knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to better meet the diverse learning needs of their students” (Learning Forward, 2011, p. 4). Learning Forward (2011), an organization dedicated to developing and implementing professional learning for student achievement, created seven essential standards to ensure that the purpose of professional learning be that educators increase their skills, practices, and dispositions to augment student achievement. These seven standards are as follows: (a) Learning Communities, (b) Leadership, (c) Resources, (d) Data, (e) Learning Designs, (f) Implementation, and (g) Outcomes. Learning Forward (2011) suggested these standards be utilized in the following way: “The standards will guide the efforts of individuals, teams, school and school system staff, public agencies and officials, and nonprofit and for-profit associations or organizations engaged in setting policy, organizing, providing, facilitating, managing, participating in, monitoring, or measuring professional learning to increase educator

effectiveness and results for all students” (p. 44). Further suggestions are provided to increase the understanding of professional learning and the delivery of effective professional learning opportunities for all educators such as practical ways to study, utilize, share, and apply the standards to teaching practices.

### **Global Perspectives on Professional Learning**

A recent Canadian study on professional learning demonstrates a contrast in thinking between Canada and the United States. Campbell, Osmond-Johnson, Faubert, Zeichner, and Hobbs-Johnson (2016) partnered with Learning Forward (2011) to identify the professional learning educators in Canada experience by critically reviewing research and documents, conducting case studies, administering surveys, and forming focus groups to create a comprehensive report. Campbell et al. (2016) found that, in Canada, decisions regarding provincial policies, professional development processes, and areas of focus by region are not solely based on data but also on a process of inquiry and judgment. They state that while a focus on students learning outcomes is important, “student outcomes should not be interpreted narrowly as achievement results primarily on standardized assessments or test scores, broader student learning and well-being along with equity processes and outcomes are important to focus and develop as well” (Campbell et al., p. 6). This study identified the area with the most needed professional learning as “supporting ‘diverse learners’ needs” (Campbell et al., 2016, p. 5). Campbell (2017) reflected on the State of Educators’ Professional Learning in Canada (Campbell et al., 2016) study and concluded that continued research which engages the Canadian educational community is necessary to more fully understand the range of diverse experiences, voices, evidence, and needs. Diversity is held as a strength in the professional learning of Canadian educators who value diverse opportunities, voices, experiences, and contributions

(Campbell, 2017). However, inequities of access, experiences, and/or outcomes for educators' professional learning, and for the students they serve, continue to be the greatest challenge for Canadian educators' professional learning (Campbell, 2017). Campbell et al. (2016) concluded that "professional learning content needs to develop teachers' efficacy, knowledge, and practices in order to support students' efficacy, engagement, learning, and equity of outcomes" (p. 6).

The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) surveyed over 5 million teachers in 34 countries to gather an international perspective of the working conditions of teachers, including their professional learning using the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2013). Schleicher (2016) reported on the results from TALIS and suggested that teachers' professionalism be recognized and supported to enhance effective teacher practices through professional learning activities. Teachers' professional learning is a lifelong journey in which initial teacher education training can be seen as providing merely a foundation, rather than producing teachers ready for the rapidly changing, potentially long career ahead of them (Schleicher, 2016). Schleicher suggested that effective professional learning have the following qualities: (a) is continuous; (b) includes training, practice and feedback, and provides for time and follow-up support; (c) involves teachers in activities similar to those they use with their students; (d) encourages development of teachers' learning communities; (e) allows for systematic sharing of expertise and experience; and (f) takes a comprehensive approach that includes clear values tied to the enhancement of teaching practices, student achievement, and school improvement.

Badri, Alnuaimi, Mohaidat, and Yang (2016) utilized TALIS data specific to educators in Abu Dhabi and further examined the professional learning experiences of educators in that country. Leaders and policy makers in Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC), are

committed to ensuring consistent and ongoing professional learning opportunities for teachers. Badri et al. (2016) found that, in Abu Dhabi, teachers felt the highest need for professional learning in the areas of working with new technologies and teaching students with special needs. The highest impact of professional learning activities that teachers identified were “related to ‘knowledge of curriculum’, and ‘knowledge of subject field’” (p. 6) while the leading barriers to pursuing professional learning were identified as cost, lack of incentives, and work schedule conflicts.

Research studies conducted to solicit educators’ experiences in professional learning reveal the need for engaging educators in the planning, implementation, decision-making, and evaluation of opportunities and activities for meaningful professional learning (Badri et al., 2016; Campbell et al., 2016; Learning Forward, 2016; Schleicher, 2016).

### **Professional Learning Trends in American Education**

In 2016, Learning Forward partnered with the National Education Association (NEA) and Corwin to launch a 60-item survey across the United States to gain insight into over 6,300 teacher-educators’ experiences in professional learning (Learning Forward, 2016). The Learning Forward (2016) study revealed four significant findings. First, teachers reported that their school leaders were committed to professional learning. Next, although their schools use data to plan professional learning, they do not use a variety of data to assess its effectiveness. Teachers also reported not being involved in decisions about their own professional learning. Finally, teachers were not provided with enough time during the school day to follow up on their professional learning. Learning Forward (2016) responded to these findings with two recommendations: (a) Schools should provide opportunities for continuous, job-embedded professional learning, using



a variety of data sources to plan and assess professional learning; and (b) Schools should include teachers in decision-making about their own professional learning.

Olivier and Huffman (2016) asserted that school reform efforts have faced challenges and failed to affect improvement and sustained transformation. Top-down and standards-based reform efforts have only increased the gap between educators and policy makers; however, PLCs have emerged as a worthwhile solution for educators to create shared learning goals based on boosting student achievement (Olivier & Huffman, 2016).

Professional learning for educators, historically, has often felt like a packaged program that teachers participate in to be able to become more proficient in a specific skill or practice. Schmoker (2013) suggested that marketed professional development initiatives or programs do not necessarily boost student achievement and furthermore, that investing time and money into such programs neglects teachers' development and understanding of the implementation of curriculum, which should be the primary focus.

Webster-Wright (2009) asserted a need for "a shift in discourse and focus from delivering and evaluating professional development programs to understanding and supporting authentic professional learning" (p. 702). Therefore, the focus should not be on how to best deliver professional development but rather on how professionals learn. Webster-Wright (2009) argued that "professional learning" is a process that includes inquiry, engagement, practice, and self-directed learning with an emphasis on "knowledge-possessing," while "professional development" emphasizes "knowledge-deficient" learning with a need for training or developing. Webster-Wright (2009) reported a plethora of research in the body of literature with a focus on professional development programs and content while identifying that there is a gap,

and a need, in the literature for more research that studies the “experience of professional learning as constructed and embedded within authentic professional practice” (p. 713).

Goswami and Rutherford (2009) found that teachers who participated in supportive inquiry communities were able to integrate transformable classroom practices as a result of sharing inquiries based on unique teaching settings and collaboratively generating new knowledge to improve student learning. “Dialoguing and sharing documentation of teaching practice in a community with like-minded others prompted a collective desire to increase our understanding of our daily experiences not as an end itself, but rather a stimulus for pursuing change” (Goswami & Rutherford, p. 76). Designing and facilitating effective professional learning opportunities for educators can be challenging when teachers have a variety of learning needs, teaching styles, and student outcome methods such as specialist teachers.

### **Professional Learning of Education Specialists**

Professional learning activities designed for large multi-disciplinary teaching groups frequently cater to traditional core classroom teachers and are reliant on standardized test score assessment data to drive planning and decision-making. This means these opportunities often overlook the professional learning needs of specialist teachers, such as performing arts, visual arts, and physical education (PE) educators (Allison, 2013; Bowles, 2002; Hanson, Pennington, Prusak, & Wilkinson, 2017;). Specialist teachers often seek their own professional learning outside of, and in addition to, the district offered activities. Hanson et al. (2017) examined the possibility of using PE Central, a website commonly accessed by physical education teachers for professional growth support and valuable resources, as sanctioned professional learning. Participants in their study reported that the PE Central website provided valuable professional learning such as peer-reviewed resource materials and a forum for virtual collaboration with

other PE teachers. However, research results indicated that PE teachers' activity on the PE Central website was positively related only to provisional teacher change and negatively associated with student engagement and permanent teacher change (Hanson et al., 2017).

Broome (2016) surveyed 223 specialty teachers who teach in multi-age classrooms to discover their professional learning needs. Closed-ended questionnaire responses and open-ended survey replies provided for both descriptive statistics and qualitative data. Broome found that arts educators who teach in multi-age classrooms preferred professional learning opportunities specifically designed for their subject area. Also, survey responses revealed that the highest priorities for professional learning needs are as follows: organizational strategies, collaboration with colleagues, assessment, integrated curriculum, collaborative student work, research, and thematic instruction (Broome). Suggestions for effective, specific professional learning included the development of affordable and credit-worthy workshops that educators could attend to increase collaboration and improve relevant teaching practices.

Allison (2013) developed a Model for Art Teacher Professional Development based on National Standards for Visual Arts Educators, published by the National Art Education Association (NAEA), which defines quality professional learning. According to Allison, it encourages teachers to reflect on self and practice, encourages teachers to clearly articulate their teaching philosophies, helps teachers link current art education research to classroom practice, shows teachers how to accurately document their teaching progress, and creates mentors. Professional learning designed by someone who understands the culture, attends to art teachers as artists, and possesses a clear connection to the work as an art teacher can support continued learning and increase art teacher effectiveness (Allison).

Campbell, Saltmarsh, Chapman, and Drew (2013) conducted a collaborative ethnographic study to explore the implementation of ‘non-traditional’ learning spaces at three newly-built primary schools, and to understand the professional learning needs of teachers in these schools. Classroom observations and interviews with teachers and principals were conducted to gather data regarding their experiences in professional learning, opportunities for collaboration, and systems for support pertaining to using flexible learning spaces. Findings suggested that successful professional learning communities focused on gradual, effective change, shared teacher leadership, and collegial conversations to use one another’s challenges and failures to grow (Campbell, et al., 2013). Teachers must build trust and feel confident enough within their PLC to confront failures and recognize them as opportunities to grow together.

### **Professional Learning of Music Educators**

Professional growth for music educators is acquired in a variety of ways at different stages in their career and usually measured by student outcome results (Hesterman, 2012). Hesterman described how pre-service teachers rely on experienced teachers for their growth, while in-service teachers often seek music educator conferences and workshops for professional growth. This study suggests that veteran teachers serve as mentors to support new music teachers’ growth as well as sustain teacher retention and the profession of music education.

Bell-Robertson (2015) suggested that school districts find creative ways to allow music teachers to interact with one another, such as: pairing teachers for peer observation and reflective practice, offering release time for music teachers to observe and team teach across buildings, and allowing opportunities for participation in a subject-alike PLC across school buildings within a district, or even among multiple school districts.

Conway (2008) conducted a phenomenological study to examine the perceptions of experienced music educators in professional learning throughout their career. Nineteen experienced (5+ years teaching experience) music educators were selected as part of an “intensity sample” (intensely manifested the phenomenon of interest). Sampling criteria were as follows: presented at a state music conference, had been a cooperating teacher at a teacher education institution in the state, and had regularly attended local and national music professional learning events (Conway). Informal, unstructured interviews that were 60-120 minutes in duration were analyzed, indicating two substantial themes. First, music teachers reported their interactions with other music teachers were a powerful way to grow professionally. Second, music teachers described the changes in their perceptions throughout their careers. For example, they discovered the need to be proactive in finding effective professional learning and the realization that learning from and with others has great value. They also expanded the initial idea of what being a music “teacher” means to a list that included leader, mentor, friend, director, entertainer, role-model, etc. (Conway). Findings suggested that working with a mentor outside the district, talking with colleagues, soliciting advice from trusted colleagues, and learning from other music teachers in a continuing education class were more relevant and powerful forms of professional development than their experiences in district-sponsored professional development efforts (Conway, 2008).

Conway (2007) suggested that informal interactions with other music teachers are the most powerful form of professional development for music educators. Conway’s list of “informal interactions” includes the following: mentoring, collaboration, active research, portfolios, observing students and educators, supervising student educators alongside university

educators, writing grants, writing curriculum, writing action plans, and presenting sessions and research.

Conway et al. (2005b) asserted that based on the results from Conway et al. (2005a) arts' educators need both specific professional learning opportunities and a variety of types of professional learning opportunities. Conway et al. (2005b) reviewed the research regarding professional learning from survey results obtained by Music Educators' National Conference (MENC) and solicited the experiences of three music educators through personal interviews. Conclusions suggested that quality music-specific professional development is needed to improve music education in schools, music educators most prefer attending conferences and programs outside of their schools for professional development, music-related offerings are more useful than general teaching offerings, and opportunities for professional development should focus on music teaching and performance topics (Conway et al., 2005b). Similarly, Bowles (2012) found that music educators identified their top professional development needs as specific to their own teaching specialty.

Conway et al. (2005a) asserted that there is a significant lack of research on the professional learning for music educators and suggested that educational policies need to address the specific needs for music and other arts teachers. This would further emphasize a need for music teachers' voices in professional development design and decision-making. It would also connect overall teaching initiatives for all teachers to the unique needs to music teachers.

### **Music Teacher Isolation**

Most music teachers experience isolation, particularly those who teach part-time, in multiple buildings, multiple courses, in rural settings, and who teach highly specialized subjects (Hadar & Brody, 2010). The phenomena of teacher isolation and the need for content-specific

professional learning including subject-alike collaboration is not unique to music educators. However, music educators experience these phenomena in unique ways as they tend to be both highly specialized and the only, or one of few, teachers in their building teaching their subject. Davidson and Dwyer (2014) suggested that professional isolation, with many possible contributing factors, is a substantial problem for music educators that potentially leads to teachers' feeling a lack of confidence and support, which then may contribute to heightened burn-out rates for music teachers. Hesterman (2012) suggested that music educators' isolation can be eased by staying involved in the profession, which is key to staying invigorated in teaching, through finding connections and networks at conferences and workshops.

Music educators need to be included in district initiatives for teacher professional learning; they should both integrate research-based teaching practices into their teaching as well as keep up with music education best practices. Learning Communities have been broadly accepted as effective professional development for teachers to collaboratively focus on student learning and increase student achievement (Battersby & Verdi, 2015). Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005) conducted a study to discover if public school music teachers experience isolation, what the effects of music teacher isolation were, if there were differences in experience levels and school context in regards to feelings of isolation, what teachers reported as the causes of isolation, and whether music teachers perceived isolation to be a result of the subject they taught. In their quantitative study, Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005) surveyed 150 randomly selected music educators who taught in Illinois public schools. Results revealed significant differences in music teachers' feelings of isolation and the negative effects isolation had on their teaching practices. Based on their years of teaching experience, novice teachers (1-10 years teaching experience) and highly experienced teachers (more than 18 years teaching experience) reported

feeling high levels of isolation and responded that professional isolation had negative effects on their teaching practices. Mid-level teachers (11-18 years of teaching experience) responded with lower feelings of isolation as well as isolation having less of a negative effect on their teaching (Sindberg & Lipscomb).

Music teachers in another study (Sindberg, 2011) reported heightened feelings of isolation due to a variety of factors including those mentioned in the Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005) study, as well as diminished opportunities to connect with other teachers due to teaching schedules, lack of resources, lack of respect from parents, teachers, and students, travel time and physical classroom placement. Frierson-Campbell (2004) found that music teachers reported professional networks and professional development opportunities as being key factors to their successful teaching careers. Bell-Robertson (2015) also found that teachers who support each other can have a positive effect on music teachers' professional learning and sense of belonging.

Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005) conducted a quantitative study which included a survey with a Likert Scale and a section for comments and further explanation, to examine teacher perceptions, and possible causes, of professional isolation. In their analysis, Sindberg and Lipscomb concluded that the considerable number of comments written by respondents to the survey was evidence that professional isolation is an important topic to many music teachers and further suggested that additional analysis and qualitative research be conducted to gain more understanding of public music teachers' specific experiences.

**Physical isolation.** Teachers tend to experience isolation as they work alone in a space with students. Music teachers are apt to experience heightened levels of isolation as they are often the only music educator in the building and music teachers are sometimes hired to teach in multiple schools (Harrison, Ballantyne, Barrett, & Temmerman, 2007). Ballantyne (2007)



described a contributing factor of physical isolation as a music teacher's classroom, or rehearsal space, being placed far away or separate from other learning areas as a logistical necessity to alleviate the noise, produced in the music room, from bothering other classrooms or events in the school building. Sindberg's (2011) research revealed teachers' perceptions that the distance of the music room further isolated them as many people who walk through classrooms, including the principal, physically miss the music room. Additionally, music teachers often meet with their students less often than other classrooms and are left out of common planning time, which further increases the feeling of isolation; no other teacher in the building or district shares a similar schedule or situation (Bell-Robertson, 2015).

**Psychological isolation.** The feeling new music teachers report of being completely alone in their pursuit to teach is compared to being a one-man band or being thrown in the deep end and forced to sink or swim (Ballantyne, 2007). Davidson and Dwyer (2014) asserted that teachers who report feelings of physical isolation also suffer from psychological isolation as building relationships and receiving feedback reduces stress. Sindberg (2016) studied music educators in a researcher facilitated PLC as they collaborated to implement Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance (CMP). Sindberg's data suggested that "working together made a difference in sustaining their efforts while navigating emotional aspects of this work" (p. 9).

**Professional isolation.** Physical and psychological isolation contributed to a lack of professional development opportunities within the school; researchers agreed that professional isolation is a phenomenon that uniquely affects music teachers due to physical, psychological/emotional/social, and professional isolation (Davidson & Dwyer, 2014). Contributing factors to music teacher isolation are a lack of administrative instructional support

(Eros, 2013), heavy workloads and scheduling (Sindberg, 2011), assignments to multiple buildings (Sindberg, 2011; Ballantyne, 2007), and the lack of time to collaborate with colleagues (Battersby & Verdi, 2015).

When a teacher is the only music teacher in a building, they are often assigned a schedule that accommodates all students in the school, frequently leading to short class periods with very little time in between class meetings (Sindberg, 2011). Additionally, music teachers' schedules and workloads promote feelings of isolation when they have large numbers of teaching periods, often of several different specific course contents and grade levels (Battersby & Verdi, 2015). Sindberg (2011) found that music educators felt professionally isolated and frustrated by their perceptions that other teachers in the building lacked a value for music education beyond their own prep coverage and were not empathetic to the experiences of music educators.

When teachers are assigned to multiple buildings, their non-teaching time is devoted to traveling between buildings, preventing participation in professional collaboration or community building (Sindberg, 2011). Furthermore, when the music teacher is given a teaching schedule that purely serves the purpose of providing lunch and prep periods for other teachers in the building, their feelings of community and professional collaboration for common goals are diminished (Sindberg, 2011; Battersby & Verdi, 2015).

School administrators and other teachers will often unintentionally exclude music teachers from school-wide initiatives and growth opportunities (Eros, 2012). Data from Eros' (2012) qualitative study suggested a lack of administrative instructional support was offered to music teachers who appeared to have their classroom in order. Moreover, Eros (2012) found that a teacher felt taken for granted and perceived that she was overlooked by her administrator who observed her rarely and offered no reflection or professional development for her professional

growth. Additionally, Battersby and Verdi (2015) found that school administrators, in an effort to include all teachers in professional learning, assigned music teachers to other subjects' PLCs, in which the music teachers are often left out of the shared conversations. Administrators may lack pedagogical knowledge to specifically offer support to a music classroom teacher because music teachers are highly specialized and expected to not only grow as educators in general but also in the field of music education (Sindberg, 2011). Frierson-Campbell (2004) found that music teachers' distress over solely being the provider of prep time for 'real' teachers was supported by building administrators who indicated their belief that music teachers do not need specialized planning or in-service opportunities, due to their role in the building.

Ballantyne (2007) described the combination of the lack of pedagogical support for a new teacher and isolation as "praxis shock." Bell-Roberston (2015) asserted that music teachers are underrepresented in the current research on new teacher induction issues. Ballantyne (2007) described "praxis shock" as a result of physical and professional isolation and that the primary concern is that early career music teachers are offered little, to no, content-specific professional support in bridging the gap between the learning of becoming a music teacher and the realities of being a music teacher.

Ballantyne (2007) asserted a need for continued research on in-service teacher development and mentor programs for early career teachers. Music educators often have a wide range of professional responsibilities outside of the classroom teaching time, such as marching band and public performances (Eros, 2012). Consequently, teaching responsibilities in addition to public performance expectations of music educators increases their student-contact time commitments and decreases time to pursue professional collaboration.

Eros (2012) conducted a multiple descriptive case study to investigate how second-stage music educators (4 to 10 years of experience) described their experiences in professional learning and their perceived professional learning needs. Three second-stage music educators were purposefully selected to represent primary, middle, and high school levels of teaching as well as areas of music teaching specialty, such as general music, band, choir, orchestra, and drum line. Each research participant took part in background surveys, journals, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group interview which Eros (2012) coded and organized into the following four major themes: forms of professional development, professional development needs at different times, obstacles to professional development, and concerns about a lack of professional development. Findings suggest that effective professional learning can take place in many forms which includes formal workshops, advanced degrees and certifications, informal conversations, reflections, and writings. Eros found that educators' needs shift throughout their career. While beginning teachers may be more concerned with managing students and the classroom, more experienced teachers can focus on curriculum choices and their professional growth. Eros' study found two obstacles to professional learning: (a) the lack of 'problems' the music educators' had in their classrooms for which an administrator could provide support in order to sustain professional growth, and (b) participants pursuing their professional learning through graduate education to obtain an advanced degree would cost them their program, or even their job (Eros, 2012). Suggestions for second-stage music educators' professional learning include allowing teachers to take on leadership roles, supporting music teacher collaboration, and allowing for both formal and informal professional learning opportunities (Eros, 2012). Creative solutions to reduce professional isolation for music teachers must address these many unique challenges presented by the existing research.

### **Collaboration Can Alleviate Isolation**

The research reviewed affirms that music educators uniquely experience teacher isolation and the barriers inherent to teaching music in schools exacerbate the feelings of physical, psychological, and professional isolation. Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005) suggest that music teachers' experiences of isolation could be combated by creating the time, space, and facilitation of a PLC that provides a forum for student achievement focus inquiry, and support for professional practice and growth. Stanley, Snell, and Edgar (2014) suggest that music teachers can benefit from collaborative professional learning experiences by creating networks, contacts, and resources in which to evaluate, assess, and alter their own practice based on feedback; many professional learning structures are limited in musical content and duration, do not honor teachers' prior knowledge, and lack reflection opportunities.

Stanley et al. (2013) interviewed eight music educators across the United States to gather descriptions of their experiences in professional development (PD) that supported collaboration. Music educators' collaborative experiences included music-specific groupings, arts educator groupings, and multi-disciplinary groupings. Collaborative professional learning of any structure allows educators to form contacts and resources from which to draw support and solicit feedback for enhancing teaching practices (Stanley et al.). Additionally, Stanley et al. stated that frequently professional learning structures for music educators lack subject-specific content, de-emphasize prior knowledge, lack reflection opportunities, or do not support classroom change. Another researcher, Berry (2015) also found that collaboration among teachers is emerging as an effective tool to improve teachers' practice and that the focus needs to be not on obtaining new teaching skills, but rather on taking risks, embracing weaknesses, and changing habits of mind together.

This idea is further confirmed by Davidson and Dwyer's (2014) conclusions that suggested music teachers' participation in collaborative professional learning benefitted the teachers in the following ways: creating lasting networking relationships with other teachers, learning new content and repertoire that can be transferred to their classroom, learning new teaching strategies and techniques, meeting other teachers, "as well as a method of accumulating and building of their music pedagogy, methods, and resources" (p. 45).

Draves (2017) found that music educators who participated in a summer professional learning session, Designing Arts Instruction (DAI), found the most benefit in the collaboration the session provided. Teachers that participated in the four-day DAI session described the collaboration as a relief to isolation, emotionally supportive, and an opportunity to share ideas with one another. Music educators tend to have drastically different experiences and needs based on their teaching location, teaching experience, and teaching assignments which differ at varying stages in their career. Draves suggested a tool be developed that allows music teachers a voice in identifying their professional learning needs and the design of their professional learning experiences.

### **Professional Learning Communities (PLC) for Educators**

The term PLC is used to describe a wide variety of groupings of educators (DuFour, 2007). The PLC model is widely accepted as a compelling way to increase student achievement. However, effective implementation of the PLC model for beneficial school reform requires that the educators be mindful and intentional about the principles and goals of the PLC model (DuFour, 2007).

Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) suggest that teachers and their students benefit from collegial learning opportunities for teachers that are intense, rich, well-designed, and

content-rich to enhance teachers' understanding of a specific content and how to teach it to students.

Hadar and Brody (2010) found that teachers' individual growth was supported by the PLC group process where student learning was the focus and teachers contributed to creating a safe, trusting, supportive environment in which to grow together. Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman and Yoon (2001) found that teachers who work in learning communities are more likely to discuss teaching practices during professional learning time, share common resources and assessments, and create support systems across disciplines and grade levels.

Professional learning delivered in a short-term, workshop model to provide continued learning opportunities for teachers has shown to be less effective than sustained, collaborative learning among teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2009). Easton (2017) asserted that accountability enforced from outside a PLC does not often lead to the most effective learning community. Conversely, "PLC members will embrace strategic accountability that members see as something they do to themselves, for themselves and others in the learning community" (Easton, p. 44).

DuFour (2004) asserted that to successfully improve teaching and learning, a professional learning community should stay focused on student learning, be committed to collaboration, and be consistently attentive to results. In a PLC, the educators engage in inquiry to improve instructional practices together (Darling-Hammond, 2009). When teachers can collaborate ideas, reflect on results, and inquire together, their professional development work transforms from passive learning about theoretical practices to actively applying, assessing, and planning new relevant teaching practices (Hadar & Brody, 2010).

Teachers' conversations solicit reflection and feedback allowing for genuine opportunities for growth and change. Hadar and Brody (2010) found the teachers' participation

in a PLC, what they refer to as a Professional Development Community (PDC), enhanced discussion around successes and failures in the classroom which ignites inquiry, support, and growth. After participating in a research-facilitated PDC, teachers reported heightened feelings of motivation, clarity, efficacy in teaching, less isolation, and a commitment to the PDC group and process (Hadar & Brody, 2010). Research on the PLC, PDC (Hadar & Brody, 2010) or Professional Network (Davidson & Dwyer, 2014), suggested that an effective PLC has six components: (a) focus on learning, (b) collaborative culture (c) collective inquiry into best practice, (d) action orientation, (e) commitment to continuous improvement, and (f) a results orientation (DuFour & Marzano, 2015).

Carpenter (2014) conducted a qualitative study to explore perspectives of teachers and administrators in the implementation of PLC practices and concluded that school leaders must work with teachers to create policies and procedures that support school improvement, ensure positive school culture, and support effective professional learning communities that improve student outcomes.

### **Professional Learning Community (PLC) for Music Educators**

Although PLCs have not yet been widely implemented in the field of music education, using the PLC model for professional learning to increase music teacher collaboration could alleviate feelings of isolation and also have positive effects on the learning of students. DuFour (2007) asserted that PLCs are powerful mediums for making educational gains in student learning. When a staff shifts their focus to student learning and outcomes, teachers commit to collaborative inquisitive work to increase achievement and hold themselves accountable for the process and the outcomes. Collaborative professional learning not only empowers and supports educators, but also provides for consistency across a teaching staff in the teaching and



assessment of essentials skills for students (DuFour, 2015). Professional learning communities allow teachers to analyze data and use evidence to find solutions to the following questions: (a) Which students were unable to demonstrate proficiency? (b) Which students are highly proficient and would benefit from extensions? (c) Did one or more teacher(s) have excellent results that others in the PLC can learn from? and (d) Is there an area in which student results were low and all members of the PLC need support to teach this skill more effectively? (DuFour, 2015).

Interviews revealed that music educators valued involvement in learning communities with other music teachers and that their teaching had developed due to their participation (Moore, 2009). Battersby and Verdi (2015) found that collaboration among music educators allowed for systematic professional support, content-specific orientation, and alleviated professional isolation. They further advise that PLCs be supported and sustained by school districts and building administrators, and additionally advocate that the participation in a PLC satisfy the professional development portion of the music educators' evaluation.

Moore (2009) found that teachers who participated in a music teacher PLC reported they had professionally developed as a result of their participation, used strategies and tools discussed in the group, benefited because of their participation in the PLC, and had observed professional growth in other participants of the PLC. Sindberg (2016) found that the PLC model resulted in professional collaboration, emotional support, and growth in one school district's music teachers who participated in a study using the PLC model to implement Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance (CMP) into teaching practices. These themes were not only observed by the researcher but also reported by the participants as leading factors allowing the elements of CMP to be successfully implemented into the music teachers' practices and result in continued professional growth (Sindberg, 2016).

Additionally, Laor (2014) found that members in a community of learners, consisting of music educators, described the group as a source of professional and social support, providing strength and meaningful interactions for professional growth. Music teacher identity has been identified as a factor that impacts access to professional development (Frierson-Campbell, 2004). Furthermore, Frierson-Campbell found that music teachers' identities as musicians can be at odds with their identities as educators and that collaborating with other music educators to focus on student learning and working collegially with administrators can increase understanding of expectations and grow professional development.

A phenomenological inquiry to discover the essence of the lived experience of five women becoming music teacher educators revealed that the development of their identities as music teacher educators came as a result of interactions in their PDC. The group experience was found to be a safe place to discuss thoughts, concerns, and insecurities. Through group interaction, they were able to offer empathetic support and alternative views to one another providing valuable encouragement throughout their development (Pellegrino, Sweet, Kastner, Russell, & Reese, 2014).

Professional learning communities, when implemented and maintained with guiding principles, offer valuable professional learning opportunities for educators. Research has shown that music teachers value the opportunity to reflect on teaching practices (Conway, 2008), feel reduced levels of isolation when allowed the time and support to meet and share with one another (Davidson & Dwyer, 2014), and that professional development specific to music educators is the preferred offering that results in a positive impact on teaching practices and student achievement (Conway et al., 2005a). Sindberg (2011) found that music teachers' feelings of isolation are often a result of being excluded from staff collaboration time, either due to

workload requirements or unintentionally in the design of the PLC which often does not include other music educators.

Borko (2004) found that the benefits of creating learning communities which focus on student learning and outcomes, and that establish group norms for building trust and welcoming difficult yet transformative conversations around improving teaching are worth the time-consuming, sometimes difficult-to-schedule logistics of the learning community. Therefore, the barriers that challenge the creation of music teacher PLCs, to allow for collaborative and transformative conversations around specific teaching practices, are worth confronting in the interest of student achievement in music education. Music teachers' individual situations call for unique, creative solutions to offer equitable opportunities that improve teaching practices for all teachers.

### **Online Professional Learning Community (OPLC)**

Professional learning requires time, and professional learning communities require time together. Music teachers' unique, sometimes creative, teaching assignments and associated obligations present a challenge for finding the time and space to coordinate and facilitate face-to-face meetings (Battersby & Verdi, 2015). Davidson and Dwyer (2014) suggest online networks where teachers can virtually connect to discuss curriculum and teaching practices when face-to-face meetings are not possible. Bell-Robertson (2015) suggested that virtual communities of practice may be a practical alternative to face-to-face PLC meetings. Additionally, Battersby and Verdi (2015) suggest that the effectiveness of the PLC model for teachers in general can, and should, be applied to music teachers and that music teachers would benefit.

Upitis and Brook (2015) examined the use of the technological tool iScore which supports the use of technology for professional learning of independent music teachers as well as

for the teaching of private music lessons. Virtual collaborative webinars and workshops were found to be valuable for educators' professional growth as well as way to gain confidence in using the iScore tool in their teaching to communicate and give feedback. Upitis and Brook (2015) concluded that teachers need access to various forms of professional learning, including technological forms, in order to transform music education.

Online professional learning communities (OPLCs) are suggested as a solution to the barriers that music teachers experience, such as music teacher isolation, finding time in multiple teacher's schedules to meet, and finding a place for multiple music teachers to meet (Battersby & Verdi, 2015).

Harrison, Ballantyne, Barrett and Temmerman (2007) found that creating an online music educator's forum, or portal, increased peer collaboration regarding specific principles including: (a) a forum to share ideas and personal experience; (b) a place to upload news; (c) a forum for problem solving where novice and veteran teachers can connect; and (d) a place to allow for private conversations between participants which evolved from shallow interactions and logistical website concerns to rich, content-related conversations and ultimately resulted in increased collaboration and improved teaching practices. Eros (2013) concluded that music teachers reported frustration with the obstacles to valuable music educator-specific professional development and that teachers communicated different needs and preferences at different points in their career. However, most music teachers, regardless of teaching stage, reported appreciating the time and ability to connect and collaborate with other music teachers.

Bauer (2007) asserted that technology needs to be included in the further study of professional learning and its effectiveness. Bell-Robertson (2015) further supported the potential for the utilization of technology in the supporting and induction of novice music teachers through

online discussion boards, chat rooms, and group e-mail correspondence. Various forms of online interactions between music teachers in a variety of settings and with diverse years of experience allows for a forum to share emotions, common issues and struggles, and ask questions. In addition, fellow music teachers can review music, concert programs, field trip resources, lessons, and curriculum plans (Bell-Robertson, 2015).

### **Summary**

Professional learning trends, both in American Education and globally, have shifted to empowering teachers to collaboratively construct data-based learning opportunities based on their students' specific needs. When educators have the opportunity to continuously work in subject-specific teams they can support their own professional growth as well as one another's. Educators in unique teaching assignments or disciplines, such as specialists' teachers, often do not have teaching partners in their school building and struggle to find opportunities for collaboration. Researchers have just begun to explore the elements and culture of music educator-specific PLCs that include participants across a school district who teach in different buildings (Sindberg, 2016) and internet-based platforms (Battersby & Verdi, 2015). Solutions, based on research-based teacher learning best practices for increased student achievement, can be applied to music educators in creative ways to meet the unique needs these teachers have.

### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter explains the methods used to conduct this study. I have included details about the goals of this study, participants, research design, data collection process, and human subject safeguarding. I also describe research ethics and potential contributions of the research.

I utilized a qualitative approach using phenomenological research methods to explore music educators' unique experiences in professional learning. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) described phenomenology as a common qualitative research approach to explore the experiences of an activity or concept from the perspective of a particular group. Furthermore, Randles (2012) asserted that phenomenology allows for rich descriptions, and a way of looking at perceptions of identity, of an individual's experiences in the field of music, and other fields, in which quantifiable assessments are not easily made.

#### **Participants**

This study focuses on the professional learning experiences of music educators who teach in Oregon public schools. Public school educators in Oregon are offered professional learning facilitated by their administrators during staff meetings, often in the form of full and partial days negotiated into the school year schedule. These can include early release days or late start days throughout the school year. In Oregon, school districts and administrators are given much autonomy in the design and delivery of professional learning for their educators.

There are additional professional learning opportunities outside of district-offered opportunities, such as subject-specific or non-subject-specific workshops or conferences. Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Oregon Education Association (OEA) offer a variety of tools and resources for professional learning, including partnerships with nearby colleges and universities.

Music educators can individually access music-specific professional learning opportunities, either online or in person, through the National Association for Music Education (NAfME). Additionally, NAfME has state affiliate organizations that facilitate additional workshops and conferences for music educators, such as Oregon Music Educators Association (OMEA). OMEA offers an annual music educators' conference for members of the organization; it supports professional learning opportunities for K-12, college, and university music educators. In Oregon, music educators who participate, or have their students participate, in any OMEA-sponsored event (such as all-state ensembles, solo and ensemble, league or state festivals, or any workshop or conference) must be a registered member of OMEA. OMEA offers leadership roles such as district chairs, conference managers, conference facilitators, conference performers, or conference leadership/administrator roles.

In this study, I investigated the professional learning experiences of Oregon public music educators who had pursued a leadership role in the 2018 OMEA conference. They were music educators who have pursued professional learning beyond that offered in their school building. I explored how they came to that role and what drove them to pursue professional learning outside of their school district. I inquired about their opportunities, if any, to collaborate. I further explored their perspectives of what makes professional learning valuable to them, and how they have experienced professional learning over the course of their career.

### **Phenomenology**

“Phenomenology tries to show how our words, concepts, and theories inevitably shape and give structure to our experiences as we live them” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 58). Qualitative studies conducted with a phenomenological approach allow for an understanding of the lived experiences of participants as they describe and interpret them.

Randles (2012) and Gay et al. (2012) further describe phenomenology as a common qualitative research approach which allows for rich descriptions and a way of looking at perceptions of identity of the individual experiences in the field of music, or from a particular group of participants' perspectives, in which quantifiable assessments are not easily made.

I explored the phenomenon of music educators' lived experiences in professional learning by conducting individual interviews with guide questions intended to solicit descriptions of valuable professional learning experiences. I inquired further for rich descriptions by engaging in conversation with participants based on their responses. Collected data was coded for themes in participant responses which informed an identifiable essence of participant experiences in professional learning. Although generalizability is not the objective in phenomenological studies, the "essences of the experiences" of research participants can be acknowledged to inform specific practices that can potentially be transferred to others in similar situations (Randles, 2012).

### **Sampling**

I selected research participants using purposeful sampling procedures. Creswell (2013) described purposeful sampling as intentionally selecting participants that "inform an understanding of research problem and central phenomenon of the study" (p. 156). In phenomenology, the goal is not to generalize results to a larger population but to capture in-depth descriptions of personal experiences in which connections among the research participants can be identified, potentially clarifying connections for readers. Realizing such connections can increase educators' understanding of the complexities in the experiences, enabling them to gain an appreciation for how individuals interact with social and structural influences (Seidman, 2013).



I used purposeful intensity sampling methods to select participants who were “rich with information and manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely” (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). This sampling method provided participants who had extensive experiences in professional learning for music educators, but not exceedingly so, such as designing, delivering, or researching professional learning themselves.

I most readily found these individuals through my association with the OMEA. Members have had the opportunity to get involved in the OMEA organization by performing or having their students perform, and by participating in the annual conference as a facilitator, presenter, manager, or leader. I selected a research participant pool from the OMEA conference program of music educators who volunteered for additional responsibilities in the administration of the 2018 OMEA annual music educators’ conference. Creswell (2013) advised “the participants in the [phenomenological] study need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon in question, so that the researcher, in the end, can forge a common understanding” (p. 83). Purposeful selection ensured a participant pool who represented music educators that had experienced the research phenomenon and could share personal stories of their lived experiences.

Forty-two music educators qualified within the parameters of this study. I decided to eliminate the educators whose only role was presiding a session at the convention in order to enlist those educators who had dedicated more time and effort into their role at, or in preparation for, the conference. This decision resulted in thirty educators remaining on the list of possible participants. I then generated a list of twenty possible participants, and began by reaching out to ten participants with an email invitation. I invited participants to join this research project by emailing personal letters explaining the research study, the purpose of the research, the method

of the research, and how I would use the results of the research (see Appendix A). I outlined the participants' role in the research, my role in the research, and the time commitments required for the interview process should they choose to join the study and become a participant. After invitations were extended for one week, the first round of ten invitations to participate in my study did not result in any responses. After one week with no replies, I sent a follow-up email to inquire about each possible participant's consideration and offer an incentive of a \$10 Starbucks card for their time and contribution to this research project. The follow-up email is in Appendix B. I secured two participants at that point. One week later I reached out to a second set of ten possible participants. Subsequently, I sent another follow-up email to the second set of ten music educators to incentivize and encourage consideration for my research study. This helped me acquire three more research participants. I then referred back to the list of possible participants and emailed three more music educators, and one week later sent a follow-up email. To this, I received no response. However, while attending an OMEA-sponsored event in April, a music educator overheard me having a conversation with a colleague and contacted me, wondering if he might qualify as my last participant. His name was not printed on the program but he did meet my participant criteria so he became my last participant, two months after my initial email. Ultimately, I interviewed six music educators. All of the research participants, including my two pilot interviewees, received a thank you note with a \$10 Starbucks card.

### **Research Design**

Using a phenomenological research approach, I collected data by conducting personal semi-structured interviews, recording written observations and personal reflections in a researcher's notebook and gathering participant-selected artifacts. I audio recorded each interview and sent digital audio files to be professionally transcribed in order to obtain written

transcripts. Written transcripts, my researcher's notebook, and notes from participant artifacts comprised the data set.

Research studies conducted to explore or find meaning in the experiences of teachers in their specific context are often pursued through qualitative methods (Randles, 2012). The qualitative studies indicated in the literature review often utilized phenomenology and case study as research designs. In nearly every study reviewed, regardless of the research methodology, some form of interviewing was used to gather data.

Upon approval of the research proposal, I obtained approval from the George Fox Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix C). To ensure that the interview questions elicited the information I was seeking, I then conducted two pilot test interviews with music educator colleagues in the school district where I currently teach as advised by my research committee. Once interview procedures and questions were refined and set, I began data collection with my research participants. For this research study, I interviewed each participant one time. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was audio recorded using a Zoom recording device that allowed for digital downloading of audio files. The audio files were uploaded to Verbalink for professional transcription. I then coded the written transcripts to find themes in the data.

### **Data Collection**

In qualitative research, interviews are a common method to generate and gather data in order to illuminate a phenomenon (Turner, 2010). I collected data by keeping a researcher's notebook, collecting artifacts, and conducting personal interviews utilizing semi-structured questions, with six music educators who teach in Oregon public school districts (see Appendix D).

I conducted one interview with each participant in the location of their choice to increase convenience and personal comfort for the participants, which was important to me. The interview locations ended up being either at the school in which they taught or a local café or coffee shop. Interviews conducted in classrooms or offices during hours in which students were not present provided a quiet and secure environment for audio recording each participant's interview. Café and coffee shops were a little bit louder but still provided a comfortable and secure environment for the interviews.

**Interviews.** Interviews conducted in phenomenological inquiry must focus on descriptions of a *lived experience* rather than any assumptions, theories, and interpretations of the phenomenological question (Van Manen, 2014). Laor (2015) conducted semi-structured interviews and questionnaires at different points in her research to gather participant perceptions during and after the two-year study. Also, Hadar and Brody (2010) collected data in two phases, the first phase included semi-structured exploratory interviews based on participants' experiences and understanding of the PDC they had volunteered to join, and the second phase included semi-structured interviews, group interviews, reflective writing, and a final written report about their overall experiences in the PDC. Personal interviews can offer in-depth, rich narratives from participants' experiences that can inform an understanding around a phenomenon.

In a research study, interviews can take place spontaneously with little structure or can be quite structured with planned questions to produce the same information from each respondent (Turner, 2010). Turner suggested that less structure in an interview may allow for more genuine conversation and natural interaction but that the responses may result in inconsistent results. In addition, Turner suggested that interviews conducted with more structure, through the consistent

wording of the questions, can produce similar data across research participants while still allowing for elaboration and follow-up questions. The participants in this study were asked questions with consistent wording to elicit comparable data.

Interviewing provides an opportunity to gather in-depth information that cannot be acquired simply through observation. It also produces a plethora of data. Gay et al. (2012) suggests three methods for collecting interview data: (a) note-taking during an interview, which can be distracting, (b) writing notes after an interview, a method in which the researcher risks forgetting important information, and (c) recording the interview either with video or audio technology, a method that allows the researcher to repeatedly access the interview verbatim. Recordings of an interview can produce large amounts of data when transcribed into written notes which can be analyzed (Gay et al., 2012). Personal interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed, photocopies of personal artifacts were obtained, and observations and notes were written in a researcher's notebook within an hour of each interview.

Phenomenological studies aim to convey results and applicability of a single phenomenon to those impacted by the phenomenon. Randles (2012) suggested that data gathered in a phenomenological study through interviews, conversations, discussions, observations, focus group meetings, and journaling be analyzed by finding common themes among data sets and individual responses. Randles (2012) found that qualitative research models allow for rich explanations of the lived experiences of teachers, and furthermore asserts that teachers' involvement in qualitative research contributes to genuine, relevant knowledge for the practicing teacher, and possibly for other teachers in the field. Thus far, research in the field of music education is most often conducted with qualitative methods and includes interviewing as a key method for data collection.

**Researcher's notebook.** I wrote observation and reflection notes within an hour of the conclusion of each interview to capture the context of the interview, including the participant's demeanor, the setting, physical characteristics of the participant, and any other unique observations about the interview.

**Artifact collection.** I asked each participant to bring an artifact to our interview that represented a valuable professional learning experience. Not every participant was prepared for this portion of the interview with a physical artifact and ended up just talking about a particular experience. Depending on the teacher's connection to the item, these artifacts potentially offered talking points in the interviews and served as pieces of evidence. Examples of an artifact included session handouts, books, and reliable resources acquired through professional learning experiences with colleagues. Conversations about each artifact were included in the interview recordings and I archived the artifacts by taking a picture or making a duplicate of the document. Significant findings that contributed to illuminating the experiences in professional learning for these music educators are discussed in Chapter 4 in the Participant Responses to Interview Questions, and artifact hard copies are attached as appendices.

**Interview questions.** Interview questions for a phenomenological study should be carefully crafted to gather relevant material about the lived experience under study, including descriptions and personal stories (Van Manen, 2014). Additionally, Van Manen cautions that interview questions which solicit perceptions, views, beliefs, and interpretations need to be avoided in phenomenological studies because the aim is to investigate the phenomena as ordinarily experienced, prior to any interpretation or theorizing.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) outline twelve essential aspects that characterize the qualitative phenomenological semi-structured interview: (a) Life World- the world encountered

in everyday life, independent and prior to explanations, (b) Meaning- understand the themes of the participants' lived world, (c) Qualitative- expressed in normal language, (d) Descriptive- describe experiences, feelings, and actions as precisely as possible, (e) Specificity- specific, not general situations and actions are described, (f) Deliberate naiveté- interviewer is open to new phenomena, (g) Focus- interview is focused on themes but not on opinions about those themes, (h) Ambiguity- clarify, as far as possible, (i) Change- may be a learning process for both interviewer as well as interviewee, (j) Sensitivity- different interview conditions require varying levels of sensitivity, (k) Interpersonal situation- the interview process is an interaction between two people, and (l) Positive experience- ideally, participants gain new insight into their own situation. I utilized these twelve aspects to approach and guide my personal interviews. I found deliberate naiveté, change, and sensitivity important aspects throughout the interview process as I wanted to ensure and maintain my openness to learning about others' experiences. I also wanted to encourage the participants to be open to learning from this experience as well as from their own reflections. Interview conditions required sensitivity to distractions, noises, and time constraints which I strove to remain aware of while conducting interviews.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research studies is an iterative process starting at the initial stages of data collection, continuing through the entire research process, and becoming the primary focus of the researcher as the data set is completed (Gay et al., 2012). Phenomenological studies aim to convey results and applicability of a single phenomenon to those impacted by the phenomenon. Turner (2010) asserted that regardless of the interview design, due to the flexible nature of interviewing, the data can be difficult to code and the researcher must develop a system to find themes among participant responses and interpret the information gathered.

At the conclusion of each interview, I sent an audio file of the interview to a professional transcription service to obtain written transcripts of each interview for analysis purposes. Using Creswell (2013) as a guide, I then used the following steps to analyze the written transcripts:

1. I first highlighted significant phrases, ideas, statements, or quotes that contributed to my understanding of the professional learning experiences of participants.
2. I generated a list of the significant excerpts.
3. Next, the list of significant excerpts was organized into “clusters of meaning” (Creswell, p. 82) or themes.
4. I then developed the themes into descriptions, both textural and structural.
  - a. The textural descriptions expressed what the music educators experienced in their professional learning and included quotes and specific examples discovered in data collection.
  - b. The structural descriptions illustrated how the music educators experienced their professional learning, including the settings and contexts in which their experiences took place.
5. Finally, I integrated the textural and structural descriptions to describe the “common experiences of the participants” (Creswell, p. 82) and presented the essence of the experiences with professional learning of these music educators (Creswell, 2013).

### **Positionality**

My experiences as a public-school music educator for the past thirteen years serves as an asset to understanding and interpreting the essence of participant responses within this study. I discussed my own personal lived experiences with professional learning throughout the research process to increase rapport with participants. Creswell (2013) described how, in phenomenology,



bracketing can be difficult as the researcher brings some experience and assumptions to the research phenomenon. And, although bracketing is used as a way to allow readers to learn about the researcher's experiences as well as evaluate whether the researcher's experience influenced the study results, in phenomenology the researcher's experience is considered to add to, rather than detract from, data collection and analysis.

In phenomenology, researchers cannot fully remove themselves from the any portion of the study but decisions to bracket out assumptions during data collection and analysis “serves to identify personal experiences with the phenomenon and to partly set them aside so that the researcher can focus on the experiences of the participants in the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 78). I tried to identify and bracket out any assumptions I may have had about participants' responses and personal experiences and listen to what was being reported. Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) discuss how being a member of the research population can be an asset but also create some confusion around the researcher's role. Being an “insider” in the research often promotes acceptance by participants which can produce data with more depth and cultivate trust and openness; this can result in an immediate common ground from which to start a relationship with participants. However, researchers who are members of the research population should be aware of role confusion, when the researcher is familiar with the research setting through her own experience, because participants may make assumptions about common experiences and fail to fully explain their experiences, assuming the researcher already understands the situation. Conversely, the researcher is also in danger of making assumptions about participant responses based on her own experiences (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). To avoid relying on my own assumptions during the interviews, I referred back to the twelve essential aspects that characterize the qualitative phenomenological semi-structured interview (Brinkmann and Kvale,

2015). I focused specifically on (d) Descriptive- describe experiences, feelings, and actions as precisely as possible, and (f) Deliberate naiveté- interviewer is open to new phenomena.

In my experience, professional learning opportunities are directed by the building administrators or district administrators during staff meetings, early release days, or full-day professional learning activities. As I have developed as an educational leader, I have increasingly pursued relevance and meaning of school district-led professional learning opportunities for my work and professional growth. I have also endeavored to share this with my colleagues in order to support professional growth of my arts colleagues in their work and growth. Collaboratively finding the ways in which staff-wide professional learning can be applied to our courses and professional growth is one way I have found to increase value for my own professional learning, and to support that of others.

I disclosed my own experience and potential for bias by articulating my connection to the research. And, I provided descriptions of the settings, activities, and movements of the participants to connect the reader to the characteristics of the interviews and participants.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I am a graduate student working to complete my doctoral degree and this research project serves as the final component in degree completion. I am also a music educator in a school district spanning two suburbs of the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area, which is similar to the school districts in which the participants in this study live and work. As a result, I had a vested interest in this research. I sought to gain insight into the experiences of other music educators' professional learning to find which experiences were identified as the most and least valuable. My goal was to investigate trends in effective professional learning for the broad field of education and find ways to increase value and meaning for music educators. I purposefully

interviewed music educators with who I did not have a personal relationship, but I did reveal my role and intentions for this research with each participant.

### **Research Ethics**

I obtained informed consent by providing a letter to each participant that included the purpose of my study, the sponsoring institution, and my contact information and signature lines for myself as the researcher and the participant. Two letters were signed to allow for both the participant and me to possess a copy (see Appendix E). In addition, participants received a verbal explanation for both their right to refuse to participate or terminate participation at any time and the details and process for how I would maintain confidentiality. I attempted to maintain awareness of participants' well-being in the research process and worked to ensure that participants knew their freedom to terminate participation in the research, and/or refuse any portion that challenged them beyond their comfort level.

I promised and maintained confidentiality in my dissertation by using general descriptive terms for each teacher that included identifiers excluding names, such as the district in which they teach, their teaching assignment, and/or the level they teach. I ensured confidentiality in my research presentation by holding the individual identities of the research participants in confidence and utilizing measures to ensure anonymity, such as the use of pseudonyms chosen by the participants.

I reduced the risk of harm to the participants in my research study by thoroughly articulating the expectations for participants' investment, including expected time commitments. I stored interview transcripts, audio recordings, field journals, and notes in both a locked file cabinet and password-protected digital devices. Any files or data that included participant names will be securely archived for up to three years concluding my dissertation defense. After three

years, I will personally dispose of any confidential files and data by shredding hard copies and deleting digital files.

### **Timeline**

The following is my projected timeline for this study:

- January, 2018- Proposal meeting and acceptance from George Fox University committee. Submission and acceptance from the George Fox University Institutional Review Board and the school districts involved in the study.
- February/March/April, 2018- Conduct one interview with each of the participants in the study. Collect field notes, artifact notes/observations.
- April/May, 2018- Code and analyze the data looking for emerging themes.
- June/July, 2018- Complete chapters four and five, modify chapters one, two, and three as necessary, and submit to committee for consideration.
- August, 2018- Oral defense

### **Potential Contributions to the Field of Research**

Educators who participate in effective professional learning practices are better prepared to meet the needs of their students and boost student achievement. Professional learning for music educators, and other specialist educators, is often approached in a variety of ways. Gathering research regarding the lived experiences of music educators' professional learning illuminated the valuable aspects of their professional lives. It also highlighted the potential barriers that exist in the current state of professional learning offerings for teachers' professional growth for meeting student needs, and boosting student achievement.

**Summary**

Randles (2012) argued that qualitative research models allow for rich explanations of the lived experiences of teachers, and furthermore asserts that teachers' involvement in qualitative research contributes to genuine, relevant knowledge for the practicing teacher, and possibly for other teachers in the field. The research I conducted to discover the lived experiences of music educators' professional learning included a qualitative approach with phenomenological research methods. I designed semi-structured interviews with individual music teachers to collect rich descriptions of the unique perceptions and experiences regarding professional learning. Ultimately, I developed and conveyed an "overall essence of the lived experience" (Creswell, 2013, p. 80) of these music educators' experiences in professional learning.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This study examined the lived experiences of six music educators in their professional learning throughout their careers. I explored participants' personal narratives about their professional learning experiences, both in and outside of their school districts, along with their perceptions on how important professional learning experiences have been to their growth as a music educator. Participants also shared about specific professional learning experiences that were particularly compelling. They did this through artifacts or memories of professional learning experiences. Within these interviews, teachers described opportunities for collaboration, details about funding for professional learning, challenges they faced with professional learning, and what advice they would give a school administrator wanting to best support music educators.

In this phenomenological study, I personally interviewed six music educators over the course of a five-week period. At the conclusion of each interview, I sent an audio file of the interview to a professional transcription service, verbalink.com, to obtain written transcripts of each interview for analysis purposes. Using Creswell (2013) as a guide, I used the following steps to analyze the written transcripts: I first highlighted significant phrases, ideas, statements, or quotes that contributed to understanding the professional learning experiences of these music educators. I then generated a list of the significant excerpts. Next, the list of significant excerpts was organized into "clusters of meaning" (Creswell, p. 82) or themes. I then developed the themes into descriptions, both textural and structural. The textural description expressed what the music educators experienced in their professional learning and included quotes and specific examples discovered in data collection. The structural description illustrated how the music educators experienced their professional learning, including the settings and contexts in which their experiences took place. Finally, I integrated the textural and structural descriptions to

describe the “common experiences of the participants” (Creswell, p. 82) and presented the essence of the experiences with professional learning of these music educators (Creswell).

This chapter introduces the participants in the study and reveals the themes identified through data analysis.

### **Description of Participants**

Participants had between six and twenty-six years of experience teaching music. Five of the six participants taught outside of Oregon at one time and offered descriptions about professional learning they experienced both in and outside of Oregon. These five teachers offered interesting comparisons to the professional learning they experienced in Oregon in contrast to their professional learning experienced outside of Oregon. All six participants had experiences in music education as a student themselves, outside of Oregon, which offered some unique perspectives on the field of music education in Oregon. The participants personally selected their pseudonyms which I used in this document when referring to them by name.

Table 1 provides demographic information about the six participating music educators in the study.

Table 1  
*Demographic Information about the Participants*

Name	Role in 2018 OMEA conference	Years of teaching experience	Current teaching role	States taught and experienced professional learning in
Connor	Ensemble Manager	23 years	High School Band	Washington, Oregon
Ray	OMEA Conference Coordinator, Ensemble Manager	26 years	High School Band	Texas, Oregon
Morris	Session Presenter, Ensemble performer	15 years	Middle School Orchestra	Ohio, Georgia, Kansas, Oregon
Sunny	Ensemble Performer	16 years	Middle School Band	Oregon
Karen	Session Presenter	24 years	Elementary General Music	Illinois (student-taught), Texas, Oregon
Gray	Ensemble Manager	6 years	Middle & High School Orchestra	Arizona, Oregon

The following section reports each participant's reflection on their journey of personal musicianship and the field of education. Each participant had complex stories that impacted their perspective on their professional learning experiences.

### **Connor**

Connor started teaching band 23 years ago in a small rural town in Washington where he taught for eight years. He taught both the middle and high school bands and team-taught fifth-grade general music with the choir director. He felt personally supported by his principal but



expressed his viewpoint that the band program lacked the necessary support needed to develop and sustain a program. While teaching in his first position, Conner felt physically and professionally isolated and ultimately sought other employment. Simultaneously, Connor enrolled in a graduate program which allowed him to continue to teach full-time while boosting practical teaching skills. He then accepted a high school band position in western Oregon, where he continues to teach today. Collaboration has always been a part of his teaching experience as he has had student teachers during many of his teaching years and has had other music educators both in his building and in the school district to collaborate with professionally.

Connor has worked as a technical and support personnel employee, serving as the audio-visual services equipment manager for the OMEA conferences for the last ten years. He was encouraged by his peers to get involved as a leader in the convention and has committed to a leadership role in that organization for at least the next four years.

### **Ray**

Ray started his teaching career as a high school band director in Southern Oregon, where he taught for six years. He then transferred to university athletic and music education teaching positions, first in Oregon for six years and then in Texas for two years. Ultimately, Ray ended up back in Oregon teaching high school band. He has been in the same district in western Oregon for the past twelve years where he has taught at two different schools. In his school district, the music educators have had several opportunities to collaborate across the district. Through this collaboration, music educators in his district developed the established music curriculum and scope and sequence from the primary school level to the high school level, which supports the success of his program.

Ray has the trust and support of his administration to pursue his professional growth in a way that is conducive to authentically directing the band program. For instance, he does not feel that school-wide initiatives are forced on his teaching but rather that his teaching already fulfills the initiatives. Additionally, his principal and the other teachers on his staff support the band program and they understand that support requires flexibility in what professional learning looks like for music educators.

Ray was prompted by his peers to get involved in OMEA conference leadership, which he has done for the past five years. He considers the OMEA annual conference to be the primary source of professional learning for music educators in Oregon. According to Ray, this is an important venue for professional networking, professional learning sessions, and performance opportunities and observations.

### **Morris**

Morris has a wide range of teaching and professional learning experiences from his 15 years of teaching across four different states. He had planned on becoming a performer rather than following in the footsteps of his father, who was an orchestra director, but ended up with both a jazz performance degree and a music education degree. In his graduate program at University of Kansas, he was prompted to research, write, and publish articles for journals. This opportunity gave him the skills and confidence to write and present sessions at state music conferences.

Morris started teaching middle and high school orchestra in Ohio. After four years, he and his wife, who also teaches orchestra, both worked for one year in Georgia. Finding that was not a good fit, they relocated to teach orchestra in a large district in Kansas for eight years. The poor teachers' salaries in Kansas encouraged Morris and his wife to relocate to Oregon to teach

in a large school district in western Oregon. Each relocation has been dependent on finding an orchestra teaching opportunity for both Morris and his wife, which has resulted in their teaching in large urban school districts. With the exception of his first position in Kansas, all of the districts in which Morris has taught have been large school districts. Morris believes that working in bigger school systems has offered him more opportunities for collaboration and more music-specific professional learning opportunities. When he taught in Georgia, the school district hired well-known musicians to lead music-specific professional learning sessions for music educators. Currently, he has music colleagues in his building as well as a network of music colleagues throughout the school district. According to Morris, this collaborative network supports his professional growth.

Morris believes that professional learning happens by getting to know people. You learn a lot by asking questions and watching other ensembles perform. Morris said, “I want to be seen as a source of information and inspiration” (Morris, 3-22-2018). He considers state music conferences a good venue to get to know people, both formally, by getting involved through attending and presenting sessions, and also informally, by socially getting to know other people in the field of music education.

### **Sunny**

Sunny waited until her children were in middle school before she completed her music education degree and obtained her first teaching job. This position was a middle school band job in a large school district in northwest Oregon, where she continues to teach. The courses have changed several times in the past 16 years and have included band, choir, ukulele, and percussion courses.

Sunny also started and directed an adult community ensemble. Now she performs in the ensemble instead of being the director. Additionally, she performs in a swing band, occasionally performs in two other local adult wind ensembles, has frequent student performances, and tries to watch live music as much as possible.

Sunny stays very busy with music performance opportunities both for herself and for her students. She believes it is important for music educators to remain active in music performance by playing in ensembles outside of their school. Sunny asserts that when staying active as music performers, music educators will increase their awareness of what it is like “on the other side of the podium” and decrease their talking from the podium, while increasing their empathy for the musicians in the ensemble. Sunny was recruited to get involved in the OMEA conference. Her ensembles have performed or she has presented sessions at the conference three times.

### **Karen**

Karen has taught primary general music for 24 years. Additionally, she has worked as a solo and ensemble accompanist, a general music textbook researcher for Silver Burdett, and a journal editor for *General Music Today*. She has taught in public schools as a teacher as well as at a private school as a preschool music specialist. Being able to decide what she is teaching and expanding her resume is so important to Karen that she has taken teaching positions with long commutes to avoid taking just any job.

Karen is passionate about professional learning. She is committed to seeking growth opportunities for herself to bolster her career in hopes of obtaining a university teaching position. She is also dedicated to the professional learning of others; she contributes by presenting sessions and giving workshops based on her successes and experiences. Karen was compelled to

get involved in the OMEA conference because she felt she had a voice and something to offer that the conference was lacking. She wanted to make it better for everyone.

Karen taught music in the public-school system in Texas prior to teaching in Oregon. She believes that her most valuable professional learning experiences were in Texas. From her perspective, the biggest difference between the two states, educationally, lies in the culture of professional learning. In Texas, the district's music curriculum starts in primary school and continues through middle school, and ultimately high school. All schools in the district align curriculum to ensure that students are experiencing the same instruction across the district. Additionally, all of the music educators in the district work together regularly to continuously develop and support one another's teaching practices. She felt supported by her school district and also felt like part of a team. In her experiences, music educators in Texas were offered music-specific professional learning on a regular basis. In reflecting on her Oregon experiences, she has not experienced any music-specific district-led professional growth. She believes that her principal considers her a singleton, and she expressed feelings of isolation in her professional learning experiences. In Texas, Karen was respected for being a music teacher, but in Oregon, she feels as though she is treated like a "second-class teacher whose role is to cover breaks for other teachers" (Karen, 4-10-2018).

### **Gray**

Early in his teaching career, Gray had the opportunity to participate in a mentorship program in Arizona. For the first three years of his teaching career, he was assigned a music-specific mentor who supported him in developing general teaching skills, such as: time on-task, different questioning tools and techniques, different forms of assessment, and strategies for showing evidence of teaching which included scripted lessons and set observations. He did not

realize until later in his career how exceptional and atypical this experience was. Not only did the experience support his beginning teaching skills, but it offered him a role model for mentorship and constructed a foundation of confidence for his current teaching and leadership.

Gray has been teaching for six years and feels that he is already taking on the role of mentoring. He moved to Oregon after teaching in Arizona for four years. He teaches middle school and high school orchestra in a large Northwestern Oregon school district and serves as the strings coordinator for the district. In his role as the strings coordinator, he collaborates with the secondary music coordinator and the elementary music coordinator about district issues. Together they work with administrators, facilitate recruitments, plan concert and tour schedules, coordinate teacher visits, and advance their ideas and agendas for the programs. He also has the opportunity to collaborate with other music educators in his buildings, namely the choir and band directors at the middle school and high school where he teaches.

However, despite the collaboration he experienced, Gray described feelings of isolation in his transition from teaching in Arizona to teaching in Oregon. He explained that when he moved to Oregon, he felt like he was “flying blind.” He has been able to rely on the retired teacher, whose program he now directs, for support but realizes that is not her job. Gray also explained how he has participated in a lot of administrator-directed professional learning activities that he believes have created barriers to his growth, due to ineffective execution and relevance to music educators.

Gray got involved in the OMEA conference when his colleague informed him she had volunteered both of them to co-manage the ensemble. He had already volunteered to listen to violin auditions and host the middle school Solo and Ensemble Festival, so he perceived that he “appeared to be someone who likes to do things.” He enjoyed collaborating with his colleague

throughout the process and felt that they had successfully managed the 2018 OMEA orchestra. According to Gray, the musicians had a great time; they were able to coordinate sectionals and the conductor enjoyed himself.

### **Thematic Overview**

Six music educators shared their personal experiences of professional learning with me. This study focused on exploring the professional experiences that promoted professional growth for these six music educators. Throughout the process of data analysis, I identified the following three themes: (a) Participants felt confident in knowing their learning needs for professional growth and were apathetic or resistant to professional learning opportunities offered by building administrators; (b) Participants viewed the observation of other music educators' work as important for their own professional learning; and (c) Participants in this study regarded meaningful professional learning that impacted their work with music students as self-pursued and self-acquired. The section that follows illustrates the three themes using specific quotes and examples from interview data.

#### **Theme One: Participants felt confident in knowing their learning needs for professional growth and were apathetic or resistant to professional learning opportunities offered by building administrators.**

Participants described their participation in PLCs, their experiences with a one-size-fits-all approach to professional learning opportunities, and transformative professional learning experiences they have participated in. Despite their common stories of insignificant experiences with administrator-facilitated professional learning opportunities, there were some reports of valuable, transformative experiences.

Professional learning activities directed by the district were regarded by Conner as “not really important,” however, he said he valued “the opportunity to learn from my peers, watching my peers, watching great rehearsal technicians, and then asking them questions on it, that has been great” (Conner, 3-20-2018). Morris agreed that professional learning has not been very important. He said, “In terms of [school] building stuff, you go and get your hand-out and you put it in a pile in case you need it later, but at the end of the year you end up recycling it” (Morris, 3-22-2018).

Ray described how his administrators encouraged the implementation of writing in all classes. He was unwilling to create a writing assignment, such as a review on a composer, just to make the students write in a band class. More authentically, Ray created an assignment based on the music they were working on in class. Students were prompted to write a response based on a music listening forum. He believed he was meeting the initiative as students were writing in band class in a way that was authentic to a musician.

Karen described several staff meetings she understood to be intended as professional learning, but had various agenda items such as sexual-assault prevention and addressing trauma. She also explained that much of her professional learning time in Oregon had been spent on “nuts-and-bolts” type activities such as general topics related to running a building or scheduling issues. In her experience, “professional learning” in Texas seemed to mean something very different. In Texas she participated in regular music teacher-specific meetings in which each teacher was expected to give a 15-minute presentation to peers and then give and receive feedback.

**Opportunities for collaboration.** Participants described school-wide initiatives to boost student achievement, increase equitable practices and access to programs, and the



implementation of interventions for struggling students as key ideas for professional learning that were delivered in staff meetings or designated teacher learning times. Teachers participated in activities to learn and implement new strategies and practices into their teaching, often by participating in a PLC. Music educators participated in PLCs in their professional learning experiences but felt they were unable to collaborate and achieve the intended purpose of the activity due to the ingenuine PLC grouping music teachers often experience. In other words, music teachers felt like collaboration efforts did not work when they were not grouped with teachers who teach the same subject as themselves. Connor explained, "PLCs in our district lumped the arts teachers into a 'community of misfits' that didn't fit into anybody else's basket" (Conner, 3-20-2018).

Gray described an extended professional learning activity in which the focus was to write department curriculum and standards that included essential learning tasks. His administrators grouped the band, choir, and orchestra teachers together. He felt that although the music courses were similar, they were actually quite different in technique and teaching approach. Gray believed that asking numerous subject areas to collaborate creates more hurdles, rather than a shared partnership. Gray stated, "It would be really great if the other middle school and high school orchestra teachers in my district and I--since we're the only two secondary strings teachers in the district--could meet for that PLC time, to collaborate about these ideas. Instead, we had to stay at our individual sites" (Gray, 4-23-2018). In his view, administrators had made efforts to support collaboration for music teachers but their efforts created "shallow work production" on the curriculum and standards task, due to the general nature of multi-disciplinary music teachers working together. In this situation, the lack of understanding or communication between

administrators and music educators about specific needs for professional learning created hurdles for their professional learning rather than support for their professional growth.

**One-size does not fit all.** Connor explained, "They [school administrators] always have to come up with something, and they're constrained by budget, and so lots of the time it's a one-size-fits-all thing. And, one size does not fit all" (Conner, 3-20-2018). Also, Gray explained how in his school district they are implementing Response to Intervention (RTI) to support struggling learners. He feels the strategies used to implement this initiative do not consider all courses and are geared toward math, English, social studies, and science rather than encompass all disciplines. He explained that the initiative of implementing RTI in his school was not the issue but that the execution of the approach for the professional learning of educators in his school was insensitive to the various disciplines taught within the school.

Participants agreed that professional learning facilitated by their school district administration did not feel relevant or significant to their professional growth, but rather that attendance and participation at these activities were expected obligations that were required. Sunny felt that her professional growth was primarily self-pursued, whenever and however she needs it. She spends so much time and effort assessing and addressing her professional needs that participating in professional learning activities, whether music-specific or not, is more about supporting others' efforts and "showing up". Sunny stated the following:

A lot of times our professional development things that are sponsored by the district are not super helpful for me, but I feel like it is politically important for me to show my face at them so that people know that we're on a team. It is like when you go to a staff meeting, even though you really know there is nothing for you at the staff meeting, or when the language arts teachers call you and say, 'Can you come and help grade papers

for the statewide assessment?’ That answer is always yes. And even though those teachers do not come and set up music stands for the concert, it is okay because I pull kids out all the time. I need that goodwill with my teachers. So, the professional development part [of my job] fits in the goodwill category with my colleagues (Sunny, 3-29-2018).

Gray described how he feels like his district likes having music programs because it makes their district look good. He reflected,

I am not really sure they're open to the idea of actually putting meaningful effort and work into it [professional learning for music educators], it's a lot of lip service and trying to make sure that we feel valued because they say that we're valued, not really because they are creating institutions and systems that help sustain our programs, if I am being completely honest (Gray, 4-23-2018).

The participants described professional learning experiences that included the implementation of initiatives for the whole staff, such as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), equity, and Response to Intervention (RTI). They explained how these initiatives are relevant to their classrooms and teaching approaches but further clarified how whole staff activities designed to implement these initiatives don't always apply or make sense to their specialized teaching. The participants agreed that a “one-size-fits-all” approach to professional learning is met with resistance and does not necessarily work.

**Maybe there is something there?** Despite the unanimous reports of insignificant professional learning opportunities being offered for the professional growth of these six music educators, two participants described school-wide initiatives that have impacted their approach to teaching. Sunny explained how in her school district they have worked on equity topics through

the book *Courageous Conversations* (Singleton, 2006) and that her perspective on building relationships with children has changed as a result.

Karen participated in an extended professional learning activity with Ruby Payne, the author of the book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne, 2005). This was a transformative learning experience that Karen continues to work on; she often refers to the book when she teaches about generational poverty to music educators.

Contrary to their explanation that school-facilitated professional learning activities had been insignificant, Sunny and Karen both reflected on their approach to working with students and how it has transformed their practice as a result of their participation in these professional learning offerings. Sunny and Karen also shared stories about compelling professional learning experiences directed by their administrators, suggesting that maybe there is value in some district-led professional learning for music educators.

**Music coordinators.** Music coordinators' can bridge the gap between district initiatives and music educators' needs. In each of the interviews the topic of a district-level music coordinator came up. Five out of the six participants had, or has had, a music coordinator who holds a district-level administrative job. A music coordinator, as described by participants, supports music educators, arranges professional learning opportunities for music educators, maintains rigorous hiring practices, holds music educators accountable for quality teaching, and advocates for the music program. Having a music coordinator ultimately communicates the value of music education within a school-district. Morris said,

Music coordinators are important. You need them. Districts that are successful have them. For districts that are just trying to keep it going, it's a lot harder when there isn't somebody with an office at central office to fight for you (Morris, 3-22-2018).

The presence of a music coordinator role in an Oregon school district is sparse. Many participants had experienced the supervision of a music coordinator in another state. The participants in this study agreed this was an important role for the field of music education, but that in the absence of a music coordinator, the music educators themselves need to be solicited for advice when making decisions that impact K-12 music programs.

Sunny was passionate about discussing hiring practices for music educators. She discussed the importance of soliciting music educators in the hiring process to alleviate the need to provide professional learning for the purposes of filling in knowledge gaps. Sunny suggested the book *Evaluating Teachers of Music Performance Groups* by David Doerksen (Doerksen, 2006) which supports non-musician administrators who suggest it as a resource for improving the hiring practices of music educators. Additionally, she mentioned that having a music coordinator could support both the music educators and the administration in improving decisions, including hiring and professional learning, regarding music educators.

**Theme Two: Participants viewed the observation of other music educators' work as important for their own professional learning.**

Participants described professional learning throughout their career as an evolution of seeking mentors to becoming mentors. Participants regarded both the process of becoming an adjudicator and adjudication itself as important forms of professional learning for music educators. Additionally, participants described how meaningful professional learning often involves going outside of the school district. And, participants provided an artifact from a professional learning experience that they found compelling.

Participants described instances where early in their career they sought to create a professional network of master teachers with whom to observe, communicate, and collaborate.

And later in their careers they explained how they supported the creation of professional networks and became a mentor for others. Morris stated, "The best professional learning is just to be available for people. Try to give guidance and advice. Try to go and seek guidance and advice from people who have done it before" (Morris, 3-22-2018). Karen, who feels compelled to present at OMEA so that other music educators, particularly younger teachers, have the opportunity to feel part of a community said, "We must provide proper role models for young teachers and student teachers for the future of the profession" (Karen, 4-10-2018). Karen reflected on her experiences, stating that as a beginning teacher professional, learning experiences were invaluable, but that as she has grown as an educator, she is able to think of the bigger picture, read research, and go back to her own experiences in teaching to build knowledge rather than rely on others to provide learning opportunities for her.

Gray also believed that experienced music educators have a responsibility to support and maintain the field of music education. He believed that "if you're an experienced teacher, and you've got a strong program, and great feedback and ideas, then you volunteer and share that. I know we're all busy, but we're only going to help create that professional learning community within ourselves if we volunteer and we help sustain and promote that" (Gray, 4-23-2018).

**Adjudication for professional learning.** Connor believes that adjudication is the highest degree of professional learning. He described how being an adjudicator/performance evaluator builds rapport and sensitivity with the state-wide rubric that benefits his own band program. Becoming an adjudicator requires individually enrolling, attending, and becoming certified in a course which could be considered professional learning itself. Once certified, an adjudicator earns their name on the "certified adjudicator list," which is referred to anytime a performance evaluator is required for a festival or competition. He added that adjudicators are held

accountable for the verbal, written, and numerical feedback and scores that they give as each festival or competition has at least three adjudicators whose scores and feedback should corroborate within a reasonable range. Having the opportunity to observe multiple ensembles and work with the performance rubric allows the adjudicator to know what is going on in the state.

Ray and Sunny also discussed the value of adjudication. Ray said, “Adjudication supports professional growth as when you’re offering feedback and assessment to an ensemble you’re also refining your skills to work with your own band” (Ray, 3-21-2018). Sunny echoed him when she said, “Adjudication workshops open up your ears to another level of what you’re looking for in your own ensemble” (Sunny, 3-29-2018). Directors who become certified to adjudicate become approved adjudicators and can be hired for Oregon School Activities Association festivals and competitions. However, according to Ray and Connor, there is a lack of support from administrators to obtain a substitute teacher that would allow them to pursue adjudication opportunities. Connor wondered, “How is formal adjudication different than English teachers grading writing assessments on the six strengths? And how do we train district administration that sending band directors to adjudicate is a valuable professional learning experience?” (Connor, 3-20-2018).

The participants regarded becoming an adjudicator and the adjudication process as a compelling professional learning experience. Participants assert that adjudication involvement qualifies as professional learning because certification, observing, assessing, and offering formative feedback for other ensembles requires a commitment to one’s professional growth. However, without support from administration, music educators cannot pursue adjudication.

**Going outside the school district for professional learning.** Participants described local, state, and national music educator conferences and festivals as an important part of their professional learning. Morris said, "when professional development is presented by the people who are your colleagues, who are doing it, it's a lot harder to be dismissive of it because it's your friends who are doing it. You're much more likely to be like if my friend is doing it, I can at least try it" (Morris, 3-22-2018).

Meaningful professional learning happened through music conference sessions or workshop attendance, collaboration with colleagues, adjudication, pursuing performance to increase personal musicianship, performing with student ensembles, and observation of other music educators. According to the participants, professional learning is most beneficial when they go outside of the school district in order to enhance their professional knowledge and skill.

Gray described a bowing workshop that he attended at an American Strings Teachers Association (ASTA) sponsored event in Arizona, facilitated by a well-known strings teacher associated with a large university. The bowing workshop provided a map and process for walking students through beginning to advanced bowing skills and knowledge. This professional learning experience provided memorable, valuable teaching skills as well as practical resources that Gray continues to use in his teaching.

Morris described his own 2018 OMEA session on working with young double bass players. From his perspective and experience being a bass player and an orchestra teacher, Morris felt there was a need for an accessible tool for orchestra teachers who often struggle to communicate and reach their bass players effectively. He has seen orchestra performances in which the ensemble performed well with the exception of the bass player, who seems to have missed out on valuable learning opportunities. It frustrates Morris that double bass students'



learning needs are not being addressed. However, he was inspired to produce a resource for educators to access in order to meet the specific, unique needs of double bass students. He created a handout (see Appendix F) and presented a session at OMEA entitled *Tips and Tools to Communicate with Young Bass Players*. The session addressed the specific handling, sizes, playing position, bow hold, hand position, scale performance, necessary equipment and accessories, literature, and helpful website resources specific and unique to double bass teaching and playing. He said, “whether it’s your beginners or high school kids, they’ve got everything they need. You can communicate with them and give them some real information, hopefully” (Morris, 3-22-2018).

Participants have attended several activities outside of the school district for professional learning. These included, but were not limited to the annual OMEA conference which is a four day in-state conference, several out-of-state conferences such as American Strings Teachers Association (ASTA) conferences, National Association for Music Educators (NAfME) conferences, and other state conferences. In addition, some have attended regional conferences such as Western International Band Clinic (WIBC) the annual MidWest Clinic, and All-Northwest biennial conference. They also attended workshops pertaining to how to conduct a workshop, bowing, and literature reading. Some have also taught outside of their school at summer band camps; they view these opportunities as ways to collaborate with other music educators and learn with and from one another.

**Reliable artifacts.** Ray reflected on a session he attended on conducting, led by an out-of-state All-State ensemble director from a large state university, at a past OMEA conference. The conducting method was based on the Laban method of dance. The Laban method of conducting and dance, according to Ray, was based on organic and natural gestures used in life.

This method suggested mimicking natural motions, such as wringing a towel for sustained music with crescendos or decrescendos, or skimming one's hand across a pool of water for light, legato, flowing music lines. Ray felt these conducting techniques addressed his professional needs at a specific time in his career. He added that he has not only drawn from this method for his own conducting techniques, but also to teach other band directors to develop their conducting techniques. Ray provided the session handout from the Laban method of conducting and dance (see Appendix G).

Gray described an artifact called *The Daily Warm-ups for String Orchestra* by Michael Allen (1993), <https://www.halleonard.com/product/viewproduct.action?itemid=4625100>, as a reliable staple for accessing techniques and learning concepts for teaching students. He had asked many orchestra directors for one daily activity they would recommend for orchestra teachers to help a group sound "really great." He realized a pattern in the responses from orchestra directors whom he regarded as having good programs. The orchestra ensembles that sound great used the *Daily Warm-ups for String Orchestra*. Gray has continued to discuss the use of these warm-ups with other directors and perceives this artifact as a reliable professional learning artifact thus far in his career.

Sunny described the essential artifact for her professional career as a handout generated by a former high school band director who had gained recognition in the state OMEA organization. She received the handout, which included warm-ups, major scales, and arpeggios, at a clinic she attended while in graduate school. She explained how there have been some adjustments and additions since then, but she still uses these warm-ups every day.

Karen described a yearlong workshop working with Ruby Payne, the author of *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. She participated in this professional learning experience

while working in a school district in Texas. Karen described this school district as very segregated with multiple generations of poverty and wealth that required multiple understandings and skill sets for working with these populations. She explained how this workshop transformed her approach to working with students and families as she had developed an understanding for their values. Karen stated, “I may be their partner, not [to] overload [them with work], and I learned that my values have a place in my life and it’s not for me to put any of those children down” (Karen, 4-10-2018). She continued by describing interactions she had witnessed when teachers were frustrated over a student’s seeming inability to know something important. But she goes on to point out that some things which may seem obvious to her might not be valuable knowledge to students. For instance, she described how we teach students not to hit at school. However, in her school district children may be taught at home to hit in self-defense if possible intruders (e.g., drug dealers) enter their homes. So, we may teach that hitting at school is not acceptable, but hitting for self-defense may be a life-skill for those children who are taught this at home; it is a different value set, but not necessarily wrong. Additionally, Karen has used Ruby Payne’s book and information from the workshop to facilitate professional learning for others.

These identified artifacts were tools the participant educators had collected through professional learning; they were memorable, transformative, and continue to be useful in practice. In addition, these artifacts were things participants had shared with colleagues.

**Theme Three: Participants in this study regarded meaningful professional learning that impacted their work with music students as self-pursued and self-acquired.**

If the teacher wants to be good, there are always ways that they can develop knowledge if they have the drive. The person has to be motivated because they can't just get it from

their college education, or a conference. It has to be constant. It's a constant quest for knowledge (Ray, 3-21-2018).

The participants agreed that professional learning to fulfill the requirements of their teacher licensure renewal and expectations of their administration is different from professional learning experiences that are meaningful and transformative to their teaching practices.

Participants described their motivation to seek professional growth regardless of recognition or reimbursement. They explained the necessity to constantly seek new knowledge individually to improve teaching practices. And, participants offered advice for school administrators to best support the professional learning of the music educators in their schools.

**Intrinsic value of being better music educators.** Ray explained how he had not been able to rely on anyone else to provide him with professional learning, and described his professional learning as an intrinsic journey to seek growth. He believes music educators have to want to grow, and need to create a professional network of colleagues and reliable resources from which to constantly draw.

Karen feels passionate about professional learning both for her own growth, as well as a need to contribute to the learning of others. She said,

My principal is wonderfully supportive, but the only reason to present at OMEA or be on this [journal editing] board, neither of which I get paid for, is to improve myself for my future and to contribute to the profession (Karen, 4-10-2018).

Sunny agreed that her professional growth was a result of her efforts to grow. She said, I know where my weaknesses are, so I will call somebody. I will do one-on-one with them. I'll have them come to my school. I will seek out how to fill the holes in my

knowledge; they're a little more specific [than district offered opportunities] (Sunny, 3-29-2018).

She described how she hires professional musicians to come into her classes on a weekly basis to conduct sectionals with each section of the band. She also participates in an ensemble as a musician rather than the director. Observing other music educators, musicians, and performing “on the other side of the podium” provides the essential professional learning that she needs to grow as a music educator.

**Seek constant growth.** Themes across participants’ remarks revealed their commitment to ongoing growth as a music educator. Ray said,

This is year 26 [teaching band] for me and I still feel like there's a lot more for me to learn, constantly. I'm always seeking out great new pieces, new strategies, watching teachers teach. I will use that little saying, or tool for the toolbox. I'm always seeking out new information and it's kind of never-ending, you know, our professional development (Ray, 3-21-2018).

Ray described the professional learning activities he has pursued and believes they were important for others as well. He referred to such activities as observing master teachers, attending adjudication workshops, and ensuring a strong pedagogical knowledge base for teaching all of the instruments. He referred to professional learning as important and valuable to his growth as a music educator and believed that “the motivation of the teacher to seek out growth and knowledge constantly through networking is number one” (Ray, 3-21-2018). But for Ray, the most important area of professional growth was the never-ending quest for new information.

Sunny reflected on her performance in ensembles on non-primary instruments and her ever-expanding musicianship as being the most important professional learnings over the course of her career. She also described how throughout her career she had gained the confidence to not only know what it is she needed for professional growth, but also to walk out of a session when she realized her time would be better spent at a different session.

Gray experienced a mentorship program early in his career which he described as significant in his professional growth. He explained that when he relocated to teach in Oregon he felt like he “was flying blind for his first year.” Although he had access to the retired teacher whose position he had taken over, he felt that her role was to be retired and not to acclimate him to the job. He describes the evolution of his professional learning as taking what he learned from these experiences and then taking on leadership roles and mentoring himself so he could continue the cycle of supporting others. Gray stated, “If I had not had any professional learning, I would be a terrible orchestra teacher. I wouldn’t have as many resources and tools to help tackle the billions of different problems we see in students” (Gray, 4-23-2018). Gray credits his willingness to take on leadership and mentor roles now to those experienced teachers who modeled those roles for him early in his career. Additionally, he explained how the networking and evolution of mentee to mentor in the field of music education was important for his professional learning.

Conner reflected on how he knows more now and thinks differently than he did five years ago. He also realized it can be problematic for educators to “get stuck in the mud and think you already know what’s going to happen” (Connor, 3-20-2018), but he pointed out that he appreciates the importance of allowing himself the freedom to learn new things, change his opinion, and think differently in the future.

Morris reflected on the changes in his professional learning based on where he was teaching. In Georgia and Kansas, Morris' experiences included meetings with music educators, collaboration with strings teachers, and workshops with district-hired experts in the field. He described his move to Oregon as being less fulfilling to his professional learning as the commitment to specifically-tailored professional learning experiences for music educators have been limited.

Karen articulated that her professional learning has transformed her from being the receiver of learning opportunities to the provider of learning opportunities. She said, "What am I curious about now, and what don't I know about?" (Karen, 4-10-2018). She described how she is in a different place now. She can see things in a bigger picture and apply things she learns to her practice.

**Self-driven and self-funded.** Participants sought professional learning individually through outside-of-the-district venues, despite the lack of funding to support these necessary professional growth activities.

Some of the participants are given a dollar amount by their districts, allotted either yearly or over two or three years to spend on professional learning. This allows for educators to attend yearly conferences, or save funds for a more expensive conference such as the Midwest Clinic which would require airfare, conference fees, hotel fees, food, and transportation. However, participants explained that the allotted district funds were expected to be used for the annual OMEA conference fees and associated expenses. The district's allotment does not fully cover the OMEA fees and expenses and requires a personal financial contribution. This does not allow the participants to participate in any other professional learning covered by the school district. And, although OMEA is a source of professional learning for educators, it is also a requirement that

any teacher who has students performing in any All-State ensemble be present of the conference and be available for their students. Participants expressed that their professional learning was primarily self-funded even though their school districts may technically contribute to a portion of the annual expenses. Additionally, some of the participants work in school districts that do not contribute any funds to professional learning outside of the district. Gray expressed concern about the justification for his school district to send a group of teachers out of state, expenses paid, to a workshop on RTI, yet were unwilling to supply a substitute teacher and pay for him to attend OMEA.

One exception to participants' funding themselves is the way Conner's administrator pays for him to attend OMEA. His administrator even pays for the students' fees to attend OMEA in light of educational equity. Conner understands that student athletes' fees, busses, lodging, and food is paid for by the school district and that his administrator equitably distributes funds to student musicians and their coaches (teachers) accordingly. However, this support and practice is not uniform across his school district. The situation is due to the unique principal that Conner currently has.

**Self-driven and meaningful professional learning does not always qualify for professional learning requirements.** Participants described a variety of professional learning experiences. These experiences included traditional professional learning activities such as attending a session or workshop at a music educators' conference. However, these experiences also included non-traditional professional learning experiences, such as the process of becoming a certified adjudicator, the work of adjudication itself, performing in ensembles to maintain and grow personal musicianship, and the observation of other music teachers. The participants described how the most meaningful and genuine professional learning, for them, often does not



qualify as professional learning as defined by their district administration, or to renew their teaching license.

Ray described important, but “not on the record” professional learning such as “studying new music for our ensembles, score study, and keeping up with the research on best practices for program management and the best way to use technology in your music program.”

Conner and Morris explained how getting out of their classrooms, where they are alone with their students, and being able to socialize with other music educators at OMEA was an important piece of the conference. Conner explained how he regards the most valuable portion of OMEA to be the rehearsals. He said, “I think we as teachers can learn the most by going and watching the honor group conductors work with the musicians” (Connor, 3-20-2018). He further elaborated by suggesting that OMEA have demonstration ensembles so music educators could observe great directors working with their bands.

Karen described her current professional learning as “kind of me, myself, and I” (Karen, 4-10-2018). She explained how she considers the recent books she has read as an extension of her professional learning because the books grow her understanding of the arts. The books are *Apollo’s Angels* written by Jennifer Homans (Homans, 2013), a New York City ballerina, which depicts the history of classical ballet from the perspective of a performer and *The Life and Times of Mickey Rooney* (Lertzman & Birnes, 2015), which in Karen’s words, was “a fascinating explanation of Hollywood and that musical era.”

Reading non-fiction books about the arts, spending time with music educators, observing rehearsals, researching best practices, and studying music are examples of important professional learning that impacts the growth and practice for these music educators beyond what would be considered professional learning for licensure renewal or by administrators.

**Participants' advice to administration.** The participants acknowledged that administrators do not understand, or maybe even know how to best support their music educators. They discussed advice they might offer their administrators in terms of conference travel and opportunities to observe other master musicians.

According to Morris, the most effective way to support music educators is to “send us to conferences, pay for my substitute teacher and pay the expenses” (Morris, 3-22-2018). He added that if administrators spent more time in music classrooms, they would see the good instruction going on that includes authentic assessment, a lot of feedback, different learning styles being addressed, and the production of a final performance that ultimately reflects the teacher and their effectiveness.

Ray recommended that administrators allow and support two to three music-related professional learning activities, such as conferences or workshops, every year for every music educator in the district. Additionally, he suggested each music teacher, for at least the first ten years of their teaching career, be allowed three days per year to observe master teachers teach. Although this would require substitute teachers and possible transportation expenses, in his view, the professional learning benefit for music educators would be worth the investment.

Sunny suggested that administrators solicit the advice of music educators in hiring practices. She said, “In the absence of a district-level music coordinator, it is important to instill rigorous hiring practices. Otherwise you end up with a wide variety of teaching ability, then you have educators that have a lot of holes in their knowledge, and then professional learning needs to be tailored to the individual teachers.” She added that hiring highly qualified music teachers needs to be treated as important as hiring other highly qualified teachers.

Conner suggested that music educators could come up with a plan to watch other music teachers. He believed that “peer mentoring opportunities in music education are invaluable” (Connor, 3-20-2018). Conner discussed how music educators tend to know each other because of state conferences and other events. He recognized that music educators across the region may know one another more than other teachers, and views this as a resource. He asserts that administrators interested in their teachers collaborating and observing should support their music educators in these endeavors.

Gray suggested that administrators ought to spend time in music classrooms. In his experience, administrators rarely entered his classroom and when they did there was little substantive follow-up, if any. He recommended that administrators “come into the music classroom, observe actual teaching practices, and evaluate them” (Gray, 4-23-2018). Gray asserted that it is not effective or evaluative to simply congratulate a music teacher on students’ performance successes at ensembles or solo festivals and competitions.

Karen responded that administrators must provide meaningful professional learning for their music educators. She recommended that administrators “set aside time and resources for interesting topics that they [music teachers] need to know; otherwise they will be stunted” (Karen, 4-10-2018). She said, “If you do not provide professional learning opportunities, then your teachers are operating under ideas that they acquired, what, 10, 20, 30 years ago? And can you tell me that school today is the same as it was 30 years ago?” (Karen, 4-10-2018). She advised that a consistent stream of professional learning is necessary so it becomes engrained in their profession.

## Summary

Each of the participants had a unique perspective and different passion for their work in music education. These six music educators took personal initiative to seek their own professional growth, sacrificed their time and money beyond the expected duties of their contracted job, and participated in a professional network of music educators that supported not only their own professional growth, but that of others.

Participants described a variety of experiences within and outside of their school that included the following: weekly subject-alike PLCs that music educators were grouped with other elective teachers, district-wide Response To Intervention (RTI) implementation, book studies, district-funded clinicians for music educators in Texas and Georgia, district-wide scope and sequence development, annual state music educator conferences, annual national music educator conferences, adjudication, personal performance, being used as an example for how to teach to a variety of learners, and district-wide PLCs by discipline. Participants' descriptions of their experiences included both school-wide and self-initiated professional learning. These participants expressed sentiments that the most compelling and positive professional growth experiences they had were self-initiated and included collaboration with educators who teach the same subject.

The essence of the lived experience of these Oregon public school music educators who teach in K-12 schools with regards to professional learning is as follows: These music educators were intrinsically motivated to seek growth and create networks of trusted colleagues to work with and observe for continued growth despite the possibility that their time and efforts were not always recognized as professional learning, and their efforts were not always funded by their school districts.

Chapter Five provides discussion of these results as well as implications and recommendations for practice and for further research.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This phenomenological study was conducted to discover the professional learning experiences of music educators. Six K-12 public school music educators who participated in a leadership role in the 2018 OMEA conference were interviewed to gain insight into their unique experiences. At the conclusion of coding the data, I determined the following three themes: (a) Participants felt confident in knowing their learning needs for professional growth and were apathetic or resistant to professional learning opportunities offered by building administrators; (b) Participants viewed the observation of other music educators' work as important for their own professional learning; and (c) Participants in this study regarded meaningful professional learning that impacted their work with music students as self-pursued and self-acquired. The following section offers findings and potential implications, as well as provides recommendations for both practice and further research.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Through interviewing I was able to learn about the professional learning these six music educators had experienced. Additionally, I was able to collect artifacts that represented important tools for continued learning and observe the participants as they reflected on their experiences and responded to interview questions.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) identified seven essential elements for designing professional learning for educators. These seven elements are as follows: professional learning is content-focused, incorporates active learning, supports collaboration, uses models of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, offers feedback and reflection, and is sustained in duration. Participants described meaningful often self-pursued professional learning experiences that supported these seven elements. Additionally, participants' concerns for lack of meaningful

professional learning in their school buildings are validated in Darling-Hammond, Hylar, and Gardner (2017) who discussed administrative decision making regarding professional learning approaches, content, and implementation that disregards an understanding of what educators' desire or need.

Participants personal stories revealed that they wanted to feel valued professionally, that they wanted to work with other music educators in authentic ways, and that the content of professional learning presented to the whole staff can be relevant and valuable to the music educators.

**Music educators want to feel valued.** Ray discussed the topic of non-musician administrators assessing music teachers. He asked, "If the administrator doesn't understand what they're looking for, how are they going to understand what to support their music teacher to go get better at, you know?" (Ray, 3-21-2018). Ray also mentioned the book *Evaluating Teachers of Music Performance Groups* by David Doerksen (2006) to support administrators in evaluation of their music educators. He also suggested that administrators could benefit from professional learning to increase their effectiveness in evaluating music educators specifically. Ray asserted, "It's a disservice to the students and short changing the students if the teacher is not developed properly and supported properly, and the administrator does not know what to look for" (Ray, 3-21-2018).

Gray described an experience with administrators who spent little time in his classroom. They had observed him for the first time after two years of teaching in the building. He reflected, "They came in for fifteen minutes, wrote down a bunch of notes, and the worst part of it is I did not receive any feedback, none" (Gray, 4-23-2018). He described how the students were shocked to see administrators in the room. Gray said his administrators come to his concerts and

congratulate him on festival scores. But he suggested that really seeing what teachers are doing by observing them in their classrooms is necessary for effectively evaluating them.

Administrators have the ability to help music educators feel valued by increasing their knowledge of effective music practice and engaging with music teachers through pedagogical review of their work.

**Music educators want to work with one another.** Participants' experiences aligned with the results reported in Conway (2008) in which a survey revealed that music teachers reported their interactions with other music teachers as a powerful way to grow professionally. When asked to describe how professional learning has impacted professional growth over the course of their career, participants described their need to engage with colleagues and to help move their professional growth forward. Then as they gained more experience, they became a mentor on behalf of new colleagues in the field. In Conway's (2008) research, participants also described the changes in their perceptions throughout their careers such as the need to be proactive in finding effective professional learning, the realization that learning from and with others has great value, and in the expansion of the initial idea of what being a music "teacher" means to a list that includes leader, mentor, friend, director, entertainer, and role-model.

Ray, Karen, and Gray described their experiences in professional learning as changing throughout their careers. This happened as they relied on trusted colleagues for development to personally pursue content-specific workshops, certifications, music conferences, observations, and carefully selected sessions. Music educators described similar experiences in a study conducted by Hesterman (2012) who reported that pre-service teachers rely on experienced teachers for their growth, while in-service teachers often seek music educator conferences and workshops for professional growth. Hesterman's (2012) findings seem to align with this present



study; in-service teachers reported their professional learning experiences had evolved by seeking knowledge from veteran music educators to a self-driven pursuit for pertinent professional growth.

Karen, Gray, and Conner described their feelings of isolation within their school buildings. They explained how the lack of respect given to a music teacher, the location of the school (rural, urban, or suburban), and scheduling considerations all contributed to their feelings of isolation. Karen described the difference between teaching music in Texas and Oregon. In Texas, Karen felt part of a team and was respected by others for being the music teacher. However in Oregon, she felt like she was apologizing for being in the building. She described feeling “second class” to other teachers and treated as though her purpose was to “give them [classroom teachers] a break”. These experiences are aligned with the findings of Sindberg (2011) and Battersby and Verdi (2015) who found that when the music teacher is given a teaching schedule that purely serves the purpose of providing lunch and prep periods for other teachers in the building, their feelings of community and professional collaboration for common goals are diminished.

**Content that is relevant can be valuable.** Findings suggested professional learning offerings that were relevant to understanding the educational community to improve instructional practices were valuable to some of these music educators. Sunny explained how her school district dedicated “late start Wednesdays” to professional learning based on equity. She admitted to being dismissive of this professional learning time initially but later came to value the professional learning time and content. She articulated the importance of making personal connections with students in order to give formative feedback without upsetting them. Furthermore, Sunny’s work with equity has inspired her to ensure equitable representation when

hiring sectional tutors and jazz celebration artists. She described how she tried to hire women teachers and teachers of color in the community. In her view, the students have to “see someone who looks like them on stage, to know that it is real” (Sunny, 2-29-2018).

Karen described a compelling professional learning experience she participated in based on a system for working with students from generational poverty developed by the author of the book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Payne, 2005). Ruby Payne facilitated the year-long workshop to build teaching skills to navigate working with students with different cultural values and skillsets based on poverty or wealth. Karen described how building relationships within their families regardless of wealth or family structure has equal validity in the life of each child. According to Karen based this professional learning experience, public schools function within a middle-class value system which can be difficult for some students. Karen grew awareness around working with children whose family values and skillsets did not match those of the school community. She describes this professional learning experience as transformative to her teaching.

Professional learning that improved how to work with children within the community was valuable and transformative for Sunny and Karen. Despite reports that administrator offered professional learning were often not relevant for music educators these findings suggest professional learning offerings can be valuable and transformative depending on the content.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

While this phenomenological study cannot be generalized, it offers insight into the professional learning experiences for music educators. The discussion continues with recommendations for how music educators, administrators, and organizations that support the field of music education can support music educators’ growth through professional learning.

**Communication.** This study reveals how important it is for music educators to have voice in the design of their professional learning. Music educators are confident they know what professional learning they need and may be able to contribute to how whole staff initiatives are implemented for music educators. Music educators could have more professional autonomy in their professional learning time and if something is not a valuable use of their time, they could be trusted to use that time in more useful ways. Music educators could take the initiative to speak with their administrators about ways they can further their content area professional development and ways they can be supportive of school level initiatives.

Participants who have relocated to teach in Oregon reported feelings of isolation and lack of support in their new teaching position. Perhaps administrators in Oregon could learn from educators from other states what has successfully met their professional needs.

Participants have experienced PLCs, although not always with positive, meaningful results. They reported not being allowed enough time to meet and not being dismissed from whole staff activities to meet with other music educators, but instead being grouped with other specialists within their building or with other disciplines. In these situations, participants expressed frustration with administration. Conner's experiences support Eros' (2012) statement which asserted that school administrators and other teachers will often unintentionally exclude music teachers from school-wide initiatives and growth opportunities. Additionally, the participants' responses affirmed Stanley et al. (2013) which stated that professional learning structures for music educators frequently lack subject-specific content, de-emphasize prior knowledge, lack reflection opportunities, or do not support classroom change.

**Partnership.** School administrators could partner with and solicit the perspectives of their music educators in the design of professional learning activities for the whole staff in order

to consider their needs. Additionally, administrators can publicly and personally recognize the consideration in content-specific professional learning activities for music educators and other specialists. Music educators may feel more professionally valued if they know they were considered in the design of professional learning activities.

School districts and groups of school districts, leagues or regions, could assist in creating networks of music educators to support one another. Multiple school districts might benefit from pooling resources and employing a music coordinator to oversee more than one music program. This cost-effective solution for school districts could offer an important service to music educators as well as support administration in the hiring, evaluation, supervision, and professional learning unique to music educators.

Participant's experiences in other states attest to the importance of this type of support. State and national music associations, such as OMEA and NafME, could also assume a role in facilitating music educator networking, mentoring, observation, and continued collaboration, including PLCs both in person and online. The investigation in this study revealed that professional learning, conducted in an online forum, was just beginning to be explored. It seems like new territory that holds promise for bringing together a community of music educators that value learning from one another.

**Creativity.** The participants report that they know what they need, want to collaborate with other music educators, and want or need to self-pursue their professional learning. Finding time to pursue meaningful professional learning was reported as one of the biggest challenges in professional growth. I observed passionate and emotional frustration during the interviews when the participants described their experiences in professional learning as directed to them by administrators in their school districts. They expressed disappointment in the experiences when

professional learning activities included irrelevant content, promoted ingenuine groupings, and felt professionally counterproductive. With planning and creative consideration, I would argue that administrators' professional learning goals and objectives can be achieved through a variety of activities.

Participants revealed that observation and collaboration with other music educators provided the most meaningful of professional learning opportunities, which aligns with Bell-Robertson's (2015) research, which suggested school districts find creative ways to allow music teachers to interact with one another, such as: pairing teachers for peer observation and reflective practice, offering release time for music teachers to observe and team teach across buildings, and allowing opportunities for participation in a subject-alike PLC across school buildings within a district or across multiple school districts.

Battersby and Verdi (2015) suggested that online professional learning communities (OPLCs) are a potential solution to the barriers music teachers experience, such as music teacher isolation, finding time in multiple teachers' schedules to meet, and finding a place for multiple music teachers to meet. Ray described his experiences with annual in-person job-alike meetings across his school district that included sharing information on a UDrive. Throughout the school year, music educators in his district continued to share resources online through the UDrive and Google Drive. Conner also explained that using the internet to post district music educator meeting notes to a Google Drive was a tool for accountability with the district administrators.

Research suggests that music educators and administrators explore creative ways to meet these music specific professional learning needs. This might include creative ways to promote collaboration and observations across the school, district, and state. It might also require

substitute teachers and/or the replacement of whole staff meetings be supported by district administration.

### **Recommendation for Further Research**

Further research to discover the experiences of all teachers in professional learning might shed light on not only music educators' experiences, but also the experiences of other educators in the arts. It would be interesting to learn if the experiences of other types of arts teachers were similar to music educators. Additionally, further research could uncover the experiences of specialist teachers' experiences in professional learning, and therefore could illuminate similarities to music educators as well as inform the topic of professional learning for teachers in general. Research studies on PLCs that include online forums have the potential to discover effective collaboration models outside of a school building. These may alleviate feelings of isolation and increase genuine collaboration efforts, proving helpful for many educators.

Research to study the perceptions that administrators have regarding the professional learning of music educators could offer a window into their decision-making and may allow music educators to have a deeper understanding of bigger picture issues in the school building or district. These common understandings are an outstanding place to begin working collaboratively to make positive changes.

Larger quantitative research studies that include the perspectives of a more varied sample of music educators to expand on the findings of this small qualitative study could present a larger view of the experiences of music educators. The participants in this study discussed experiences outside of Oregon that were in contrast with their professional learning experiences in Oregon.

Gathering a larger view of the experiences of professional learning for music educators could illuminate the parallels and differences with these music educators in Oregon.

### **Conclusion**

This study revealed that music educators not only believed that much of their administrator-directed professional learning time was not relevant, but also perceived their administration did not know or care that their needs were not being met. Participation in formal district-offered professional learning activities did not seem genuinely connected to their professional growth, and was often met with resistance and perceived as trivial. The findings illuminated the idea that music educators wanted to be involved in decision-making for the music program, feel valued professionally, and work together authentically. The research also showed that music educators were driven to pursue professional learning on their own, which often required them to use their own time and finances.

These music educators were intrinsically motivated to seek growth and create networks of trusted colleagues to work with and observe for continued growth. However, their time and efforts were not always recognized as professional learning. These educators viewed their own efforts as practical and necessary for professional growth and practice, but felt discouraged that the activities were not classified as the kind of professional learning that meets the requirements for school administration or licensure renewal.

This research indicates that increased communication, partnership, and creativity to assess and address the professional learning needs of music educators could increase their feelings of involvement, value, and ability to collaborate. Music educators, school administrators, and music education organizations could work together to create meaningful learning opportunities for music educators.

This research indicates that that all educators deserve equitable access to professional learning opportunities. Requiring equal participation and allowing equal access to resources for all teachers does not ensure equity. Communication to increase advocacy, genuine collaboration, and meaningful professional growth could increase equity for all teachers and benefit the whole educational community.



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**APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

### E-mail invitation to participants

Dear Music Educator,

My name is Allison Bonn-Savage and I am a student in the Doctor of Educational Leadership program at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. I am also a Music Educator in a school district in Oregon. As a requirement of my program, I will be conducting research and have chosen to examine the lived experiences of music educators in their professional learning.

You are invited to engage in an interview regarding your experiences in professional learning as a music educator in your school district, and throughout your teaching career. You can expect the questions to be open-ended and related to your background and professional experiences as an educator. I also ask that you bring an artifact which represents a professional learning experience that you found compelling, which I hope you will discuss with me during the interview. This artifact may be an agenda, a handout, a conference flyer, a website, an article, or something else that can serve as a talking piece and evidence of a valuable professional learning experience that you participated in.

I hope that the findings of my interviews reveal insight into the professional learning practices that are of most value to music educators, as well as any possible barriers you might have experienced in your professional learning endeavors.

The risks associated with this research are minimal. The interview questions are general in nature and not personal. Therefore, the interviews should not create any discomfort. Nevertheless, please be aware that your participation is completely voluntary and you may decline to continue at any time or decline to answer any question at your discretion.

The results of this study will only be used for research purposes, which may include presentations at a professional conference and/or academic publications. Personal interviews will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Information will be analyzed and presented in an anonymous manner and no individual will be personally identified, either by name or by district details. I will keep any personal information and identities confidential.

If you decide to participate in this study I am prepared to coordinate with you, via email or phone, to schedule an interview that I expect to last approximately one hour. I am planning to travel to your school, outside of school hours, or another location that is both convenient for you and quiet enough to conduct a recorded conversation.

If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact me at (503) 473-5430, or my advisor at George Fox University, Dr. Karen Buchanan, at (503) 554-2884.

Thank you for your time in considering this project,

Allison Bonn-Savage

**Appendix B**

## Follow-up email to participants

Dear Participant (name),

I wanted to check in to see if you've had the opportunity to consider participating in my dissertation research study based on the professional learning experiences of music educators. I know that your time is precious and this is a crazy time of year for us music educators with festivals and performances. I would really appreciate learning your perspectives and including your unique stories in my dissertation. Your willingness to contribute to my research project would help me a lot and I can offer you a \$10 Starbucks card for participating in an interview with me.

Thank you for your consideration,

Allison Bonn-Savage

**Appendix C**

## Institutional Review Board Approval

**GEORGE FOX  
UNIVERSITY****College of Education**

414 N. Meridian St., V 124, Newberg, OR 97132

503.538.8383 | Fax 503.554.2868 | [soe.georgefox.edu](http://soe.georgefox.edu)

January 24, 2018

Ms. Allison Bonn-Savage

Ed.D. Candidate

George Fox University

Dear Ms. Bonn-Savage,

This letter is to inform you that as a representative of the GFU Institutional Review Board I have reviewed your proposal for research investigation entitled “The Professional Learning Experiences of Music Educators.” The proposed study meets all ethical requirements for research with human participants. The proposal is approved.

Best wishes as you complete your research investigation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terry Huffman'.

Terry Huffman, Ph.D.

Professor of Education

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions for Music Educator Participants

#### Context/Building Rapport

- 1) I notice that you took on a leadership role in the 2018 Music Educators' conference. Tell me how you got involved in that role and what led you to getting involved in the conference.

#### Demographics/History of Music Education background

- 2) Tell me about your background in teaching music.
  - a. How long have you been teaching?
  - b. Describe your path in music education that brings you to your current position.
  - c. Has your teaching assignment changed in your career? If so, which other courses have you taught?
  - d. Do you work with any other music educators?

#### Lived Experience of Professional Learning

- 3) I'm interested in hearing more about the experiences that music educators have with professional learning; the professional learning experiences both within your school district and outside of your district. Talk about your overall experience with professional learning as it pertains to your professional community of music educators.
- 4) When you think about how you've grown as a music educator over the course of your career, how important have professional learning experiences been in that journey?
- 5) Can you share a professional learning experience that was particularly compelling? What about this experience made the professional learning compelling?

#### Details of the Experience of Professional Learning

- 6) What artifact did you bring today? What does it represent? Tell me more about how it pertains to a particular professional learning experience.
- 7) How have your experiences with professional learning changed throughout your career?
- 8) Tell me about any collaborative learning opportunities that you have had.
- 9) How would you describe your experiences in professional learning conducted at your school?
- 10) How much of your professional learning is district-driven versus self-driven?
  - a. How do these experiences differ?
  - b. How are they structured?
  - c. How are they funded?
- 11) What is your biggest challenge regarding professional learning?
- 12) If you had the opportunity to give advice to an administrator about how to best support the professional learning of their music educators, what would you tell them?
- 13) Is there anything that was raised for you in this interview pertaining to your experiences in professional learning that you would like to tell me or maybe something that I didn't think to ask you about?

## Appendix E

### Letter of Consent for Participating Teachers

#### A Phenomenological Study of the Professional Learning Experiences of Music Educators

Dear Music Educator,

My name is Allison Bonn-Savage and I am a student in the Doctor of Educational Leadership program at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. I am also a Music Educator in a school district in Oregon. As a requirement of my program, I will be conducting research and have chosen to examine the lived experiences of music educators in their professional learning.

You are invited to engage in an interview regarding your experiences in professional learning as a music educator in your school district, and throughout your teaching career. The questions are open-ended and relate to your background and professional experiences as an educator. I also ask that you bring an artifact which represents a professional learning experience that you found compelling, which I hope you will discuss with me during the interview. I hope that the findings of my interviews reveal insight into the professional learning practices that are of most value to music educators, as well as any possible barriers you might have experienced in your professional learning endeavors.

The risks associated with this research are minimal. The interview questions are general in nature and not personal. Therefore, the interviews should not create any discomfort. Nevertheless, please be aware that your participation is completely voluntary and you may decline to continue at any time or decline to answer any question at your discretion.

The results of this study will only be used for research purposes, which may include presentations at a professional conference and/or academic publications. Personal interviews will be audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Information will be analyzed and presented in an anonymous manner and no individual will be personally identified, either by name or by district details. I will keep any personal information and identities confidential.

All research materials (i.e., audio-recordings, transcriptions, and signed consent forms) will be locked in separate, secure locations for a period of no less than three years. I will be the only individual who will have access to these materials. After three years, I will personally destroy all relevant materials and delete the audio recordings.

Thank you for your time in considering this project. If you have any questions regarding this research, please contact me at (503) 473-5430, or my advisor at George Fox University, Dr. Karen Buchanan, at (503) 554-2884.

If you understand the use of this research and agree to participate, please sign below.

Participant signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

Morris' artifact: Session handout

# Sizes, Shapes and Scales

Tips and Tools to Communicate with Young Bass Players

January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Sousa, 10:00am

## 1. Packing and Unpacking a Bass - Huh?

I know this seems like a "well, duh" statement, but we've all seen it in action! The easiest way to pack and unpack a bass is with the instrument standing up. Gravity is your friend.

**For Packing:** Push the endpin into the instrument first. In a vertical position, hold the bass around the neck and the case in the other hand. Drape the case over the scroll, let gravity help you. Make sure the bow sleeve is in front and that the music pouch is on the back!

**For Carrying:** I prefer a shoulder strap to carry basses. Straps can be used on the outside shoulder or by "climbing into" the strap, bringing the strap across the chest.

**Wheels:** The KC Strings Bass Buggy is great for helping students travel distances with their instruments. Wheels that go into the endpin are also ok. Make sure that endpin wheels are pneumatic and can absorb bumps as the shock is being applied directly to the instrument block. Luggage carts and bungee cords work well too.

**For Unpacking:** hold the neck with one hand and unzip the zippers with the others. This is always easier with a case that zips up the neck. Try to avoid cases with only quarter zips at the bottom or cases that have the zipper going over the scroll. If your zipper does go over the scroll, don't unzip it all the way! Get one hand onto the neck of the bass, and use the other hand to lift the case off. Sometimes leaning the bass or a half spin is needed.

## 2. Bass Sizes

### -What Size Is It?

There are now a variety of bass sizes available on the market but the sizes often seem strange or contradictory. First of all, a "full size" or "4/4" bass does not exist. It is true that there are some really large basses but those are most often labeled as "7/8". Bass luthiers traditionally worked separate from other instrument luthiers, therefore there is a greater variety in shapes and sizes and less standardization.



**List of bass sizes:**

**7/8-** large body, slightly longer string length- around 42". Good for large players. Creates a big sound, great for orchestral playing but the larger body can prohibit upper position accessibility in solo work.

**3/4-** This is the standard "full size" for bass players. Most players move into a full size around 7<sup>th</sup> grade. ***When a student purchases their own bass, it should be a 3/4.***

**5/8-** This is a specialty size. Most students should NOT look for a 5/8 instrument and it is NOT a transition into 3/4.

**1/2-** This is the most common elementary and early middle school size. Most 5<sup>th</sup> grade beginning students will size into a 1/2.

**1/4-** This is a fairly common size and is widely available from most shops. Students usually spend one year on 1/4.

**1/8-** This is another specialty size that is being seen more widely.

**What size to choose?:** When sizing students, I first look at the size of their body and try to fit an instrument to them that looks natural. The second consideration is the size of the player's hands. Smaller hands mean smaller bass. A student should be able to reach to the bridge when bowing. Try to avoid having to lengthen an endpin on a small instrument. Move them up in size.

**Important:** Avoid students mixing sizes! Students will often end up with one size bass at home and a different size at school. Insist that the instruments be the same size. This is most common with young players in middle school where 1/2 is not available and in elementary where a 1/4 is not available and almost always on 1/8.

**Set-up:** Proper set-up is key to making basses playable for young students. Bridge adjusters are highly recommended and should be checked as the seasons change.

***String Spacing:*** The distance from the center of the G to the center of the E, on the bridge should be 76-78mm.

The distance between my strings are:

G-D: 25mm

D-A: 27mm

A-E: 26mm

***String Height:*** String height is probably the most important setup adjustment to allow for easier playing instruments. String heights will vary depending on the scoop of the fingerboard. Over time a finger board dress may be necessary if strings are buzzing against the fingerboard while being played. These problems may also be symptoms of a warping bridge, a worn nut, a warped fingerboard or more serious problems such as a cracked scroll or a neck coming unglued.

The string heights on my bass are:

G- 7mm

D- 8mm  
 A- 9mm  
 E- 11mm

### 3. Proper Playing Position -Standing vs. Sitting

**For Standing:** The back edge of the bass, along the upper bout, should rest on the hip- usually where the belt loop is. The left leg should be slightly behind the instrument and the knee may contact the bass if necessary.

**Important:** Avoid allowing students who are bowing to stand on the side of the instrument! Maintain a clear path for bow travel.

*Feet should be shoulder width apart. Balance the knees over the feet and the hips over the knees. Balance the head on top of the spine- orange on a toothpick! The classic "Grow an Inch " strategy is great for this.*

When going into higher positions- lean forward at the hips, allow the bass neck to come into the shoulder.

**For Sitting:** Make sure that the stool has a rung for the left leg to rest on. I find that stools with one even rung are preferable to those with different heights as the student may not notice the difference! The right foot should remain flat on the floor and the leg should be out. Bring the bass into the body and allow the weight of the instrument to rest on the left leg. I prefer having the left leg up instead of both feet flat on the floor.

**Important:** Make sure the bass is far enough forward (not too deep into the body) to allow for smooth bow travel without contacting the right leg, especially on the E string.

**Endpins:** Endpin height should change going from seated (a lower endpin setting) to standing (a higher endpin setting). The goal is to set the first finger in first position (first finger "E" on the D-string) at about eyebrow level. Students should be able to see their hand out of the corner of their eye while playing and should be able to easily look over at their hand. Make sure that the bass angle does not set the left hand behind the ear.

*I prefer standing and I ask my students to stand. I believe it promotes better body mechanics and awareness. It is fine to provide stools or chairs for students but I find that it slows their ability to be ready to participate!*

I do not use the Rabbath center mounted, bent endpin. The methods involved with the Rabbath and George Vance Methods are valid and useful. They are not my areas of expertise. Professor Hans Sturm at the University of Nebraska is an expert in this area and is always available to clinic and teach this subject!

## 4. Right Hand Shapes

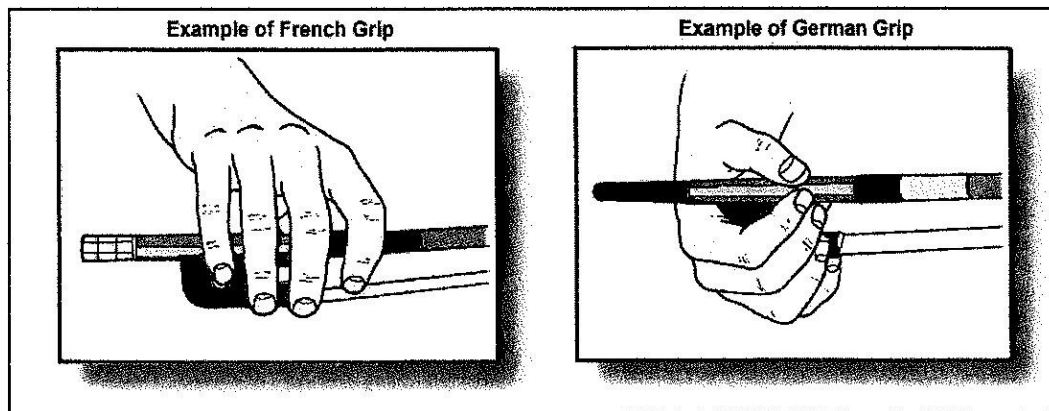
Right hand skills and shapes are essential for all string players. Bass players should also have significant emphasis placed on proper pizzicato technique in addition to arco.

*I prefer French bow and most of my knowledge is in this area.*

**Proper Bow Placement:** End-pin height should place the bow between the bridge and fingerboard. Students should be able to place the bow onto the bridge without excessive reaching.

**French Bow:** Fingers wrap over the stick, a bent thumb is placed behind the second finger. The thumb can be applied either on the stick at the end of the frog or at the back of the "U" on the frog. When the thumb is at the "U", it should be in the upper corner and not be allowed to slide through. Thumb knuckle may contact the ferrule, this is ok. When the thumb is placed on the stick, I find that the ring finger will contact the ferrule. When the thumb is placed on the corner of the "U", I find that the middle finger contacts the ferrule.

**German Bow:** Make the "OK" hand shape and form around the bow. Encourage students to use the natural weight of their arm to generate sound rather than pushing down with the thumb onto the stick. The same relaxed and fluid wrist motion that is sought in French bow (or violin/viola bowing) still applies to German bow. The difference is that they wrist is turned 90 degrees.



**Straight Bow:** Emphasize that the bow stays parallel to the bridge. **Students should keep their hand below the tip of the bow.** As players pull towards the tip, there should be a slight rising of the hand. This prevents students from catching extra strings. Bowing is like fishing: Always keep your tip up!

**Pizzacato:** Anchor the thumb on the side of the fingerboard, about 2 inches from the bottom of the fingerboard and pull the string down into the lower string. Use the meatiest part of the finger not the tip! The finger being used varies with the individual. Index finger only, middle finger only or both together are all acceptable. Over time students should learn to use both for greater speed and variety, especially when playing in a jazz ensemble.

## 5. Left Hand Shape

**-What does it look like and where does it go?**

*Proper left hand shape and spacing is essential for quality tone and intonation. **Players must keep their fingers pressed into the fingerboard until the next note.***

### **Proper Hand Shape and Position:**

**Thumb Placement-"Cup" Shape-** The left hand should look exactly like holding a can of soda or a water bottle. The thumb must point towards the ear. Having a student grasp a bottle and observe their hand is an effective tool for creating a good hand shape. I relate the position of the thumb to its position behind the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> fingers rather than a specific point on the neck.

**Finger Spacing- "Pops" Shape-** There should be a  $\frac{1}{2}$  step between the first and second finger. There should be a  $\frac{1}{2}$  step between the second and fourth finger. Bass fingers are NOT equidistant from one another. The distance between first and second finger is roughly that of a Pops Rosin container! It is vital that students understand the whole step, half step relationships in their hand. This knowledge will empower players to know what notes are available to them and when and where they should shift.



## Identifying Fingerboard Playing Positions

### -Labeled using 1<sup>M</sup> Finger note on the "G" String

1/2= "Ab" I= "A" II= "Bb" 11 "B" 111= "C" 111½="C#"

IV % = "D#/Eb" V = "E" VI = "F" VI ¼ = "F#" T= Thumb,

**Finger Tapes:** This is obviously a topic with a variety of opinions! Here are *my* suggestions:

Place tapes marking I position (all notes are on the G-string)- "A" and "B". Use different colored tapes to mark III position- "C" and "D". Return to the first color to mark V position "E" and "F#" on the G-string. I like a small, half piece of tape under the G and D strings, marking the "G" harmonic. Beyond the harmonic, I tend to use pencil marks instead of tapes. I find that I most often will mark A, B, C, D (which is a harmonic), E, F#, G (which is also a harmonic) in pencil as needed. The reason behind these notes is that they are the pitches most often called upon in common string keys, and the flats and naturals in between are easy to identify based off of these marks.

I do a lot of pencil markings on basses, my own included. I will usually mark out the "C#" on the G-string with pencil, but I avoid taping this note. Adding tapes on the half steps starts to look very confusing to students. By having two colors, students can easily see where their hand should be and can give you an added communication tool from across the room. I also discourage taping the C# (III ½) instead of the C (III position).

*Reasons:* I believe that bass hand shape is built from the 1<sup>st</sup> finger. A strong understanding of the half-steps (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>) and whole step (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>) created by the hand is crucial to good intonation and understanding what notes are available in the variety of positions. Marking I, III, V and VII positions will allow students and teachers to visualize almost all combinations of positions needed for 2 octave scales.

### **The Pivot**

The pivot is used in bass playing in place of a h step shift, and can go both backwards and forwards. When pivoting, keep the thumb in place on the back of the neck and roll toward the desired note. The angle of the thumb will change, pointing upward or downward depending on the direction of the pivot, but the thumb pad remains in place. I reserve using the pivot for positions III and above. I shift for half steps when playing in h, I, II, and III½ positions. The idea of the pivot in all positions is a key component of the Rabbath system.

*Other Useful Finger Pattern Reminders-* Basses are tuned in fourths, a perfect fourth interval is achieved by playing the same finger, one string over. Also useful is that a perfect fifth is achieved with the 4<sup>th</sup> finger down and the 1<sup>st</sup> finger one string lower. An octave is achieved with the 4<sup>th</sup> finger down and the 1<sup>st</sup> finger two strings lower. These standardized intervals are useful in helping students to avoid crossing multiple strings.

## 6. Scales

Scales are often more cumbersome on bass than other string instruments. Because of the way the instrument is tuned and because of its size, bassists are in extreme upper positions more quickly than other string instruments. Classroom teachers can find their fingerboard knowledge exhausted after one octave and at a total loss trying to communicate two and three octave fingerings in a classroom setting.

A few useful things to remember about scales:

*Cheater Scales-* This is my term for scales that start in the second octave and drop down to the first octave, usually on the open E but sometimes on F. This idea allows bassists to more comfortably participate in common two octave scales (C, D, E-flat major). This idea also allows for the playing of three octave scales that otherwise require an extended fingerboard (E-flat major) or a low C extension.

*1/2 Step Resolution-* All scales should end with the h step in one hand position, that is to say "24" or "2-3". Avoid any scale fingerings that resolve "1-2" or "4-4" or "3-3".

*Upper Octave Universal Finger Pattern-* Every scale that ends above B-flat in the Thumb position will be fingered: 1\* 2- 1 2- 1 2 3, where 1\* is the second (re) scale degree. The idea of "2" is relative though, because it is representing a whole step. "2" can be subbed with "3" in upper positions around the harmonic, and is necessary when playing chromatic passages in upper octaves. "2" can also be subbed with "4" in lower positions. This finger pattern is consistently applied for all scales ending above Bb5.

*When to switch to "3"-* The switch to 3<sup>rd</sup> finger and away from 4<sup>th</sup> finger happens at the harmonic, VI position. All notes including and above the harmonic will use a 3<sup>rd</sup> finger and 4<sup>th</sup> finger is no longer used.

*When and where to use the thumb-* The thumb (T) becomes a viable finger option once the 4<sup>th</sup> finger is abandoned for the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger, beginning in VI position. When switching to 3<sup>rd</sup> finger, the thumb will vacate its position on the back of the neck, coming around to the side of the neck. In certain cases, the thumb may be called upon to play notes on the fingerboard in this position. Once the 3<sup>rd</sup> finger is in use in VII and above, it moves on to the fingerboard, and should be played on the side of the thumb, near where the skin meets the nail.

The thumb as a finger choice is most common in Thumb position. When shifting in Thumb position scales, it is ideal if the thumb trails behind the I finger on the previous diatonic note. For example, in G major, the thumb will engage the string on G(T) while the first finger engages the string on A(1). The thumb should help to hold the string against the fingerboard. The thumb may also be placed adjacent to the 1<sup>st</sup> finger, again helping to hold the string against the fingerboard for ideal clarity and tone.

***When to shift and where to go-*** The goal for bass players is to play as many notes as possible in one position without shifting and without compromising bowings. The upcoming note usually dictates position selection. More often than not, the pitch two notes ahead dictates the final decision! The Simandl book exercises emphasize this type of decision making throughout.

## 7. Useful Equipment and Accessories

**These are items that will make the lives of you and your bass players much easier!**

**Quivers:** Invest in bow quivers for your basses! They make rehearsals much easier for the players and quieter and less distracting for you! Quivers also protect bows and instruments when walking through the halls and aid in arco to pizzicato transitions.

**Bows:** Invest in better bows! Bass bows are not cheap but they do last. For middle school and high school classrooms I like braided carbon fiber and entry level pernambucco bows. If possible, re-hair your bows every one to two years. The difference in sound from your traditional fiberglass bow is amazing and the better bows will allow bass players a greater ability to properly articulate different strokes. Black bow hair on bass bows is common, and it is slightly coarser than traditional white hair.

**Bridge Adjusters:** Try to have adjusters on all of your basses. They can be added to an existing bridge for around \$75. I like string heights to be around 7-1mm off the fingerboard. Too low and you will get buzzing, too high and the strings are hard to push down.

**Cases:** Try to get a full zip case for your bass players. The more handles, the better. I prefer using a shoulder strap to carry an instrument. Careful- some cases have a lot of pockets on the front side. These can cause an instrument to roll onto its bridge.

**Strings:** For school basses use D' Addario Helicore Orchestral strings, medium tension. The Helicores will last a long time and are relatively affordable, \$120-\$140 for a set. If you have a designated "jazz" bass at school, I highly recommend using Thomastik Spirocores, \$220-\$240. These are the best jazz string and will last a long time! They are on the scratchy side for orchestra but sound great in jazz band. If you are able to buy higher end strings I prefer Thomastik Bel Canto, \$270+. They have an even sound and work well for jazz and classical.

**Rosin:** I prefer Carlson rosin. I also like Nieman and Kolstein. I try to avoid Pops because it is very sticky and it will run! If you have Pops, keep it in a sandwich bag, then replace it in the container. This will help keep it together.

**E-String Extensions:** Extensions on double basses are a common addition. Nearly all professional symphony players have an extension on their orchestra bass. The extension extends the range of the instrument downward to a low B or C, depending on the type of extension. Most extensions currently being installed are designed to be fingered, and most provide "gates" for setting the note at a specific pitch. Most modern extensions have been designed to avoid drilling through the scroll, which is preferable. Having at least one bass with an extension is encouraged for schools playing standard orchestral literature.

**Tuners:** Keep tuners ready and available to your bass players. I prefer Korg brand tuners. Avoid "guitar" specific tuners as they will not pick up the low sounds. The addition of the separate clip is very helpful as well. There are many good clip-on tuners available such as Poly-Tune, Snark, and Orb.

**Pick-ups:** The very best pick-up available for school use is the Realist by David Gage, \$225. It mounts under the foot of the bridge and stays there forever! Installation is easy and fast. Hint: Use a zip tie to attach the cable port rather than taking the string off! The Fishman Full Circle, \$220, is also good, but cannot be switched to another instrument as it is embedded in a bridge adjuster. I do not find it necessary to use pre-amps or other electronics, especially in a school setting.

**Amplifiers:** I like Fender Bassman amps. I use a Roland DB-150 for myself. Galen-Kruger and SWR also make very good amplifiers for double basses. For school use, a combo amp is best. This means that the electronics (the dials and the speaker are all housed together in one unit. Try to get an amp that has wheels or place it on a luggage cart for easier portability. For more bass "boom", 12" or 15" speakers are great. For more definition and overall volume, two, three, or four 10" speaker cabinets are good options.

**String Winders:** A string winder will make your life much easier when changing bass strings. I use a winder made by KC Strings that can be tightened into an electric drill. A guitar style, hand held string winder is also effective.



## **8. Double Bass Literature**

*This is a small sample of literature that I use in private lessons. These titles can provide direction for orchestra teachers helping bass students.*

### **Method Books**

- My First Simandl**-William Eckfeld/Amy Rosen
  - Simandl**- Simandl/Zimmerman/Drew- Carl Fischer
  - Essential Elements**- Allen/Gillspie/Tellejohn-Hayes- Hal Leonard
  - Progressive Repetioire for Double Bass\***- George Vance- Carl Fischer
  - Nouvelle Technique de LaContrebasse\***- Francois Rabbath- Alphonse Leduc
- \*These methods are based on the bass concepts of Francois Rabbath. I strongly encourage teachers to study with a Rabbath trained pedagogue using these methods before suggesting or incorporating these method books into their classrooms. Johnny Hamil and the KC Bass Workshop host annual workshops specializing in teacher training with Francois Rabbath!

### **Solos**

- 77 Baroque Basslines**- Lucas Drew-Alfred
- Festival Performance Solos**- Carl Fischer
- Six Sonatas for Cello or Double Bass**- Marcello- G. Schirmer/Hal Leonard
- Eight Festival Solos for Bass and Piano**-Deborah Baker Monday
- Thirty Etudes for String Bass**- Simandl- Carl Fischer
- Russian Sailors Dance**- Gliere/Issac- Carl Fischer
- Die Mietersinger**- Wagner/Issac- Carl Fischer
- Gavotte**- JS BacWZimmerman- Carl Fischer
- Caballero**- John Merle- Carl Fischer
- Introduction and Dance**- A. Louis Scarmolin- Ludwig
- Concertrto for Double Bass**- Antonio Capuzzi- Boosey & Hawkes/Hal Leonard
- The Elephant**- Saint-Saens- G. Henle Verlag

*Solos beyond Marcello in difficulty should not be attempted without private teachers!*

- Concerto in A major**- Dragonetti- International
- Concerto in E major**- Dittersdorf- Hal Leonard
- Sonata in G minor**- Eccles- International
- Concerto, Op. 3**- Koussevitzky- International
- Concerto No. 2**- Bottesini- International

*Solo Tuning*- Many advanced bass concertos are written in "Solo Tuning". In Solo Tuning, the player tunes each string up a whole step. This creates a brighter tone and helps the instrument project during a solo. Strings labeled "solo" are intended to handle the increased tension although most strings can maintain solo tuning without incident. When using orchestra accompaniment, check the tuning!

**Jazz Solos**

- The Music of Paul Chambers**- Transcribed by Jim Stinnett- Stinnett Music
- Arcology-The Music of Paul Chambers Vol. 2 (Bowed Solos)**- Transcribed by Jim Stinnett- Stinnett Music
- **The Music of Oscar Pettiford**- Transcribed solos by Volker Nahrman- self-published , but widely available
- The Bass Tradition**- Todd Coolman- Jamey Abersold
- The Real Book**- Various- Hal Leonard
- Charlie Parker Omnibook**- Charlie Parker- Hal Leonard
- Ray Brown's Bass Method**- Ray Brown- Hal Leonard

**Helpful Websites for Bass**

Jason Heath's Double Bass Blog [doublebassblog.org/](http://doublebassblog.org/) Great Resource for Printable Scales and Orchestral Excerpts

Sandor Ostlund 2-octave scale play alongs- [sandorostlund.com](http://sandorostlund.com)

International Society of Double Bassists [www.isbworldoffice.com/](http://www.isbworldoffice.com/)

Lemur Music [www.lemurmusic.com/](http://www.lemurmusic.com/)

KC Bass Workshop, Johnny Hamil- [kcbassworkshop.com](http://kcbassworkshop.com) Includes lots of bass ensemble PDFs

KC Strings Violin Shop [kcstrings.com](http://kcstrings.com)

## Appendix G

Ray's artifact: Session Handout

### EXPRESSIVE CONDUCTING THROUGH QUALITATIVE GESTURE AS BASED UPON THE LABAN METHOD

#### **Gesture: Float**

Category: sustained, indirect, light  
 Practice: a feather floating  
 Alternate Approaches: conduct with only air resistance, reduced use of direct beat pattern  
 Traditional: even preparatory, little if any ictus, even rebound  
 Types of music: light legato, floating chords, ethereal sounds, impressionistic chords  
 Music with little harmonic drive

#### **Gesture: Glide**

Category: sustained, direct, light  
 Practice: skimming your hand across a pool of water  
 Alternate Approaches: drive 20mph around the pattern, conduct under water  
 Traditional: even preparatory, minimal ictus, even rebound  
 Types of music: legato, flowing, linear music

#### **Gesture: Press**

Category: sustained, direct, heavy  
 Practice: raising a stuck window, contrary motion  
 Alternate Approaches: conduct cold molasses, wrist leads and tip of hand or baton follows  
 Traditional: preparatory leads to a heavier ictus, rebound relaxes away from ictus  
 Types of music: intensely pulling music, crescendos and decrescendos

#### **Gesture: Wring**

Category: sustained, indirect, heavy  
 Practice: wringing motion  
 Alternate Approaches: conduct in extremely cold molasses, wrist leads and tip of hand or baton follows with great intensity, much more indefinite use of beat pattern  
 Traditional: preparatory intensely leads to a clear ictus, rebound intensely relaxes away from ictus  
 Types of music: extremes of romantic expression in pulling music, extreme crescendos and decrescendos

#### **Gesture: Flick**

Category: quick, indirect, light  
 Practice: flick water of fingers  
 Alternate Approaches: dotting an "i", quick wrist motion  
 Traditional: preparatory quickly speeds to a clear ictus, rebound quickly speeds away and has complete stop of motion  
 Types of music: detached, short styles, staccato

#### **Gesture: Dab**

Category: quick, direct, light  
 Practice: touching a hot iron or wet paint  
 Alternate Approaches: playing with a yoyo, bouncing a ball, keep beat generally moving with clear ictus

Traditional:	preparatory slightly speeds to a precise and clear ictus, rebound slightly slows away from the ictus without ever stopping motion
Types of music:	pulsing, rhythmic style, need for clarity and pulsation
<b><u>Gesture: Slash</u></b>	
Category:	quick, indirect, heavy
Practice:	cutting through a jungle with a machete
Alternate Approaches:	“swashbuckling” with a sword
Traditional:	preparatory quick speeds to ictus, rebound relaxes away from ictus
Types of music:	extremes of romantic expression, intensely pulling styles, a sudden tenuto on a loud chord
<b><u>Gesture: Punch</u></b>	
Category:	quick, direct, heavy
Practice:	punching a punching bag
Alternate Approaches:	driving a nail with the fist, same motion as dab but with extreme weight
Traditional:	preparatory quickly speeds to a precise, heavy ictus
Types of music:	extremely heavy, accented music, accents in general