Exploring Middle and High School Band Directors' Perceptions of Collaboration and

Its Impact on Their Programs: A Qualitative Study

by

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Abstract

Collaboration is the act of working together to achieve a set goal. Band programs are essentially designed for students' progression from middle to high school and beyond. It would seem natural for band directors at all levels to want to collaborate their teaching skills to benefit the number one stakeholder of their programs, the students. However, collaboration in the band director community appears to be a rarity and is uncommon among band directors with connected programs. This qualitative study explored middle and high school band director pairs' perceptions of collaboration and its potential impact on the success and growth of their programs.

The interview process divulged the lived experiences of middle school and high school director pairs who work collaboratively for the success of their students and programs. The twelve band director pairs came from a nationwide invitation via posts on Facebook band director pages, the BAND App seeking interviewees, colleagues' suggestions, and snowballing. After transcribing the interviews, I used the *ATLAS.ti* software program to label, organize, and interpret codes/themes. The iterative coding process revealed four themes: *Collaboration, Building Relationships, Communication,* and *Student-Centered*. The over-arching essence encompassing these four themes was these band directors' focus on developing and growing *One Comprehensive Band Program.*

The data revealed four themes. The first theme was that of collaboration. The pairs/teams of band directors interviewed discussed types, benefits, and hindrances to collaboration. The four types of collaboration were *Team Teaching*, *Performances/Programs*, *Shared Goals,* and *Vertical Alignment.* The three benefits of collaboration discussed were *Student Growth, Recruitment and Retention,* and *Visibility*. The other three themes of

Building Relationships, Communication, and a Student-Centered program can offer band director pairs guidance on building a successful comprehensive program cultivated from the middle school to high school band programs.

There are opportunities for future research based on the findings of this project. Future phenomenological studies could include a case study based on the school setup. An ethnographic study would allow researchers to immerse themselves in the different band directors' programs. The findings from this research could also lead to a mixed-methods design with a national survey. The data from the survey could then be analyzed to help focus questions for interviewing future band directors to generalize for band directors across the nation. There is also plenty of room to explore the perspectives of the other band program stakeholders.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Music educators expect students to work together to create music. However, our students may not see their middle and high school band directors working as a team. Sindberg (2014) suggested music educators should develop a culture of collaboration by building relationships that support both them and the program. People often see middle and high school band programs as two separate entities. The programs are viewed based on their physical location, i.e., the middle and high school buildings. Each appears to stand alone, to be worked and judged accordingly. Furthermore, in most cases, a middle school band program directly feeds students into a high school band program. The band's connection reiterates the importance of collaboration among band directors for their programs' growth and success (Rothlisberger, 1995).

The band director plays a vital role in the students' lives and the programs' growth. According to Justus (2001), the director is the most influential factor contributing to the success of the band program. Justus (2001) listed the characteristics of a successful band director. These characteristics included "educational background, social skills, attitude, dedication, family background, enthusiasm, experience, and age" (p. 21). A successful band director can lead to a successful program. Humphries (2012) suggested band teachers should welcome ideas and suggestions from their colleagues. He further stated too many band directors hid from their colleagues, neglecting the abundantly available collaboration. Humphries (2012) found collaboration can happen in unique ways, such as email discussions, professional development days, observation visits, and professional learning communities. Sindberg (2013) echoed this sentiment in his research by concluding directors need to connect and build these collaborative relationships; they must change the culture of their program to

include the efforts of connection and support.

Collaboration is the act of working together to achieve a set goal. Hansen (2009) made a case for collaboration in the corporate world by stating three advantages: better innovation, better sales, and better operations (p. 38). These three items can also apply to music education. The first one, better innovation, could be seen by music educators as keeping their programs current, relevant, and motivating for all stakeholders; students, parents, administration, and the community. Two, better sales may translate into better retention and growth of one's program. Finally, better operations could translate into running a band program better and more efficiently to ameliorate the program. Battersby (2019) concluded music educators could create a practical ethos where sharing information is a significant part of their supportive community through collaboration and relationship-building with colleagues. Within this community, one can offer many opportunities for growth and development. These opportunities are especially concrete because middle and high school band directors could share their students, goals, and educational standards.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore middle and high school band director pairs' perceptions of collaboration and its potential impact on the success and growth of their programs. If the band directors are willing to put forth the effort necessary to work together, collaboration could be the key to the success of any band program. This collaboration could improve their student's education, ensemble musicianship, and the potential growth and success of the middle and high school band programs. Middle and high school band directors could learn from successful band directors where there are apparent efforts from both directors to be a part of one another's programs and success based on the types and benefits of collaboration. Discovering these methods could reveal ideas, concepts, and foundations to inform band directors

who do not collaborate or see their programs as one.

Research Questions

Throughout this study, I used the following questions to guide my interviewing process, as well as to determine themes and concepts discovered in the data analysis:

1. What types of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs?

2. What benefits of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs?

3. What hindrances to collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors experience in their individual and overall band programs?

4. What are the similarities and differences in middle and high school directors' perceptions of collaboration?

This qualitative study explored middle and high school band directors' perceptions of collaboration and its potential impact on the success and growth of their programs. I used semi-structured qualitative interviews to find ideas and concepts of collaboration by exploring band directors' lived experiences and perspectives about the benefits, challenges, and concepts of best practices for collaboration between middle and high school band director pairs. What ideas and concepts can be helpful to directors in learning the benefits of collaboration and applying them to their programs for success? Through the lens of collaboration, qualitative research helped gather data on the lived experiences of middle and high school band directors and their perceptions of their programs' successes and challenges.

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Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Collaboration

Collaboration is not a new concept for researchers or educators of varying disciplines. According to the Oxford Dictionary online (n.d.), collaboration is "the action of working with someone to produce or create something." Kruse (1996) defined collaboration as the "exchange of expertise…fostered by and is a natural outgrowth of reflective dialogue and deprivatized practice" (p. 6). Mattessich and Monsey (1992) summarized,

> Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. Furthermore, the relationship includes a commitment to a definition of mutual relationships and goals, a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility, mutual authority and accountability for success, and sharing of resources and rewards (p. 11).

Collaboration as a goal is attainable by educators in all disciplines. However, educators need guidance on what collaboration truly is, how to navigate the collaboration process and discover the factors that lead them to a successful endeavor with their fellow educators and programs. Music educators are trained to be self-reliant and organized to handle larger classes of diverse students to create something. Often, music educators may feel incompetent or embarrassed if they do not understand how to accomplish a task for their program, department, and school. For any educator, asking for help can give one a sense of ignorance and self-doubt. In reality, asking for help is an intelligent way to learn something new about others, how they run their program, and, ultimately, about yourself. If we as educators could put our pride and egos to the side, a whole new world of learning and opportunities could open up. Collaboration is the key to opening that door, and this key

could be shared with many educators. The same educators are probably in the same predicament of wanting help but not knowing where to turn.

Factors of Collaboration

Mattessich and Monsey's (1992) research identified and discussed nineteen keys or factors for successful collaboration. They grouped these factors into six different categories; (a) environment, (b) membership, (c) process/structure, (d) communications, (e) purpose, and (f) resources.

Environment

The school community, both in the building and the surrounding area, must be seen and felt as a place where all stakeholders have an essential role and say in the education of the students. These stakeholders could include administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents and guardians, and community investors. If each of these stakeholders feels like they have a say and opportunities to work, succeed, and grow, they will be more willing to work and be a part of something to help it be the best it can be from start to finish. School leaders must help open this environment by leading by example (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

Membership

Members, which include administration, teachers, staff, students, parents/guardians, and the community, must understand how they fit into the collaborative efforts of the school and how they work with and for one another's success (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

Process/Structure

Collaboration requires all those invested to participate in the process at all stages and levels. Nevertheless, being a part of that process also requires those members to be professional, open-minded, involved, and pulling in the same direction for the betterment of the students (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

Communication

Communication is one of the collaborators' most potent tools. Work cannot be done individually or in solitude if the purpose of the collaboration is for the group's success (Mattessich & Monsey, (1992).

Purpose

For collaboration to be successful, all members must move towards the same endpoint; success for their program. Success comes through the unification of purpose by establishing where the group is, where they want to go, and how they will get there (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

Resources

The sharing of resources, which may include financial, environmental, experience, and educational, puts the improvement and goal of the group into an attainable focus (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

Green and Johnson (2015) stated that a benefit of collaboration was that it "provides a means for organizations, institutions, or professions to achieve more than they can on their own" (p.2). Green and Johnson (2015) used the definition of research collaboration from the National Academics including:

1. Opportunities to learn and go beyond traditional ways of thinking

2. Potential to develop lifelong relationships and bonds that may be beneficial in the future

3. Gain from the wisdom of others

4. Access to new resources and the potential to develop new skills

5. Increased productivity through doing more work in less time

6. Sharing recognition and accolades

7. Association with others who are successful

8. Sharing costs

9. The "pooling knowledge for tackling large and complex problems" (Green & Johnson, 2015, p. 3).

Green and Johnson's (2015) focus was on collaborating for research purposes; however, their insights and discoveries can be easily transferable to the educational disciplines. In education, we are always looking for new and different ways to reach our room of diverse students. As educators, connecting to that teacher cohort that understands struggles and can celebrate victories, big and small, can help make day-to-day teaching experiences something special for one another and their students. With the effort to collaborate, teachers can admit that there may be a better way, or at least a different way, to reach students and help them learn. As a teacher, the more tools we have in our toolbox, the more equipped we are to help our students succeed. Teachers with these connections are collaborators with a mission to succeed together. However, individuals and groups must be ready and equipped for collaboration to be effective and beneficial.

Ready for Collaboration

Green and Johnson (2015) developed a checklist for assessing whether or not one is ready to collaborate. This list could provide a much-needed starting point for different programs looking to begin collaboration or programs trying to assess where they are in their collaborative efforts. For many of the band director pairs interviewed, they could efficiently work their way down this list. I asserted that these directors wanted to collaborate, understood what was necessary to do so, were already working their way around or through hindrances, and were aligning their programs' goals to benefit students in both programs.

1. Know when to use collaboration and when not to.

2. Know what the collaborating professions or organizations stand to gain from the alliance and what the costs are to get there.

3. Be aware of the factors that drive the strength of collaboration: alignment of mission/values

4. Become familiar with the factors that lead to successful collaborations. Such factors include attitudes, environmental concerns, communication, resources, and trust.

5. Recognize the intangible elements, such as tacit knowledge, social capital, ownership, disclosure, transparency, motivation, and commitment, that strongly influence peoples' decisions

6. Identify barriers to the collaboration that you desire to build and find ways to remove the barriers so that collaborative relationships can evolve.

7. Create organizational learning objectives and goals to facilitate knowledge creation

8. Commit to collaboration for the long haul because it is a long-term process and investment.

9. Know when it is time to stop a collaboration. (Green & Johnson, 2015, pp. 6-7)

As Green and Johnson (2015) echoed, educators must learn where and how to prioritize their programs and students. We must put the others first; students, fellow teachers, parents/guardians/ administration. The program comes second. However, if we put our stakeholders first, the program will also grow in importance. Finally, we must put ourselves last. Egos can be a huge stumbling block in any educator's career; our preconceptions about others have no place in any program.

Green and Johnson's (2015) insights echoed Hanson's (2009) statement about disciplined collaboration. Hanson (2009) said that disciplined collaboration "can be summed up in one phrase: the leadership practice of properly assessing when to collaborate (and when not to) and instilling in people both the willingness and the ability to collaborate when required" (p. 28). Hanson (2009) recommended not collaborating merely for the sole sake of collaborating. Our end goal for

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collaboration should be to improve our programs and achieve better results (Hanson, 2009).

"Collaboration can make possible what was in isolation impossible" (Sutherland, 2015, p. 1632).

In order to have successful collaboration, all stakeholders, especially the leaders, must understand how important laying the proper foundation down on which to build their collaborative program. Successful collaboration is a multi-step process that requires stakeholders to be involved at all levels. Recognizing what needs to be done and how it needs to be done moves the collaborative group toward its shared success goals. Understanding the collaboration process and inserting each member's expertise brings change, flexibility, and a forward push for the success of all invested (Green & Johnson, 2015; Hanson, 2009; Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

Collaboration in Education

There is an abundance of research on collaboration in general education. Anrig (2015) stated, "A growing body of research shows that collaboration between teachers and administrators, not confrontation, improves student outcomes" (p.1). Anrig (2015) discussed two important research projects that strongly supported the importance of collaboration in education. The first study was The University of Chicago's Consortium on Chicago School Research (Sebring, Allensworth, Bryk, Easton, & Luppescu, 2006). Anrig observed that the Consortium discovered,

> The most crucial finding was that the most effective schools, based on test score improvement over time after controlling for demographic factors, had developed an unusually high degree of "relational trust" among their administrators, teachers, and parents (p.2).

The University of Chicago's Consortium (Sebring, et al., 2006) contributed five organizational features to the success of school improvement. One is having the teachers within the same grade and across grade levels coordinate curriculum and assessments within a coherent instructional guidance system. Two, this system is for teachers' support and guidance to help improve the profession. Part of

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this process allows classroom work to be peer-review and critiqued by colleagues and other experts. Three, the support network for students involves all stakeholders; school personnel, parents, and the community. Four, an environment focused on the individual student's needs and problems helps facilitate a beneficial learning climate. Fifth, the administration's job is to help teachers, parents, and community members become invested in building student and school improvements (p.2).

According to Anrig (2015), the National Center for Educational Achievement conducted another study with similar results to this research. This group "sent teams of researchers to 26 public schools in five states that had a high percentage of low-income students, and whose students had made significant gains on math and science exams in a three-year period" (p. 2). This study discovered how administrators and teachers collaborated in the selection and development of instructional materials, assessments, and learning strategies. This study found it was important for the teachers to have time to collaborate every week to help enhance instructional practices. Together, the administration and teachers were a part of monitoring testing data to help students and teachers with additional support. Communication from the school's teachers and administration with parents was vital to help coordinate student support. The school reached out to community groups to help expand the resources the students can reach out to for help. The findings shared a kindred spirit of success based on the effectiveness of administration and teachers working together for common interests and goals of success for their students and programs.

Collaboration Research

Hargreaves has been a significant contributor to the literature with over 30 years of researching teacher collaboration. Hargreaves (2019) has,

> examined ways of collaborating that are available to teachers, how formal or informal
>
> collaboration should be, how collaborative efforts can be misused or misdirected, and what

factors must be considered when deliberately designing teacher collaboration so it will have the most beneficial effects.

Hargreaves' (2019) research has found that teachers who collaborate or work in a collaborative culture have more successful outcomes than those who tend to isolate themselves from the learning community around them. His findings echo Green and Johnson's (2015) findings discussed earlier. Teacher isolation is a hindrance to teacher and program success. He goes on to state,

> For researchers in the 1990s, undoing individualism and isolation by building more collaborative cultures in schools was seen as a positive direction, but the persistence of presentism or shortage of time out of class to work with colleagues was regarded as a significant obstacle (p. 607).

Hargreaves also found how those in charge want their teachers to collaborate, but only for strategic reasons. However, collaborative efforts aim to help empower the teacher to initiate their own ideas and collaboration efforts with purposeful activities and teaching. Hargreaves and Dawe (2019) stated "collaborative cultures comprise evolutionary relationships of openness, trust, and support among teachers where they define and develop their purposes as a community. Collaborative cultures foster teacher and curriculum development. Contrived collegiality enhances administrative control" (p. 227). Hargreaves (2019) came to understand that professional collaboration help increase student achievement. This understanding led many in the profession, researchers, administration, and school consultants to seek ways to support teacher collaboration. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) became this group's most popular and widely used design. Dufour (2007) said,

> The rise or fall of the professional learning community concept in any school will depend not on the merits of the concept itself, but on the most important element in the improvement of

any school—the collective capacity, commitment, and persistence of the educators within it

(p. 7).

A popular method of PLCs embodied goal setting, team-building activities, collecting data, designing interventions, and problem-solving. "But this form of PLCs, although popular with the administration, did not garnish the support of teachers. "In the high-stakes environment of US educational reform, at least, PLCs often became little more than a way to try and get teachers to commit to things that administrators wanted them to do" (Hargreaves, 2019, p. 610). Hargreaves (2019) discovered that "when leadership has emphasized schools' and teachers' own goals and included teachers in decision-making, PLCs have energized educators and led to improvements in outcomes" (p.611).

Hargreaves (2019) discussed how they used

> the metaphor of *capital* to establish the point that in teaching....if we want a return, we have to make an investment… educational change was being driven by the wrong kind of capital, *business capital*, where public education reform was underpinned by the intent to increase returns to the private sector (p. 612).

Hargreaves (2019) further discussed *professional capital*. Professional capital has three components. One, *human capital* is the quality of individuals; their competence, knowledge, qualifications and commitment. Two, *decisional or decision-making capital* is when teachers' professional judgment and how it developed through experience and professional learning and coaching over time. Three, *social capital* is capital people have together through their networks of learning, the strength of mutual support, shared professional development, and firm foundations of trust (p.612).

In 2016, the Ontario Ministry of Education came up with the definition of *collaborative professionalism*. They stated

Collaborative Professionalism in Ontario is defined as professionals—at all levels of the

education system—working together, sharing knowledge, skills, and experience to improve

student achievement and the well-being of students and staff. Collaborative

Professionalism values the voices of all and reflects an approach in support of our shared

responsibility to provide equitable access to learning for all. All staff are valued and have

a shared responsibility as they contribute to collaborative learning cultures (p. 614).

Based on Hargreaves' studies, collaborative professionalism came more from the teachers' desires to

collaborate than the administration thrusting it up on them. This desire to collaborate led to the

administration working collaboratively together as well. This interchange became profound and

challenging, but simultaneously, all people involved were trusting and respectful of one another

throughout the process. Hargreaves (2019) ends with this thought, "It is important now, therefore, not

just that teachers collaborate, but that they collaborate well, and that school and system leaders enable

and empower them to do that" (p. 618).

 Preston and Barnes (2017) presented a literature review on capabilities and talents associated

with successful leadership in rural schools. Their findings discovered two over-arching themes. One,

these rural principals encouraged an attentive relationship with stakeholders like staff, students,

parents, and the community. Two, the principals from rural communities can help change their schools

by harmonizing policies from both the local and district areas and working alongside their teachers to

make the school's teaching and learning the best it can be (Preston & Barnes, 2017). The foundation

of these themes is the importance of collaboration with all school stakeholders. About 40 research

studies were studied to arrive at these findings. The compelling connection of their findings to this

current study on collaboration is the sub-themes that emerged.

Preston and Barnes (2017) labeled these sub-themes as the following: (a) people-centered leadership; (b) collaboration among and with staff; (c) collaboration with individual staff members; (d) collaboration with parents and students; (e) collaboration and interaction with community stakeholders; and (f) collaboration through social capital. Many of these sub-themes also directly correlate with Hargreaves's (2019) findings over his 30 years of research.

Based on their research review, Vangrieken, et. al (2015) defined collaboration as the interchange of different stakeholders in a group as they work towards a shared goal or task. They concluded there is no one way to collaborate, but many different forms occur at varying levels throughout the process (Vangrieken, et. al, 2015). Vangrieken, et al., (2015) stated,

> The educational sector is confronted with an increasing pressure towards collaboration: teachers need to be proficient collaborators in order to successfully perform their job. There are different reasons for this evolution and the fact that teamwork is a phenomenon of growing importance in society overall is one of the contributing factors.

One form of collaboration mentioned was in a previous discussion: Professional Learning Community (PLC). Vangrieken, et. al (2015) described professional (learning) community as an assembly of collaborative teachers who share values and goals focusing on learning. Vangrieken, et. al (2015) discussed other collaborative groupings:

- **Community of Practice (CoP):** CoP as one of the binding elements of teacher community then includes the characteristics of teacher mutual support, collaboration, and collegiality. In this conception, community of practice is not seen as a distinct form of collaboration, but the aspect of practice is seen as one of the binding elements in a community.

- **Team:** A team can thus be defined as a distinguishable collection of individuals, who identify themselves as a team and interact as a team to reach certain shared goals for which they share responsibility and hold themselves mutually accountable.

- **Group:** Thus a group can be defined as a collection of individuals who share a common social categorization and identity, but the focus remains on individual goals and individual accountability. It can be discerned from a team by the fact that groups do not have to comply with all criteria of a team as described above.

Each of these collaborative groupings could be found in an educational setting. Although each group is based on some form of collaboration, each group has limitations that could hinder its effectiveness towards success. The idea of mutual practices bounds the (CoP). This bond could leave out potential teachers with particular skills or expertise simply because they do things differently than others. The idea of a Team benefits from shared goals and responsibilities because it is a group of individuals who want to be a team or group associated with one another. These individuals hold one another accountable for helping the group succeed. A group shares specific criteria but does not have to agree on all aspects of the group or its intentions. However, the focus lies on the individual, their goals, and how they will reach them independently. Each offers some form of collaboration, but not to the full extent that collaboration could benefit all stakeholders.

Vangrieken, et. al (2015) went on to reveal the benefits and negative consequences of collaboration. These two concepts were also studied in the current research. Vangrieken, et. al (2015) broke down the benefits of collaboration into three groups: students, teachers, and school. The collaboration helped improve many aspects of each group as they worked. Interestingly, each group impacted the other as they collaborated throughout the year (Vangrieken, et. al, 2015).

"Teacher collaboration is not a panacea that solves all problems, and attention should be given to possible negative consequences of collaboration" (Vangrieken, et. al, 2015, p. 29). Some of the negative consequences brought up included; (a) competitiveness among teachers, (b) members can lose their voice; and (c) collaboration can be used as a control contrivance. Vangrieken, et. al, (2015) summarized,

> education is a challenging context with regard to collaborative opportunities. A large array of obstacles needs to be overcome and pitfalls need to be avoided, but at the same time there is an ample amount of points of action and a diverse array of reasons for teachers to collaborate because all parties involved in education benefit. Moreover, teacher collaboration can never be seen as separated from its context. The educational context and culture and characteristics of the teaching profession strongly influence the implementation and sustainment of teacher collaboration (p. 36).

So, the question arises; does collaboration have a place to thrive and benefit those in music education?

Collaboration in Music Education

Battersby (2019) discussed how collaboration among music educators is not standard in our nation's public schools. This discussion was echoed by Haack (2003) with his findings on the rarity of collaboration among music educators. He stated this was due to their isolation from colleagues due to the solitude of music teaching positions. If no time is scheduled for the educator to seek help or attend other classrooms for assistance or learning, these educators may suffer from this isolation (Battersby, 2019; Haack, 2003). Research also shows collaboration is rare among music educators because they often feel secluded from their colleagues (Battersby, 2019; Haack, 2003). This seclusion comes from the nature of what and how they teach. Music educators work in isolation because their schedules may not align with other music educators in their building or

district, or they may be the only ones in their school, community, or district. According to

Sindberg and Lipscomb (2005), collaboration is a standard solution to eliminating isolation among

educators.

A successful band program can have numerous forms of collaboration. One form of

collaboration may be how new students are needed every year in the high school program to

replace those graduating or lost by attrition (Gibson, 2016). These new high school students

transitioning from the middle school band feeder programs are vital to the growth and success of

the high school programs. Research indicated most students consider dropping out of the band

program in the transition between eighth and ninth grade (Boyle et al., 1995; Gibson, 2016;

Jackson, 2017; Strickland, 2010). According to research, relationships among band directors can

be built to improve the education and transition of band students from the lower-level programs to

the high school level (Roskosky, 2006). Criss (2010) found a sense of community and

collaboration helps students commit to the ensemble and any task set before them. Band directors

must find and cultivate a collaborative connection not only between themselves but the program

as well.

Bridging the Gap

Bazen and Bailey (2009) suggested building a bridge between feeder and upper programs

helps build lasting relationships between students and teachers. It also encourages feeder program

directors to become active in both programs, especially by giving them roles and activities with the

upper-level program. Finally, this connection with the feeder program positively influences how

excited students and teachers are about continuing their musical experience. Many music educators

have a foundational interest in providing music with integrity, discipline, enhancement of content,

and supporting the diversified learning styles of students in the ensemble setting (Cane, 2009).

Students should see a connection between the middle and high school programs when building the success of both programs. Much like Bazen and Bailey (2009), Atwood (1998) suggested band directors meet to discuss ways to benefit one another's programs. Atwood (1998) further indicated the high school director spends time at the feeder school, not only with the students and director but also with the administration and parents. Furthermore, he recommends the high school director attend concerts. Hence, the students and parents see the high school director's invested interest in the future of the student's musical careers.

Why Collaboration?

Research has been conducted on outward influences contributing to the loss of band students from middle to high school (Gibson, 2016). In education, collaboration contains the following components: communication, shared decision-making, administrative/faculty/staff involvement, financial allocation, and students/participants (Gregory, 1995). However, a gap exists in the research on how much influence the middle and high school band directors have on the successful retention of students transitioning from the middle school band program. There is also very little research on how the directors' collaborative efforts affect their programs (Miksza, 2006; Morehouse, 1987; Strickland, 2010). Gardner (2010) contributes a culture that embraces collaboration will help sustain arts programs over long periods. When educators include stakeholders in the collaborative efforts for the growth and goals of their program, then these stakeholders will want to build the sustainability and success of the program. However, collaboration among music educators is not occurring in many of our nation's schools (Battersby, 2019). Nonetheless, a perceived connection exists between a successful program and the directors who work to make them that way (Deisler, 2011). Monical (1994) had this to say about bands,

Music provides a place for growth and learning. We learn about music itself. We learn

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how to manipulate music through composing and arranging. We learn how to create music

with our voices or on an instrument. We learn about different styles of music and learn how

to improvise and create our own style. We learn how to work with others and about how

our own brain learns. Music helps everyone make connections and grow beyond

themselves (p.1).

Possible Contributing Factors to and Tangible Outcome of Collaboration

Vertical Alignment

When speaking about vertical alignment, one must understand several terms. As Chandler

and Mitzener (2014) defined, vertical alignment is when educators attempt to design the

curriculum to emphasize particular objectives and learning activities that hope to lead to successful

mutual goals (p. 2). *Aligned curriculum* is a related term referring to "an academic program that is

(1) well organized and purposefully designed to facilitate learning, (2) free of academic gaps and

needless repetitions, and (3) aligned across lessons, courses, subject areas, and grade levels"

(Glossary of Education Reform, 2014, p. 1). According to Bergman et al. (1998), *curriculum*

alignment is the purposeful amalgamation of three elements of education: curriculum, instruction,

and assessment. Bergman et al. (1998) also define v*ertical collaboration* as "planning and

implementing the curriculum sequence from one grade level to the next in grades Pre-Kindergarten

to grade twelve" (p. 19). King (2018) concluded when developing a curriculum, vertical alignment

and collaboration can contribute to achieving successful student advancement through various

grade levels in general and fine arts classrooms. Chandler and Mizener (2011) quantified,

Vertical alignment, one of several aspects of curriculum alignment, is the practice of

purposely designing the curriculum for a particular academic area so objectives and

learning activities are coordinated and lead to the accomplishment of a set of mutual goals

(p.14).

Vertical collaboration emphasizes collaboration for sequential instruction, enabling students to move smoothly from one grade level to the next. Holiday (2022) stated, "the common goal of vertical alignment in education is to build academic growth and student achievement. With academic growth on all grade levels, there must be a collaboration between educators" (p. 3). Chandler and Mizener (2011) said, "educators seem to value vertical curriculum alignment, but there is often no follow-through either by the elementary or the secondary directors" (p. 21). In other academic disciplines, such as math, vertical alignment has been successful in the learning objectives of the PreK-12 curriculum. According to Schielack and Seeley (2010), the communication of mathematics teachers across grade levels helped students understand the content and processes of instruction at all levels, making a move from one level to the next more successful. Vertical alignment between elementary and middle school was an admirable goal, but it was not commonplace in the districts, according to Chandler and Mizener (2011). In their study, most elementary music educators were not practicing vertical alignment with the middle school music programs. Chandler and Mizener (2011) postulated this was due "to lack of communication between directors or administrators or a lack of enforcement of an aligned curriculum by the immediate supervisor" (p. 9). How can we, as band directors, not collaborate regarding vertical alignment? Collaborating on a critical component like vertical alignment helps our students progress from grade to grade or band to band and prepares the student to transition from one program to the next. As band directors, we have the knowledge, influence, and drive to help our programs thrive and succeed.

Band Directors

There are many considerations to define a successful band program and director. Success

depends on many variables relative to each specific person or program. To an outsider looking into any band program, defining success for that program is relative unless there is an understanding of where the program has been and where the director(s) wants to take it. Success for a rural, one-county school program will look different from a well-funded, urban band program pulling from a population of over 2500 students. According to some research, administrators advocate music teachers often enter unprepared for the commitment to the time necessary to maintain a successful program (Allen, 2011). Corona (2021) suggested that teaching high standards with solid modeling and effective teaching strategies can lead to a successful band program, open student creativity, and the development of everlasting friendships, musical relationships, and career opportunities. "There are components such as management, differentiation, and unique culture-building strategies that set the foundation of having a successful music program with an embedded culture where students thrive" (Corona, 2021, p. 11). Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser (2009) discussed the importance of directors communicating the program's shared goals. Through musical standards, directors should share with stakeholders the multitude of methods to support the program's goals. Lautzenheiser (2009) goes on to say,

> The young musicians, students, members of the group are the source of unlimited growth and development. It becomes the director's responsibility to unleash the knowledge, creativity and talent inherent in every member. This requires an ongoing interaction with everyone associated with the program. An open and honest line of communication confirms the director's concern for the welfare of the people (p. 9).

Capone-Raschilla (2019) found that the directors' relationships impact any band program's sustainable success. Interestingly, no directors perceived success according to the awards or recognitions received from their programs (Capone-Raschilla, 2019). The research echoed this

sentiment by presenting foundational components that can lead to a music program's success, like management, differentiation, and unique culture-building strategies, which lead to an immersed culture where students thrive (Coronas, 2021). Battisti (1999) said,

> The leader, working with the members of his or her group, must strive to create a feeling of community and group identity. Development of trust and cooperation between students is one of the teacher's most important responsibilities. It is crucial that a teacher helps students from diverse backgrounds develop an awareness and appreciation of shared goals and experiences (p. 50).

According to research, defining success with any band program can be attributed to the directors, retention of students, strong band culture, and consistent curriculum and learning (Asmus, 1986; Caimi, 1981; Capone-Rashcilla, 2019; Contorno, 2011; Olson, 2011). Research also discovered that students' ability and effort are perceived causes of success and failure in music (Deslier, 2011). The following contributing factors can affect the recognition of the program: characteristics, attitude, teacher collaboration, individual students' background, socioeconomic status, and the mean socioeconomic status of the school (Deslier, 2011).

Brenan and White (2003) said, "A primary purpose of team teaching is to draw upon each individual teacher's strengths to increase student achievement" (p. 30). They argue that team teaching correlates increased teaching time with increased student success. With two teachers in the classroom, each bringing their expertise and experiences, team teaching offers many unique avenues to deliver instruction and actual curriculum growth. Brenan and White (2003) discussed how communication is the number one contributor to a successful team-teaching capability. One study found post-analysis was by Thomas (2021). His study's purpose "was to investigate the goals, structure, and director perceptions of team-teaching practices within a vertically-

aligned band program (p. ii). One of Thomas' (2021) main discoveries was how vertical

alignment provided the best remunerations for students, which was a principal goal of all the

directors.

Finally, Poolos' (2022) study indicated that one way to increase student participation in

the band was having the same director for both middle and high school. However, if they students

were to have two different individual directors, collaboration would be the key to the program's

success. This success came through shard goals, sharing performances, and providing interactions

with the rising ninth graders as they look to continue in the high school band.

Howard (2006) found,

> the roles and responsibilities of the instrumental music educator are diverse and
>
> challenging. It is often difficult to express the demands of an instrumental music educator.
>
> The roles of a director are often consumed in maintaining relationships with valued
>
> constituents (i.e. students, parents, administrators, community, etc…) (p. 18).

He discussed how instrumental music programs are constructed as an intricate social configuration. The

success of the students and program relied upon relationships with all stakeholders; students, parents, staff,

administration, other directors, and the community in which they teach.

Recruitment and Retention

Gibson (2016) and Hayes (2005) indicated that students continue band from middle to high

school when students feel comfortable with the high school band director. They also found that the

relationship between students and band directors, both middle and high, contributed to continued

enrollment in the band. Hayes (2004) indicated that many high school band directors become

frustrated because of enrollment decline from junior high to senior high school. The transition

between middle and high school band programs is not interrupted because of the different recruiting

approaches used by the middle school director and the high school directors, according to Jackson (2017).

Albert (2006) affirmed numerous factors contribute to the lack of retention of students from middle to high school band programs: (a) concern for the academic challenges at the high school level, (b) poor home environment, (c) class scheduling, and (d) monetary investments necessary to participate in an instrumental music program. Staub's (2019) research found that band director Diane Snyder had three core beliefs about teaching band. These included (a) a belief in creating a culture of excellence, student ownership, and compassionate community; (b) a belief in building independent musicians; and (c) a belief in learning from mentors (p. 89). These beliefs directly relate to how band directors can recruit and, more importantly, retain students from middle school until they graduate high school. Poolos (2022) goes on to say

> Since band students typically have the same teacher for several years, band directors possess a unique opportunity to nurture and develop stable positive relationships with their students. This relationship should, in turn, improve students' emotional and psychological stress as they transition through school (p. 29).

Strickland (2010), speaking on the uniqueness of the high school band, said the teacher/student relationship grows and develops over the years spent in the high school program. She also said the high school band directors interact and build relationships with the parents because of the parental interaction as chaperones, participation in trips, booster programs, and audience members. She concluded that these outside-the-classroom interactions help form strong bonds amplified by shared successes and disappointments that occur throughout the years. These relationships, as maintained by Strickland's (2010) research, described the personal nature of band directors contributing to students leaving the band to feelings of disappointment and professional failure (p. 2).

Summary and Conclusion of Literature Review

Collaboration among middle and high school band directors appears to be a rarity rather than the norm. As band directors, we seem to set ourselves on an island with little to no communication with those in our school, supporters of our program, or with directors and programs that directly affect or feed our programs. As directors, we coordinate and thrive when our student musicians work together for common goals like performances, competitions, or program growth. Then why does it appear we struggle to have the same communication and coordination with our fellow directors and programs? Studies have shown the benefits of collaboration in other fields of education and the corporate world. Successful educators collaborate with tools like vertical alignment and team teaching to help their students and programs grow.

There were three steps to disciplined collaboration discovered by Hanson (2009). First, one must evaluate the opportunity for collaboration. Because of the nature of progression for band students to move from the middle school band program to the high school band program, can directors see this as a significant opportunity for the growth and progression of both programs? Two, one must spot barriers to collaboration. As band directors whose programs impact one another, can they ascertain what may be hindering the building of their collaborative relationship? Third, one must tailor solutions to tear down these barriers.

There is a gap in the research on collaboration among music educators, especially for middle and high school band director pairs and their programs. The benefits collaboration has to offer all stakeholders in an adjoined middle and high school band program are abundant. Furthermore, there are many band programs across the nation that are excellent examples of how collaboration can work to the growth of the students and the success of the program. Therefore, it seems appropriate to research pairs of middle and high school band directors' perceptions about collaborating and its

benefits to their collaborative programs.

Chapter 3: Methods and Procedures

Qualitative Research Design

With a phenomenological study, the researcher describes the commonalities and meaning for several individuals through their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This qualitative study implemented empirical inquiry from one primary method; semi- structured interviews. I explored middle and high school band director pairs' perceptions of collaboration and its potential impact on the success and growth of their programs. Collaboration is team teaching, vertical alignment, recruitment and retention, communication, joint performance and programs, and other contributing factors across the programs (Battersby, 2019; Hansen, 2009; Sindberg, 2014). Research has indicated the critical component of group integration is cooperation between the parties/educators involved (Wheeler, 1997). Many band programs appear to struggle with having a collaborative relationship. The discovery of commonalities between collaborative, successful band director pairs can help formulate a plan for success.

Positionality, Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

My positionality as a band director influenced this study's motivation and design. In my 26 years of teaching, I have transformed from being the sole director responsible for an entire program to sharing a program with another director. Before I shared a program, I had no prior experience in how personalities, concepts, and philosophies merge to better the students and the success of both programs. The research was limited to middle and high school band directors where the middle school band program fed directly into the high school program, or the high school directors worked together at their program and spent time at their middle school feeders. There was clear evidence of collaboration between the middle and high school directors. This delimitation also became my limitation as I sought out programs that fit my specific criteria. The

data collection became emergent and reiterative. I discovered from the data commonalities

between the different, successful, collaborative programs that could transfer to other programs

where collaboration may not be as visible or essential in their programs. With little to no literature

directly related to the research topic, I consulted research on the broad topic of collaboration,

successful band programs' qualities, and the importance of relationships between directors. I

applied what was discovered to what was observed and learned through interviews, coding, and

data analysis.

Qualitative Interviews

Participants and Setting

I aimed to recruit twelve to twenty-four pairs of middle and high school band directors who

appeared to collaborate across their programs. Upon Auburn University Institutional Review Board

(IRB) approval, the following criteria helped identify a purposeful sample of middle and high school

band director pairs (Creswell & Poth, 2018):

1. The middle school director's program must feed into the high school band director's

   program. There can be multiple middle school directors that feed into one high

   school.

2. The pairs/groups must have worked together for at least three years.

3. There must be some quantifiable evidence of program success;

   a. Consistent superior ratings at a large group performance ensemble, marching

      band, and other related programs or contests.

   b. Significant retention numbers (50% or more) of students from eighth to ninth-

      grade band programs.

   c. Shared scope and sequence of curriculum.

      d. Evidence of a shared program:

          i.   Team teaching

         ii.   Collaborative planning

       iii.   Administration and parent support

       iv.   Joint concerts

        v.   Joint trips

The band director pairs/groups selected for interviews met at least four of the abovementioned criteria. Ultimately, I interviewed twelve pairs of band directors. These pairs were middle school band directors who directly worked and fed into the high school band director's program or were direct assistants to the high school band director who also worked at the middle school in some capacity. The chosen band director pairs fit the successful, collaborative band program criteria. I posted on the Band Directors Group Facebook page, which currently has over 29,000 members, with a request stating the abovementioned criteria. The post was also shared on similar band director hubs on the BAND App, which has roughly 2500 members. Ultimately, most of my pairs came from snowball sampling from colleagues and suggestions from other participants.

Table 1 shows a breakdown of the paired participant band directors' demographics.

Table 1

Paired Participants Demographics

Name*	M/F	School Name*	Years of Teaching
Anthony	M	South East High School	17
Brian	M	South East Middle School	15
Charles	M	East High School	13
David	M	East High School/ Middle School	1
Ashley	F	East Middle School	40
Edward	M	Sunny Side High School	7
Barbara	F	Sunny Side Middle School	25
Frank	M	River High School	24
Helen	F	River Middle School	15
George	M	Mountain High School	23
Carol	F	Mountain Middle School	19
Henry	M	Palms High School	1
Donna	F	Palms Middle School	21
Elizabeth	F	Palms Intermediate School	8
Isaiah	M	Legacy High School	21
Fran	F	Legacy High School	26
James	M	Mumford High School	24
Grace	F	Mumford High School	10

Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity and location of interview participants

Data Collection

Qualitative data collection creates the conditions for the researcher to understand the interconnection of the interviewees. This understanding supports the most thorough and focused picture of the people and phenomena studied while maintaining a loyalty to the complexity of participants and their experiences. Hence, the data collection methods are not concrete; they are dynamic and emergent (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This research focused on the lived and shared experiences of middle and high school band director pairs' perceptions of collaboration and its impact on their programs. The qualitative research design's primary source for data collection relied on semi-structured interviews with the directors. The interview protocol located in Appendix A was followed for this research.

Data were triangulated with artifacts based on the criteria set by the researcher. These artifacts included program history, evidence of collaboration, retention data, curriculum, and other contributing factors which show the directors worked together for a better program (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used journaling throughout the process. Before analyzing the data, journaling was a place to explore and note my biases and pre- understandings about the phenomenon I was studying (Peoples, 2021).

Table 2 shows the association between research questions and interview items, how data were analyzed, and what research/literature helped develop the questions.

Table 2

Research Question, Data Collection, and Analysis Chart: Semi-Structured Interview

Research Question	Associated Interview Question	Data Analyses Procedure	Notes

RQ1: What types of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs?	3. How do you define the success of your band program?
	4. How do you define collaboration within your/a band program?
	5. With your current position, how important to the success of your program is the collaboration of the middle or high school band director?
	6. In what ways do you feel collaboration is essential in your setting?
	7. In what ways and to what extent is your fellow middle or high school band director involved with your program? Please give examples and details.
	8. In what ways and to what extent are you involved with the other band program?
	9. Is vertical alignment a part of your collaborative efforts?
	  a. If yes, how?
	  b. If no, why is it not?
	15. Are there any other ideas or comments you would like to contribute about collaboration between band directors and the success of their programs?
		The researcher seeks to understand and convey these collaborating band directors' lived experiences accurately and efficiently (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After the transcription process, data analysis software will help discover recurring themes. I will compare the themes across all interviews. Reporting recurring themes from the interview data will help analyze the data.	Battersby (2019) concluded music educators could create a viable ethos where sharing information is a significant part of their supportive community through collaboration and relationship building with colleagues. Within this community, one can offer many opportunities for growth and development. These opportunities are especially concrete because music teachers can share their students, goals and educational standards.
			  Hansen (2009) makes a case for collaboration in the corporate world by stating there are three upsides to collaboration: better innovation, better sales, and better operations (p. 38). These three items can easily translate into the education world in the following manner. The first one, better innovation, could be seen by music educators as keeping your program in tune with current trends and the motivation of all those involved; students, parents, administration, and the community. Two, better sales may translate into better retention and growth of one's program. Finally, better operations could translate into running your program better and more efficiently for the betterment of the program.
			  Sindberg (2014) suggested as music educators move towards a culture of collaboration, they must make an effort to connect and build relationships which are supportive of both them and the program (p. 396).

| RQ2: What benefits of collaboration do middle (6-8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs? | 6. In what ways do you feel collaboration is essential in your setting?
10. Do your band students, parents, administration, and community see you and the other director working together?
11. How important is it to you for your scholars and your program to see that you are partnering together?
12. What part does collaboration play in the recruitment and retention of students in both programs year to year?
15. Are there any other ideas or comments you would like to contribute about collaboration between band directors and the success of their programs? | The researcher seeks to understand and convey these collaborating band directors' lived experiences accurately and efficiently (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After the transcription process, data analysis software will help discover recurring themes. I will compare the themes across all interviews. Reporting recurring themes from the interview data will help analyze the data. | According to Justus (2001), the director is the most influential factor contributing to the success of the band program. Justus (2001) listed the characteristics of a successful band director which lead to a successful program, including such ideas as "educational background, social skills, attitude, dedication, family background, social skills, attitude, dedication, enthusiasm, experience, and age" (p. 21). Humphries (2012) suggested band teachers should welcome ideas and suggestions from their colleagues. He further stated too many band directors hid from their colleagues, neglecting the abundantly available collaboration.

Humphries (2012) found collaboration can happen in unique ways, such as email discussions, professional development days, observation visits, and professional learning communities. Sindberg (2013) echoed this sentiment in his research by concluding for directors to connect and build these collaborative relationships, they must change the culture of their program to include the efforts of connection and support. If the band directors are willing to put in the effort and take that step into the unknown, collaboration could be the key to the success of any band program. |

| RQ3: What hindrances to collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors experience in their individual and overall band programs? | 14. In your opinion, what are some factors that hinder the working relationship between you and the other band director?

15. Are there any other ideas or comments you would like to contribute about collaboration between band directors and the success of their programs? | The researcher seeks to understand and convey these collaborating band directors' lived experiences accurately and efficiently (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After the transcription process, data analysis software will help discover recurring themes. I will compare the themes across all interviews. Reporting recurring themes from the interview data will help analyze the data. | According to Battersby (2019), collaboration among music educators is not standard in our nation's public schools. Haack (2003) echoed this sentiment with his findings on the rarity of collaboration among music educators. He stated this is due to their isolation from colleagues due to the solitude of music teaching positions.
    "Collaboration can make possible what was in isolation, impossible" (Sutherland, 2015, p. 1632). Hanson (2009) recommended not collaborating merely for the sole sake of collaborating. According to Hanson (2009), our end goal for collaboration should be to improve our programs and achieve better results. Hadar and Brody (2010) found learning needs to be stimulated and supported to create a culture of collaboration.
    009, Cane stated:
    Effective music collaboration consists of equal partnering in the planning, implementation, management, and assessment among educators concerned in maintaining the integrity of music as a viable discipline and classroom teachers interested in providing enhancement of content as well as support for diverse learning styles. (p. 33) |

RQ4: What are the similarities and differences in middle and high school directors' perceptions of collaboration?	3. How do you define the success of your band program? 4. How do you define collaboration within your/a band program? 5. With your current position, how important to the success of your program is the collaboration of the middle or high school band director? 6. In what ways do you feel collaboration is essential in your setting? 7. In what ways and to what extent is your fellow middle or high school band director involved with your program? Please give examples and details. 8. In what ways and to what extent are you involved with the other band program? 9. Is vertical alignment a part of your collaborative efforts? a. If yes, how? b. If no, why is it not? 10. Do your band students, parents, administration, and community see you and the other director working together? 11. How important is it to you for your scholars and your program to see that you are partnering together? 12. What part does collaboration play in the recruitment and retention of students in both programs year to year? 13. In your opinion, what are some factors that contribute to the working relationship between you and the other band director? 14. In your opinion, what are some factors that hinder the working relationship between you and the other band director? 15. Are there any other ideas or comments you would like to contribute about collaboration between band directors and the success of their programs?	The researcher seeks to understand and convey these collaborating band directors' lived experiences accurately and efficiently (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After the transcription process, data analysis software will help discover recurring themes. I will compare the themes across all interviews. Reporting recurring themes from the interview data will help analyze the data.	According to research, relationships among band directors can be built to improve the education and transition of the band scholars from the lower-level programs to the high school level (Roskosky, 2006). Criss (2010) found a sense of community and collaboration helps students commit to the ensemble and any task set before them. Research also shows collaboration is rare among music educators because they often feel secluded from their colleagues (Battersby, 2019; Haack, 2003). Bazen and Bailey (2009) suggested building a bridge between feeder and upper programs helps build lasting relationships between students and teachers. It also encourages feeder program directors to become active in both programs, especially by giving them roles and activities with the upper-level program, and finally, this connection with the feeder program makes a positive influence on how excited both students and teachers are about continuing their musical experience. Atwood (1998) has many suggestions similar to Bazen and Bailey. He suggested the band directors meet and discuss ways they can benefit one another's programs. Atwood further indicates the high school director spends time at the feeder school, not only with the students and director but also with the administration and parents. Furthermore, he recommends the high school director attend concerts so the students and parents see the invested interest the high school director has in the future of the student's musical career.

The interviews included semi-structured open-ended questions with middle and high school band directors. The interview protocol came from questions already used in a pilot study seeking similar information and was submitted to colleagues for peer review. Using these semi-structured, open-ended questions, I followed up on ideas and concepts that may not have come up in the original interview questions. This process guided future interviews by allowing me to modify and update questions as new and different data were gathered throughout the interview process. With my sample drawing from nationwide band members and many COVID protocols still in place, ZOOM meetings helped expedite interviewing participants and collecting data. I intended to interview the participants separately, i.e., middle school and high school directors, but with some pairs; it was easier to interview both simultaneously. Part of the reason for the interviews being done at one time was that some participants were married. Only two of the interview pairs were married. This method allowed me to draw comparisons and themes related to the individual directors' placement in middle or high school. I transcribed each interview verbatim. Once transcribed, I reviewed the interview process and data. I looked for incomplete thoughts and possible ideas I may have misunderstood or seemed unfinished. I employed member checking of these transcriptions with the interviewees. Once the interviews where transcribed, I sent a copy to the interviewee to review. Participants were allowed to clarify or add any thoughts they may have had since our interview.

Data Analysis

I sought to understand and convey these collaborating band directors' lived experiences accurately and efficiently (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interviews were conducted via *Zoom*. I used semi-structured questions to explore the lived experiences of middle and high school band director pairs/teams. The *Zoom* meeting recordings were transcribed verbatim into Microsoft

Word and member checked by the interviewees. The transcriptions were then entered into *ATLAS.ti 23* and coded. Initial, or open coding, led to a generalized code list. Saldana (2021) defined coding as

> The portion of data coded during first cycle coding processes can range in magnitude from a single word to a full paragraph, an entire page of text or a stream of moving images. In second cycle coding processes, the portions coded can be the exact same units, longer passages of text, analytic memos about the data, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far (p. 6).

A second round of descriptive coding helped assign a more specific description of the reviewed interview data. In vivo coding was also incorporated into the process because the descriptions from the interviewees were better representations of the meanings of the codes. The coding process eventually created repeating concept codes and groups. Throughout the coding process, the trustworthiness of the inductive process and findings came from peer reviews and member checking of interview data, the coding process, and theme development (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldana, 2021). Also, throughout this process, I engaged in memoing. Creswell and Proth (2018) stated

> We emphasize the complementary role memoing plays to systematic analysis because memoing helps track development of ideas through the process. This, in turn, lends credibility to the qualitative data analysis process and outcomes because "the qualitative researcher should expect to uncover some information through informed hunches, intuition, and serendipitous occurrences that, in turn, will lead to a richer and more powerful explanation of the setting, context, and participants in any given study" (Janesick, 2011, p. 148). (p. 189).

Ravitch and Carl (2016) emphasized the importance of a researcher to understand criticality when engaging in qualitative research. They affirm that "individuals are interpreting all of the time, including when we, as researchers, are observing, engaging interviews, and reading through data" (p. 219).

According to Terry and Hayfield (2021), the reflexive thematic analysis process has six phases: "(a) familiarization, (b) coding, (c) initial theme generation, (d) developing and reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, (f) witting the report" (p.29). After the coding process narrowed the concept codes, I conducted an initial theme generation. "Theme generation involves making sense of your list of carefully developed codes and clustering or combing codes to construct multifaceted and meaningful patterns that answer your research question" (Terry & Hayfield, 2021). The interviews were re-read and re-coded to discover code clusters. Clustering unique codes into related code families was the foundation for the initial theme generation. An overarching essence was realized through an iterative process of reading interviews concerning the newly developed themes. Ultimately, this main essence of the data was supported by four main themes developed through coding and data analysis. This process included member-checked interviews for accuracy and a peer-reviewed coding process. All of this was to help authenticate the discovery of how the interviews' data answered the four research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness ensures the investigation (and its findings) are of the highest quality and meaningful to audiences. Schwandt (2015) described four criteria to assess a researcher's trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Credibility* assures the reader that the researcher has represented and reconstructed the views and responses of those interviewed. *Transferability* is the

researcher's responsibility to establish the connections between collected data. *Dependability* focuses on the process of data collection. A researcher wants to ensure it is logical, traceable, and well-documented. Finally, *confirmability* involves establishing that data are not from someone's imagination but the indistinct findings and interpretations. I accomplished my trustworthiness by collecting data via multiple sources (interviews). These sources are, in turn, triangulated by artifacts gathered by the researcher throughout the interviewing process. This study, in partial fulfillment of a doctor of philosophy degree, is a dissertation reviewed by a faculty committee.

Ravitch and Carl (2016) described the work of Maxwell (1992) to explain validity. The first is *descriptive validity* which refers to the accuracy of the data. The audience must know that proper care will be given during the transcription of interviews and the gathering of artifacts and data. Second, *interpretive validity* deals with how the researcher attributes behaviors, interviewers' answers, and other factors to the data analysis. *Theoretical validity* deals with how the study itself can explain the research. Being a high school band director myself, I hope to gain insight into the collaborative efforts of band directors. *Evaluative validity* refers to the researcher's ability to interpret, describe, and understand the data collected without judgment or being evaluative. Being a high school band director gives me the positionality necessary to analyze the data. At the same time, my positionality can also be biased because I have formed opinions about what I deem a successful or unsuccessful program.

Dependability

The interview protocol was field-tested and peer-debriefed before the actual research. Semi-structured interviews transpired via ZOOM. After the interview was complete, the researcher transcribed the interviews. By sharing the transcriptions with the interviewees, interviewers can confirm the tone, intent, and language used. Member checking helped establish

the interview protocol's validity and the data analysis's trustworthiness. Ravitch and Carl (2016) stated,

> member checks are processes by which researchers check in with participants about different aspects of the research to see how they think and feel about various aspects of the research process and the parts of the data set that pertain to them (p. 197).

Also, throughout the coding process, I continued to have my analysis peer-debriefed to ensure the validity of my work. Creswell and Poth (2018) stated the following:

> Peer review or debriefing provides an external check of the research process (Ely et al., 1991; Erlandson et al., 1993; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988), much in the same spirit as interrater reliability in quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define the role of the peer debriefer as a "devil's advocate," an individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations; and provides the researcher with the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to the researcher's feelings. This reviewer may be a peer, and both the peer and the researcher keep written accounts of the sessions, called "peer debriefing sessions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 263).

I kept a simple reflective journal throughout the entirety of the study. Given my positionality in the study, I did my best to keep my bias and assumptions in check with the journal and conversations with my peers, colleagues, and advisors. Journaling is recommended to help the researcher keep a record of their journey from beginning designs to writing the research results (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

This study addresses a gap in the literature about the collaborative and professional relationships between middle school and high school band directors. These directors' programs

feed into and rely on one another for growth and success, perceived support and barriers to collaboration and deliberate vertical curriculum alignment, and how their shared approach to collaboration can affect their programs.

Chapter 4: Findings

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the connection between middle and high school band director pairs' perceptions of collaboration and its potential impact on the success and growth of their programs. Twelve pairs of middle and high school band directors ($N = 24$) characterized their experiences regarding the different types of collaboration encountered, the benefits of collaboration, and the hindrances to their collaborative efforts. Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of the participants. Pseudonyms included any names, locations, or other identifiable personal information given by the study participants.

The four themes presented in this study are: (a) Collaboration, (b) Building Relationships, (c) Communication, and (d) Student Centered. These four themes all fall under the overall essence of the research data, *One Program*. Through the discussions of the different types of collaboration and the benefits of collaborative efforts, the band directors' thoughts always pointed back to being one team working towards the same goals: student growth and success at all levels. Because *One Program* comprises all four main themes, it will be characterized and explained in a separate section.

Collaboration

Research Question 1 asked; What types of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs? The following sub-themes emerged from the review of the interview transcripts and coding process of middle and high school band director pairs as they were outlined through the first theme of Collaboration: (a) Team Teaching, (b) Performances/Programs, (c) Shared Goals, and (d) Vertical Alignment.

Types of Collaboration

Team Teaching. Team teaching is a group of teachers working together in a classroom setting to "purposefully, regularly, and cooperatively" educate students in the learning process (Buckley, 2000). This sentiment is echoed in the idea of collaborative efforts between band directors at both the middle and high school levels to benefit the students, which benefits the program. The discussion around Team Teaching involves each director, middle or high, being able to spend time at the others' director's school. This time could be built into their schedule to be in the other band room purposely. In some cases, the pair of directors worked together at the high school with at least one, or in some instances, both parties could go to the middle school program in some capacity during the day or week.

An example of this flexibility was at Mountain High School. Carol stated, "Now we have a third director that our administration has been so gracious to grant us. And so that allows us to put two people in a classroom for most of the time". Helen at River Middle School has a similar setup. She gave the following example, "We've got concert bands that we will team teach together if needed, or I'll go over there for the concert. I'll schedule my planning on purpose in a place that is when the wind ensemble is". Helen discussed the ability to go over to assist the high school directions by running sectionals or working with students individually. In return, she can call upon the high school directors to come to her school to utilize their expertise with her students.

Henry at Palms High School tries to spend time at his middle school feeder, which includes the 7th and 8th-grade band, and the intermediate school where beginning band is taught. He stated,

> I'm going down to the Intermediate School to help out with their band. She has after school practices, sometimes for them to get ready for their concert...the more they see me the more they're going to retain and want to get interested in it (band).

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Barbara at Sunny Side Middle School supports the importance of team teaching at all levels of the band program. Barbara said,

> I wish everybody had this opportunity because there's so many things that happen because of it. And so much stress and things and weight, it comes off your shoulders because…you're not in the game alone. I know that if I need something, I can text him, I can call him, I can message them…I know if I need anything, I can just contact him and he can take care of it if it's within his power, and if it's not, he'll find a way.

Charles at East High School talked about the importance of having different directors with different personalities and teaching methods, all working together for all the students in the program. He said,

> …I think we have that collaborative approach…students are able to gravitate towards one of the band directors that can constantly push them on so it's not one person trying to go at it…most of the verbiage we use as always, we, us; even from a staff perspective. We all keep our egos in check because it's not about us, it's about the kids.

As supported by the band directors interviewed, one major benefit of collaboration is team-teaching. Using this collaborative effort, the students have a chance to grow and be successful. When the focus was on the students and their growth, the program naturally grew and was successful. As James from Mumford High School said,

> We preach and preach that it's not, it's not about winning or ratings and that…but you can get those things if you're doing that…That's not the goal, but…you know when you have a cold, you sneeze and when you are successful band, you have those opportunities.

As a director, having a team ready and willing to jump in at any time helps make any task very manageable.

Performances/Programs. Another type of collaboration discussed by many of the band director pairs was the utilization of performances to help support and promote one another's programs. Anthony, the high school director at South East High School, finds it essential to bring band students together at all levels for unique and memorable performances. He said, "the kids can't wait to perform. Finding ways to incorporate the kids with each other throughout the year is important to me". Anthony went on to reflect on his spring concert from last year. The high school and fifth-grade bands performed a combined piece at the concert. The fifth-grade students were intermixed among all the high school students. A combined performance such as this one can booster the confidence and excitement of the younger players while at the same time allowing the older students to be an example for the future of the program. Edward at Sunny Side High School agreed with the importance of performing together by stating,

> We had a joint concert band, symphony band rehearsal with their group (middle school).
> So, we had a short rehearsal before they arrived. We used it as a performance
> opportunity…And then we rehearsed their music with them. The kids had other kids
> modeling for them. The kids were getting to know other kids...

From the middle school director's perspective, Barbara at Sunnyside Middle had this to say about the same joint effort,

> We did a combined rehearsal for (state assessment), getting ready for our evaluations,
> and we did a combined rehearsal with his top group and my top group, and they sat in
> and played with us and then we sat in while they…performed theirs. But my kids were
> sizzling along with them so they could get that experience…We know that the more that
> we help each other, the better both of our programs are going to be.

Palms High School band director, Henry, sees the importance of students being together for various

performances in different capacities. He said,

> …the high schooler's come and watch as well and you know that's part of having those joint concerts. At the intermediate concert in December… we had a quite a few high school students come and watch…We had some help out with setup changes…It also helps to again have everybody perform the same venue because not many districts get to have that.

These joint performances and interactions are foundational to the program's growth and play a critical role in student interaction in getting to know one another.

Another program example was using students in mutually beneficial programs which supported leadership and growth. Elizabeth, the intermediate band director at Palms Intermediate School, reflected on her unique situation at the Palms Schools. There is a high school, a middle school, and the 6th-grade beginning band is at the intermediate school. So, there are three directors and two significant school changes for their students, which can be a difficult transition for students. These directors felt their presence and collaboration were essential for the growth of both students and their programs. Elizabeth spoke about working with the marching band and organizing events for the high school students to come to her school and play for the younger students as a recruitment tool. She and the high school directors are constantly seeking ways and opportunities to work with one another students.

Donna at Palms Middle School utilized students in non-performing ways. She said, "I have my students volunteering to pass out programs and help with stage changes at the concerts. And then, the high school students have done the same thing for my program and for the intermediate program". Mumford High School Director, James, talked about a similar program with his high school students attending the middle school. It is a Tri-M program for her students to earn service

hours to earn the Tri-M graduation chord. According to the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) website, the Tri-M Music Honor Society is a (NAfME) program that focuses on creating future leaders in music education and music advocacy. Many band programs utilize this program to encourage students to use their talents differently and uniquely. He said,

> it was set up so that the only way that kids can get a cord for Tri-M is if they do service hours and those service hours must be in support of either ushering concerts or going to the middle school after school rehearsals and helping…it's created this incredibly intertwined…connectivity between the two programs.

Helen at River Middle School has a similar private lesson program with high school students. She said they,

> …set up a lesson program where we'll let some of the upper classmen come and do free lessons or help sessions with the students that are at the junior high and we'll give them service hours for it that they do….they like that a lot.

George, the high school director at Mountain High School, spoke about his high school students going to the middle school to help those students improve their playing. He said,

> The students that are in Tri-M and go through all of the leadership training and it's usually the higher end playing students…They go down once a week and they give master classes to the younger students…there's a lot of collaboration from the top down with the understanding, almost like the Macbeth balance pyramid where most of what you do has to filter to the base for the rest of it to be supported on top.

George's pyramid metaphor for a band program translates into everything that happens at the high school, from successful, prepared students, engaged parents, or supportive community, beginning at the middle school band level. This commection furthers the importance of these directors'

collaborative efforts. As the high school director from River High School put it, "we try to have the teaching a line from beginning through the high school… that way we are using the same terminology…the same method books…all on the same page as far as program goals, student achievement, and etcetera".

Shared Goals. A significant sub-theme of collaboration echoed with almost all pairs was the idea of Shared Goals. Shared goals are deemed essential to collaboration when examining the discussion of director participants so far. If directors are going to be a team working together for the betterment of all band students, there will be a natural alignment of ideas and goals. Grace from Mumford High School said this about program alignment,

> I think remembering that we all wear the same logo, we all go to the same school, and we
> all have to support each other that way is really important. And I think that that's where a
> lot of band directors may have some missteps. They're zoned in on what they need rather
> than thinking about the overall product or the overall student experience.

East Middle and High School Band director David discussed the importance of their team having shared goals. He said, "We have our own team…one goal. We're all working towards the same thing …here's the goal we are reaching toward and here's what it's going to take to get there. Here's how we're going to achieve that goal". Charles, the East High School director, echoed David's thoughts by saying, "…it's like those different roles, different collaborations and still, all me. And part of it's not mine versus yours…We don't let our egos get in the way here. It's all about we and us". Palms High School Director Henry reflected how the directors at Palms all wanted the same thing for their students. He said, "We want the same success, but it comes in different ways, but we want the same success for our kids, and we want to work together". Elizabeth, Palms Intermediate School band director, echoed Henry's feelings.

We're aligned to the same goal and we all have different ideas on how to reach that goal. But we are able to approach each other in a professional and direct way…We're always communicating with each other when it comes to planning band events…because you can't do it alone.

One shared goal was prominent enough to contribute to the collaboration theme: vertical alignment. If directors collaborate and seek a continuum of learning from middle to high school, aligning their curriculum seems to become a natural but conversed practice.

Vertical Alignment. When asked about vertical alignment between programs, Brian at South East Middle School said this about the discussion with the high school director,

He's also set some kind of expectations…this is where I'd like them to be…here's the scales that I'd like him to be able to do. They need to know articulations…basic things...how to read key signatures and time signatures, and all…he kind of maps that out.

Anthony, South East High School director, spoke about how he likes to see the program's natural progress through the graded band levels of music. He felt that the first-year band could play level one, then the second-year could play level 2, then the directors are pushing a level three or four band by year three, depending on the student's progress. This leads to a top high school band playing level five or even six consistently. This general outline helps the director pair keep track of the student's and program's progress.

At Mumford High School, both directors, James and Grace, agree on the importance of vertical alignment, but regarding the middle school director's expertise and ability to teach and prepare students. James said,

…if you're using the literature as your curriculum…we find different gaps in different

years…And Helen has a very set philosophy for the way that she's going to teach kids. And so rather than try to tell her what to do…I don't want to fight at home also (his wife is his middle school feeder director), and so I steer clear. She knows what she's doing it for a reason…she is too good at her job for me to tell her how to do it.

Grace, James's co-director at the high school, agreed. She said,

I do think that vertical alignment is really important, but the most important part of it is the director enthusiastically trying to encourage students to continue…we are at every middle school event…The kids know us… I'm able to go to the middle school once or twice every other week, or once a month and the kids already know who we are.

Regarding vertical alignment, the sentiments at River High and Middle School appear to be the same. River High Director, Frank, spoke about the importance of the band staff being on the same page. He said,

…each spring before we leave for the summer, the entire staff sits down and we look at our curriculum to make sure that it is aligned from top to bottom. We discuss the method books…the supplements….and if we have to make any changes…everybody on the staff has a voice.

Helen at River Middle agrees. She stated,

(The students) have got to meet these minimum requirements to come up to me…I pass that down to them and then they have the option to go…you should put them back through your beginner band over there again. We have requirements for the high school auditions going into each year…I try to meet where that needs to be for them in between.

Ashley from East Middle School talked about the importance of having a clear-cut, written plan so that everyone, especially a new team teacher, understood the program's direction. Palms

Middle School director, Donna, talked about clear communication from the high school director to help her strategize preparing her students for the transition to high school. She stated, "We collaborate together…What do I need to have those 8th graders prepared to perform, and what kind of routines do they need to know by the time they get to their freshman year".

Vertical Alignment is not a fixed process. The directors above see it as an ongoing procedure that is revisited often and continuously updated to meet the student's needs where they are and assess where they need to be. Carol at Mountain Middle agreed with this concept. She said, "I say we push our students to achieve as much as they can achieve. It is not where you have to make this Milestone or this criterion. If they do not know something, we will catch them up on next year".

There are many different types of collaboration for middle and high school band directors working together. All the directors interviewed want the best for their students and their program. They realize it takes the entire team to pull in the same direction to accomplish the shared goals. These directors also affirmed that there is more than one way to have these collaborative efforts work and achieve what is set out for the success of students and programs. Fran, married to the other high school director at Legacy High School, had a compelling take on their partnership. This observation is accurate for any director's understanding of director relationships, married or not. She said, "And you know, understanding…what a vital role the middle school plays. We are nothing without middle school. Absolutely nothing. That has been huge…the goal for them to come here, but they cannot get here without our help".

Benefits of Collaboration

Research question two asked, *What benefits of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9- 12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs?* The

following emerged from the review of the interview transcripts and coding process of middle and high school band director pairs as they were outlined through the first theme of Collaboration: (a) Student Growth, (b) Recruitment and Retention, and (c) Visibility.

Student Growth. One of the extensive benefits of collaboration was centered around student growth. In any band program, students are the focus. The directors interviewed cared about their students and who they could become. David, who goes between East Middle and High School, said, "Are there kids, graduating as seniors…with the skills they need to be successful in whatever they do". James at Mumford High School said,

> We feel like the role of this band program is to provide as many opportunities to as many students as possible...from different ensembles to personal opportunities for growth and continuing in music to playing at the highest-level literature possible, to traveling around the country, and around the world. We just want to provide kids with opportunities they could not have anywhere else.

And these opportunities offer students the challenge and growth they need to be better musicians and people. Legacy High Band director, Isaiah, talked about the importance of students growing musically and as people. He said, "…as long as the kids are learning and getting better on their instruments…becoming better humans…is just as important as the notes…Teaching structure and discipline…obviously helps with the music aspect, but I think it just makes them better people".

With a positive band culture, students can grow in many different ways. Henry at Palms High School talked about taking over a band program where an excellent strong culture was established and how that impacted how the students took care of everything, from picking up after themselves to setting a good example for one another in the band. Henry's final take on making students better people beyond the band room was, "that is what we try to strive for the most is

setting the example for everybody else in the school body…the musicianship will come, the talent will come, the practice time will come".

Ashley from East Middle School tied student growth with success by stating, "I consider our program a very successful program in that we, we graduate good kids. We graduate musicians and that's a successful program". Ashley talks about the importance of this growth beginning with her at the middle school level. For her, "Defining success in junior high is teaching; seeing the students learn to get along with each other, learning how to be a good person, expounding on being a good person that is my foremost responsibility here."

Carol at Mountain Middle School discussed the significance of student growth with the thought that students develop at different speeds. She said, "Growth is a huge thing. As long as they are showing growth…and showing that growth mindset…it allows them to continue through high school". Grace from Mumford High School discussed the importance of musical and non-musical growth. She said,

> One of the things that we preach all the time is that…excellence as a skill…if they can learn to be excellent in the band room, they can learn to be excellent at anything. I think that's a large part of what drives our program too is teaching kids the skills that they need…to push themselves further than they think they can go.

However, for students to grow and learn in the band programs, they must first be a part of the program. This journey begins in middle school and leads to finishing strong at the high school level. Another significant benefit of collaboration comes in the form of recruitment and retention. As Anthony from East Side High School stated,

> If the kid keeps on showing up every day then you're successful. The kids have the power of choice to be able to do whatever they want, whenever they want to do it. So,

just to have them in coming to the band room, it's a success story. That's when you can

start focusing on though the nuances of music and really making a musician, but you

got to get butts in seats. You can't teach an empty chair.

     Recruitment and Retention. One of the leading benefits of collaboration discussed by all

directors was recruitment and retention. David, who teaches at East Side Middle and High School,

summarized the importance of the entire team being active in this process. He said,

Recruitment and retention is kind of an all-hands-on-deck effort. We've got recruitment

concerts…that we're all three in on. Ashley at the middle school obviously kind of leads,

but we all do take a part in planning that and we're all going to be present there. We all

have a pretty equal effort when it comes to retention and recruitment.

Grace reiterated the importance of the working relationships between middle and high school

directors. She said,

I've never seen a relationship between the high school and middle school like the one that

we have and…so our retention rate from 8th grade to 9th grade every year is between 75

and 90%. And then our participation and marching band every year is between 80 and

90% from those kids. All of that is because Helen cares about our success and obviously

we care about hers. We've really gone out of our way to be a part of that.

East High School director Charles agrees with the importance of the collaborative effort of all

directors. He contributes that the director's choice to collaborate helps with their retention rate.

Because of their collaborative approach, he feels they have many students who continue in the

program moving from 8th to 9th grade. Elizabeth at Palms Intermediate School talked about the

success of student retention because of the time spent by the other director at her school. She said,

"Whenever the director that they are going to see next is more involved, they are more willing to

trust that director". Returning to Charles at East High School, he spoke about how collaboration and retention go hand in hand. He said, "Collaboration is huge. It's really important. …If you look at what our teaching schedules are like, we have more time spent as a junior high school because again, collaboration is fundamental to our success here at East High School".

Donna at Palms Middle School, a huge advocate for collaboration among directors, spoke about directors' understanding of the who's and what's of recruitment. She said,

> Directors say, it's your job to do recruiting. Well, no, it's your job. And actually it should be *our* job…Recruiting for the high school is not necessarily my job but, I can help because the kids trust me. However, I need the high school director to be doing certain things to support that…I think we could see a lot more success if we were working together.

River High School director, Frank, put it very simply. He stated, "So, my philosophy is if the high school head director cannot walk into the junior high band room and those kids do not know that person by name, they are not doing it, right."

Visibility. Collaboration has many different facets which help directors and their programs be successful. As every director stated, directors must be visible to the band program's students, parents, and other investors. As discovered by the interviews, visibility can include time spent in class, being present and helpful at concerts and other performances, helping at rehearsals and sectionals, or accompanying one another on special trips. Students like support and familiarity regarding transactions and being a part of a group. When band directors take the time to be seen, heard, and helpful, it makes a difference for students continuing in the program.

Helen at River Middle School spoke on the importance of other directors being visible. She said, "All of us at some point are just being in front of them, communicating with them…they

come to the concerts…we see them at football games, marching rehearsals, any of that as they start coming through". Making a conscious effort to be seen and communicate to all program levels has benefits. Barbara from Sunnyside Middle School spoke of the importance of her high school director's presence within her program. She stated, "…I think it really helps for them to see him. He normally wears a bright green jacket… it just makes it more comfortable for him and makes it more comfortable for my kids as they're becoming his kids". She goes on to say, "We try to make sure that visually the kids know who he is and know him by name and they're not apprehensive to walk up to him and say hello to him… There's not that barrier there". Isaiah at Legacy High School is enjoying his newfound ability to go and work with middle school students. He stated,

> Whatever I can get time-wise to get in the middle school is better than nothing…The fact that we're at the middle school every week…those kids…just know us and that's huge…one of us is over there every single week and that has paid off tremendously. I had kids at one of the middle school concerts last night, and they were, Oh, hey, Mr. Isaiah. I've never seen them before, but they just know who we are and that's awesome.

The visibility of the directors to the students leads to a familiarity that forms a connection that proves positive later on. Donna at Palms Middle School agrees with the helpful nature of all the directors involved at many levels throughout the program.

> We're at each other's concerts…we are backstage helping out however is necessary. The students are seeing us and so that they are now trusting us…when I go over there now, they all know my name…my demeanor and the way I act will not be new to them because she and I…we have a lot of similarities…but, we are quite different when it comes to teaching styles…it's really important so it is not such a shock when they make those transitions.

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Visibility is just as crucial for the parents and guardians as it is for the students. Ashley at East Side Middle School speaks on the importance of parents seeing the collaborative efforts of the band director as well. She said,

> And I do think it's important because a lot of the parents will have different rapport with the three of us and some of the parents might feel more comfortable going to (one of the other directors) or vice versa. So, I think it's important that they see all three of us working with their child and they're able to see…we'll help with anything that needs to be done.

The benefits of collaboration appear to flow naturally from the different types of collaborative efforts both middle and high school band directors are engaged. These efforts are student-centered and program beneficial. The directors interviewed agreed that collaboration was central to their motivation and success, not only for their programs but the program as a whole, 6-12. Nevertheless, one has to consider the probability that it is not all positive when it comes to the collaboration endeavors of these band directors, which leads us to another sub-theme of collaboration.

Hindrances to Collaboration

Research question three asked, What hindrances to collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors experience in their individual and overall band programs? All pairs interviewed were optimistic about collaborative experiences with their fellow band directors. Some are concepts they strive to change to remove the obstruction. However, some limitations must be worked around because they will always be a part of these directors' teaching situations. The following hindrances emerged from reviewing the interview transcripts and coding process of middle and high school band director pairs as outlined through the first theme of Collaboration:

Administration, Campus Location, and Scheduling.

Administration. Administration can be a conduit of collaborative opportunities or a stumbling block to teachers' efforts to work together. So many schools are an island by themselves, and difficulties can arise when band directors want to collaborate across campuses. Elizabeth from Palms Intermediate School discussed some administration issues she has encountered. She said,

> I've had to work a lot on educating her about these are the things that band needs to be successful…the setup for the schedule that is going to continue to improve our participation and success in the band program, not just at our level, but for middle and into high school. And if we want to be competitive, and we want to be successful and we want to see these kids succeed in all of our state, adjudications and everything we got to make sure the schedule is set up correctly. She was so on board with that, because she loves seeing the growth and the progress, and the excitement that the kids have for our program.

Anthony from South East High School seemed to be the director that struggled the most with administrative issues. He said,

> They have to see the program…at football games and rehearsals because we all work together with a marching band. And you know, with jockstraps getting most of the attention around here, that's really important. Here's an example. Monday night, we had our Monday night band rehearsal in the Band Room. The auditorium which is next to the band room had a board meeting. Not one board member or the superintendent came in to the band room to thank the kids for working hard or thanks for advancing. But not one board member or official came in there to thank the kids, but our football team was 0 and 9 and a majority of them were in every single huddle after the game. Why is that?

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Brian at South East Middle School talked about trying to get the admin to understand the comprehensiveness of the band program. He said,

> …the other director has done a really good job of emphasizing to them that it's a five through 12 comprehensive program. This isn't a high school band, a Middle School band, an Elementary School band…the kids in fifth grade get the same shirt that the high school kids and the middle school kids get. Everything is the same.

Palms High School Director, Henry, has a simpler approach to administrative issues. He stated, "Admins are not always going to know what we're doing. We have to really make sure, we have learned for sure, detail, detail, detail, with this job. Donna at Palms Middle School talked about the difficulties of admin, but also ways to work with them. She stated,

> …lack of support in some ways from their admin. I really had to sugarcoat the emails and try to hold hands…Here's why we need this and here's what we need that. My principal has been on board immediately… Whereas theirs take a little bit more talking to and encouraging of why this is so important.

She explained the importance of getting admin on board by describing a situation. She requested for the intermediate school director to go to their assessment with her and her band. She took the time to explain to their principals the importance of being a part of this event and being available and visible to her students. She hopes the students go home and discuss how they met the high school band director. Furthermore, as parents and guardians hear the director's name and realize the time they are putting into their student's program, it will help the parents become more comfortable with the director and the idea of their student moving into the high school program one day. It is about building trust with the students and parents as they see the different directors of the program working together.

Although everyone did not mention the hindrance of administration, many interviewed pairs mentioned how the administration and school/district policies could play a role in preventing collaboration between middle and high school band programs. Nevertheless, as noted by several directors, to help this hindrance become a positive influence, they must communicate with their admin more and help educate them on the importance of what they are trying to accomplish with their collaborative efforts.

Campus Location. A unique hindrance that only occurred in two schools was the physical location or proximity of the schools. This distance separation sometimes prevented directors from spending time with one another's programs during the school day. When asked about the hindrance of being at different campuses at East Middle and High School, David said, "since we're at different schools…we have different classes to teach, but we found a way to make that work".

Frank at Rive High School puts distance as a hindrance to his ability to be a part of all the programs. He mentioned how the beginning band students are located at a school across town, and their school schedule is different because of busing. The beginner's school begins and ends earlier than the high school schedule. The scheduling difference prevents the directors from being involved with the sixth-grade beginners other than at concerts and events. Frank feels he is losing an essential connection to those students. This connection must be made up when they enter the middle school program.

Ultimately, directors make their situation work. Despite being on separate campuses or a short drive away, the directors make it work for the students' progress and the program's growth. Since most of the directors interviewed are on separate campuses, they work under different administrative teams. As directors work to overcome different school locations and administrative teams, scheduling is another closely related hindrance.

Scheduling. Scheduling in and of itself is a multi-faceted process that involves many different intricate steps. It takes careful planning from the counselors and administration to balance each student, class size, and course request. Scheduling is compounded for band directors trying to collaborate and spend time in each other's classrooms. For example, high school could be on a block schedule, while middle school is on a seven-period rotating day. No matter the situation, this is a hurdle that many directors struggle to get over. Frank from River High School shares his experience with trying to schedule across feeder to high school programs. He said,

> Collaboration can be difficult depending on how the individual school districts set things up. For example, in (a southern state) every day, every teacher is required to have a class built in every hour which makes collaboration almost impossible…we never saw the middle school directors and they never saw us just because we couldn't. And it wasn't that we didn't want to, it's just that that wasn't allowed because of the teacher load that we had.

> George from Mountain High School agrees that scheduling is a hindrance. He observes that there may appear to be time within the schedule to collaborate at the middle school, but sometimes other duties and responsibilities must be done. He explains, "scheduling is always tough in the to-do side of things…you'll want to be there on the podium. You want to be there to support the classes but there's all this paperwork to get done". Helen at River Middle School sympathizes with the scheduling conundrum. Even with the middle and high schools being close, spending time with one another's programs is still a struggle. She said,

> …scheduling is still challenging. There's five band periods at the high school… four band periods over here, and there's only 7 periods in a day… some point in time, two of us having to be at each campus. So scheduling is challenging and figuring out the right people in the right place and sometimes you just can't make it work.

But when it comes to scheduling, sometimes the directors have to be creative with how they structure their day and move around to the other classes. Frank at River High School learned from previous experiences and transferred them when he moved to new positions. He said,

> When I have gone to different school districts, that's been one of my request is, in my schedule, I have to have it set up where I see the middle school students every day…but as far as the assistant going back and forth, it's almost unheard of. So, it just it takes some education and conversation to make that happen. But I think it's absolutely essential if you want a healthy music program.

Building Relationships

The next occurring theme to manifest with the data was building relationships. This theme was developed through the coding process of the interview data and was not realized through the research questions. This theme covered various relationships which the directors encountered in their programs. The directors found it exceedingly essential to build relationships with the following sub-groups: Students and Parents/Guardians, Band Staff at All Levels, and Community.

Students and Parents/Guardians

Building relationships takes effort, trust, and time. Since directors spend the most time with students, this group gets the most attention when building relationships. Nevertheless, as those bonds are built, they perpetuate into good relationships with parents and guardians alike. Elizabeth at Palms Intermediate School expressed her thoughts on building relationships with the students as a team, giving them different people to help them find their way. She said,

> We work very well together to ensure that growth continues from me to Palms Middle School up to Palms High School by showing up for everyone's practices. We make an effort to be present and build relationships with the students that are in my program that

are moving up to Palms Middle School program or, Donna, the middle school director, says the same thing about Henry, the high school director, for the kids to move up into his program. So, we like to be present and available for the students to know us.

David, who teaches at East Middle and High, discussed building this relationship as students and parents advance in the program. David observed that Ashley, the middle school director, had the time to build great relationships with her students. She has time with her students from 7th grade until they graduate. It appears more challenging to do so with her student's parents because of the short time the students spend in the program at the middle school. He feels the parents are unwilling to invest with the band director yet. However, David has observed that once their student is in the high school band, the parents accept this is where their student's talents lie and where they will spend the majority of time in their high school career. This understanding translates into becoming invested in the program and the directors to be a part of the support and success of the program. Charles at East High School talked about how the uniqueness of each band director assisted with building relationships with students. He said,

That is a unique thing about the collaborative approach that we take. We all three have different personalities and we are all three different people. The kids are all going to have one of the three of us that they gravitate more to. We have to understand that that's what it is. But again, that gives them more personalities to get along with and to have that person who can really constantly put some trust there.

The importance of middle school students knowing the high school band director is vital for helping them transition to high school. Charles talked about how "if my presence, particularly, is already known down there, the students know who I am, I'm not this secretive figure that they're going to be moving up to. So, that helps bridge that gap". Students and parents want to build trust

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and support for one another, their directors, and the program. Following the example given by the directors can be a successful endeavor for all involved.

Band Staff at All Levels

The band directors work countless hours with long school days, extra rehearsals, marching band, trips, and a plethora of other duties and responsibilities. They must be the example if they want the students to work together and move forward to grow and build a successful program. Henry at Palms High School believed in collaboration's impact on staff dynamics. He said, "Collaborating is also very important because it establishes relationships with our staff. You have to have collaboration, you have to be able to work with your feeder schools in particular, or you're not going to be successful".

Personal connections play an essential role in many of the pairs. Of the pairs interviewed, some had known each other since college or had worked together for a long time. However, in some cases, such as James from Mumford High School, when asked to talk about his relationship with the middle school feeder program and how that works, he responded,

> Well, we have one feeder and I have sex with the band director. So that makes it...that
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> solves everything ....that is one of the things that's unique and special. There're two
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> band directors there. One is my wife. Grace and I have worked together for a decade,
>
> we've gone on vacations together, she's watched my kids, and I've watched her kids.
>
> And with Helen (his wife) at the middle school, it provides us a really unique
>
> opportunity here because Helen cares so much about our success.

Fran from Legacy High School, who is also married to the other band director, James, when asked about contributing factors to their collaborative efforts, said, "…he's been married to his middle school feeder his whole career…understanding what a vital role the middle school plays…we are

nothing without middle school…The goal is for them to come here, but they can't get here without our help". Those directors who have known each other for a long time have that same innate ability to work together and trust what the other is doing. Brian from South East Middle School said, "But he's been very good about…I trust you. He tells me I believe in your teaching. If somebody slips through…He's like, no problem, we've got this. That's what we're here for, we help each other". Anthony, the high school director who works with Brian, recapitulated his thoughts. Anthony said,

> … the fact that we know each other's phone number...we respect each other…no one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care…when you build those relationships along with kids and families, and parents, and your colleagues, as long as you care about it, one another and you have a genuine care…to have a vested interest in their life. I think that that helps in the collaboration.

Barbara from Sunny Side High School encapsulated the idea of staff relations when she said,

> If the person that they are, if that the program they're feeding or the program that is feeding them, if they can have this kind of relationship, it is a win-win because, as band directors…we try to control everything and once you give up control and you open that up, it allows for so much more to happen.

Community

The community can be one of the most vital support groups for a band program. A band program can be one of a school's most visible ambassadors. The importance of the band being in and active in the community is a critical relationship that needs to be nurtured and built. Legacy High School Band director, Isaiah, has had a very positive experience with the community surrounding his school. He said, "It is a community. They want to be behind the band, they want to support the

band…the community has been extremely accepting of the new guys". Also, in his situation, Legacy is the only high school in the county. Everyone ends up at this one high school. He spoke about the long-time heritage and pride in the school and band. Moreover, the community wants to build the band back to the greatness it once was. He said,

> It's like you went here or you didn't live here…So that that's been a unique thing because the parents will come in and there's like picture plaques of seniors along the whole band room wall and they'll come in and show everyone that was me back there… it's very much a family-oriented atmosphere around here with everything. And those people are excited that the band program is kind of back on track. And they see it and they and they talk about it, they encourage.

The sense of community within the band program is essential as well. Elizabeth at Palms Middle School has observed the significance of students having a place to call their own and the parents feeling a sense of reassurance of where the child has chosen to be. She said,

> Regardless of what age group the kid is in…you're joining a big family all the way up to 12th grade. You got people that are looking out for you. It makes them feel like they're part of something and the parents really appreciate when their kids are involved in something as productive and creative as music and band.

Ashley at East Middle School conferred that a sense of family in the band plays a predominant role in building unique relationships in the students' lives. She validates her observation by saying,

> We have step by step, lined up for every kid and that they matter, and that's what we want to do with them. We want them to enjoy music. We want them to enjoy being in the band and, and progressing through our curriculum…They already know (the high school directors), so they'll see a familiar face and it will be much easier for them.

The perception of community and family and the surrounding community where the band lives and interacts throughout the year play a vibrant role in helping the students, parents, and directors find common ground to build a strong foundation for success. The band director pairs interviewed seek to create this community in and outside the band room. They look towards all invested stakeholders to work together and communicate to become a vital part of their successful programs.

Communication

If any group or organization is going to be successful, there must be ongoing, open communication. For the band, this communication entails the director(s) constantly connecting with many different groups: staff, students, parents, administration, and community. This theme was developed through the coding process of the interview data and was not realized through the research questions. The theme of communication concerning parents, administration, and the community has already been discussed. The student aspect will be addressed in the Student-Centered theme description. The one group mentioned the most by directors was communicating with one another as staff.

Staff

The directors interviewed intended to build and grow a culture of collaboration. A priority in helping them create a collaborative program of success and growth for the students was having open and honest communication with their staff. Frank at River High School spoke of the indispensable need for communication among staff members. He said,

> It's essential. There's no way you could do it if that communication didn't happen…There
> will be disagreements over direction, over goals, over resources that we're going to use.
> But we're all professionals. And the goal is to listen to that input and try to make the best

decisions for our students and for the overall program growth.

Despite their mutual pull of collaboration, directors may incur a difference of opinion on how to reach the goals, yet, with open communication and mutual respect, these directors make sure everyone has a voice in the direction of the program. It takes a team to move the program forward. James at Mumford High School said,

> But I think when I say I'm band director one and she's band director A, I mean that. There are very few decisions that I make that don't involve her having the same voice as me…and so, for me, collaboration is about shedding my ego a little bit and making sure that everybody has a voice and that everybody's voice is heard and respected and valued, regardless of what their position is.

Grace, James's co-director at Mumford, echoed the idea of respect being a crucial part of openly communicating with one another and having a solid relationship. She said,

> He still showed me respect… even though I don't have the experience, I trust that you have the knowledge…he showed me the respect and the trust that I think everybody deserves…it took me like 3 years to find my footing, but James never judged me for that. And I think that respect and trust between the teachers is something that is…I can't place a more important emphasis on that to have a healthy relationship.

Helen at River Middle School reflected on how being openly honest with communication to all constituents helps put students in the right place for success, which in turn grows the program.

> We just try to be open and honest and communicate with parents and students...constantly evaluating where the students are, what they might need, if there's somebody else on our staff that can be better served at providing that for them...we regularly going back and forth about that.

As Anthony from South East High School points out, communication can take many forms. He stated, "…we talked a lot…constantly text and such…We communicate with text, email, and the Google Docs as much as possible…We just constantly just try to bounce ideas back and forth and just really just have an open line of communication".

The location of the schools and the ability to team-teach can be an advantage when it comes to communication. Helen at River Middle School said,

> The first thing for us is just proximity…I have high school students that can walk over here to see me. I've got junior high students that can walk over there…if I need something or have a question from them, I can take a planning period and walk across the street and we can always sit down because of our ability to be able to communicate face to face…and we do consistently team teach classes.

Staff communication is critical in helping the program move in the direction which supports student growth. Furthermore, with students being the band directors and the program's focal point, the reason we teach, it is no surprise that students surfaced as one of the major themes of the coding process.

Student-Centered

At the core of any successful program are the students who work hard, build their skills, and put in the practice time to help make the program move in the right direction. This theme was interwoven throughout the interviews of the band director pair. This theme was developed through the coding process of the interview data and was not realized through the research questions. George at Mountain High School discussed the development he likes to see his students advance through. He said,

> In sixth grade, we really push the solo and ensemble, because that's about where the sixth

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grade is to develop the individual tone qualities, and the individual musicianship…

seventh grade, they get to go to (state assessment) for the first time and they also get to

go to (a trip)…they also can start the honor band cycle and start doing some of our local

colleges, who host honor band's eighth grade...traditionally a big trip either to Disney

World or the regional concert band festival and 8th graders can start participating in

marching band…then by the time they get to high school, they're working through the

graded levels in our state…1 through 6 and Masterworks and the classes are also graded

…there's always something...always the next step of growth to show.

Carol, Mountain Middle School director, talked about student growth, development, and checkpoints they look for with their student progression. She discussed the flexibility of helping the students reach goals and how they keep the individual student in mind as they look for these growth benchmarks. She said, "…we push our students to achieve as much as they can...It's not where you have to make this Milestone or this criteria…and if they make it, great. If they don't know something, we'll catch them up on next year". George reiterated her introspection about focusing on the student's growth by stating, "Growth is a huge thing. As long as they are showing growth and …people can grow faster than others…and showing that growth mindset allows them to continue all the way through high school".

Sunny Side High School band director Edward expressed the importance of involving the students in the learning process. Especially when it allows students to be the teachers and the encouragers of one another. He said,

…if you would just practice more…take your five minutes…I need somebody to step up

and run a sectional and then that would kind of pick up. And now the kids will see if

there's a section, that's not what it needs to be. They took it upon themselves to get up

with their other band members of the other sections…most of the time it happens right after class or in between lunches or something like that.

Legacy High School students are critical in helping build comradery among the younger band students and be leaders and examples for them to follow. Fran said,

And they're a huge recruiting tool for us. We just preach to our kids that this is the future of your program. You got to make them want to get in the door… it's up to you guys to make them feel welcome. So, we've done that for years and obviously it's been successful.

Palms High School band director, Henry, emphasized the importance of students being a part of the growth and progress of the program. He has high school students help teach the younger students at rehearsals or sectionals. He feels this helps the students build essential relationships that help the transition into the high school program. He said, "it doesn't have to be one of us. You can learn more from the students more than us sometimes and so, they definitely show up frequently to those things".

Barbara at Sunny Side Middle School explained her connection with former students. Her students who have moved on to the high school want to support her current students so they will be a part of the high school later in their careers. She said,

we also have a kind of a Big Brother, Big Sister program. My former students can earn volunteer hours to come over and help out with whatever it is, we're doing, whether it's helping with a fundraiser, giving one-on-one lessons, or into running a sectional…I make sure they have plenty of opportunities to give back and to start that connection between middle and high school.

Students in the band, especially those who have grown up in the program, learn the

importance of building those relationships with the younger students to make those connections. Students who feel they are a part of something unique and want to see something succeed will work hard at all levels to make that happen.

Research Question 4: Similarities and differences

Research questions one through three have been answered and discussed throughout the themes. Research Question Four asked, *What are the similarities and differences in middle and high school directors' perceptions of collaboration?* The answer to this research question was acknowledged throughout the other three questions. In reality, there were no significant differences in the perceptions of the two different groups of directors. The pairs interviewed, who collaborated on their goals and mindset in their program, were aligned. This alignment is part of the success of collaborating with all directors working within their programs. Whatever differences the directors may have had, perceived or not, they put them aside for the betterment of their program and the success of their students.

In relation to research question four, the second theme, *Building Relationships*, was where band directors were working at multiple layers of relationships to help build upon their collaborative efforts and success. The three main groups were students and parents/guardians, band staff at all levels, and the community. These relationships take time to build, which denotes the importance of having all the directors present from the program's start with beginners through high school. The third notable theme was *Communication*. Band directors have an extensive population range to communicate with constantly. Students, parents/guardians, and the community require open and honest communication to help set the band program towards attainable goals and success. However, the staff was the leading group who helped with all the others. The staff had to work with one another and understand one another to get the program where it needed to be. With this

communication, fellow band directors had to be respectful and mindful of what each one brought regarding strengths and weaknesses. With this mindset, the staff can move in tandem to focus on the foremost importance: the students. *Student-Centered* was the fourth theme. As band directors, students are the cornerstone of all we say and do. We are trying to build successful students for musical prowess and to be good people in the world they move on to once they graduate. Putting students at the center of all our planning keeps our minds focused on obtaining the same goal; successful student growth in all areas of their life, both band and non-band alike. The essence which underlined all the themes was the idea of *One Program*. With collaboration as its framework, this idea of *One Program* from beginning band to graduating seniors was at the core of almost every interviewee's response. East High School band director, Charles, explained how he, and his fellow directors, viewed the entire East School Band Program.

> Our band program, is an umbrella program. It is a seven through 12 program…All of our
>
> classes have two teachers in them with the exception of one class…there's multiple
>
> people at a time, so that we can focus on individual student success as best as possible.

A critical observation from Charles' philosophy is despite the broad domain of a comprehensive program, the focal point of the whole program is helping the students succeed.

Summary of Themes

This qualitative study explored middle and high school band directors' perceptions of collaboration and its potential impact on the success and growth of their programs. I found ideas and concepts of collaboration by exploring band directors' lived experiences and perspectives about the benefits, challenges, and concepts of best practices for collaboration between middle and high school band directors. Findings offered four themes that were common among the band directors interviewed. The concept coding process supported these findings. One of the themes,

Collaboration, was divided into four parts to coincide with Research Questions One, Two, Three, and Four. For Research Question One, *What types of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs?* band directors described their experiences with team teaching, performances and programs, shared goals, and vertical alignment.

All these collaborative efforts focused on these directors' ability and willingness to put aside egos and work for the betterment of their students and program. For Research Question Two, *What benefits of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs?* band directors chronicled how their programs took advantage of their collaborative efforts to build and grow students and the band to success. These benefits included student growth, recruitment and retention, and visibility. Research Question Three asked, *What hindrances to collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors experience in their individual and overall band programs?* Despite the positive experiences of all the pairs interviewed, some things still hindered their attempts at collaboration. There were three; administration, campus location, and scheduling.

Regarding administration, the band directors found that educating their administration on the importance of collaboration seemed to be paying dividends. Part of this education explained the significance of the band being one comprehensive program from the beginning band through twelfth grade. The campus location is one hindrance that could not be changed. However, with careful planning and scheduling, the critical time needed at all schools could be worked out. Furthermore, finally, scheduling was another hindrance encountered by directors. The directors' schedules would not always be arranged beneficially because of the difficulty of lining up schedules

between schools, i.e., middle and high. Despite these issues, the director repeatedly found a way to make it work, or they began working with admin and counselors on how to improve it the following year.

One Program

The overarching essence of the four major themes, *Collaboration, Building Relationships, Communication,* and *Student-Centered, i*s the foundation for building *One Program*; a comprehensive band program from 6th -12th grade. Both middle and high directors resonated with the significance of having a student grow up in the band from the beginning until graduation. At Legacy High School, Isaiah's first year is already seeing the positives of collaboration and the concept of *One Program*.

> So, it's probably the best team aspect that we've ever had…One high school, 2 middle schools. So everything goes here…there's no separation, there's no competition…I know that every kid at both middle schools is coming here. And so, everything that we talk about with the middle school directors, it's all for here…it truly is a cool, unique team atmosphere that we get to pick each other's brains and help each other out.

Fran, Isaiah's wife, and co-director at the high school, is especially delighted at the results they are already experiencing with their one-program collaborative approach. Fran said,

> …the end goal is us…all five elementary schools go to the two middle schools that go straight to us. Everybody in the county is a Legacy so that helps recruiting…we have 226 fifth graders signed up for band at the two middle schools.

> George and Carol see the Mountain Middle and High band program as *One Program*.

George equated the band program as a seven-year, comprehensive progression for the band students.

Well, the success of the high school is all built around the success at the middle school. …every Middle School student comes to our high school...we look at success based on building that structure, almost like a seven-year program. We want the eighth graders, going into 9th graders to feel that they are continuing to achieve, not necessarily starting over going from middle school to high school but more of a continuation...we look at the events we do and we try and build up a progression of events through the program, sixth-grade through 12th-grade that allows them to continue that crescendo until they graduate.

Carol finds collaboration between the two schools vital in their pursuit of growing a successful program at all levels, especially with the students getting to know one another. She said,

> …collaboration between our two schools is huge…we do a lot of activities both within just the middle school itself and then with the high school as well…the kids get to know the high school students and get to know that there's more than just here at the middle school.

Henry at Palms High School talked about the unique structure of their program and the dynamics between the directors. He feels the one program idea and the collaborative efforts of his fellow director are helping him become a better educator growing the program. Henry also spoke about having a new facility for all to perform, allowing for more collaborative interactions with the directors and the students. These interactions contribute to the building of the *One Program* idea.

> The high schooler's come and watch as well and you know that's part of having those joint concerts. We had some help out with setup changes and stuff like that so that was really cool and it also helps to again have everybody perform the same venue because not many districts get to have that.

The students' and parents' insight into the directors' collaboration efforts for the entire program's growth and success helps solidify *One Program*'s idea.

> I think it's so vitally important because a lot of people have the perception that you are part of the Palms Intermediate Band; then your part of the Palms middle band; and then the Palms High School band but really were the Palms District Band program. And when they see us all collaborating and working together…it shows that we are growing a program together at all levels.

Finally, with this idea of building *One Program,* the directors' presence at all levels, intermediate, middle, and high, gives the students a sense of comfort and familiarity. This reassurance for both students and parents is essential in building the program from the beginning.

> …it's imperative that the kids see all of us working together to know that we're building one program and even though they leave me in 6th grade… I still go on their trips...assist for their lessons…go to clinics and then they see me with the high school band…they see that we're one unit were just at three separate schools.

Donna at Palms Middle School reflects on the importance of time spent at each other's building and program. She said, "You can see it (collaboration) happening because they're in each other's program. They're each other's band room or they're going on trips with each other". Visibility plays a crucial role in building *One Program,* with each director spending time at one another's schools. It helps the students, and parents, learn a little about each director and their personalities.

> We're at each other's concerts…the students are seeing us and so that they are now trusting us…when I go over there now, they all know my name which will help next year, it won't be so brand-new...that way it's not such a shock when they get to when they

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make those transitions.

Finally, in building *One Program,* time spent together teaching in one another's band rooms helped share the load of teaching and growing musicians at all program levels. Collaboration and success happen when directors think beyond their needs and put the students and program first. At South East High School, Anthony talks about the transition to having a feeder and the importance of the director's attitude across the program.

> I think that's what has been my motivation. A lot of my early career, I was the only band director…when I had that feeder program it was a different world…We kind of view the program as a five through 12 program and once you join, you don't quit.

The East Middle and High School directors all buy into this philosophy of growing students through the program. David, who works at both the middle and high school, talked about the importance of the students seeing all the directors involved with the program from the beginning. When moving to the next level, the students know they will be familiar with the director. Nevertheless, there is also reassurance because they will see their middle school director daily or weekly. David confirms that the directors' comradery is genuine and a considerable part of their success at collaboration. He said, "We definitely do have something special going on, just in the fact that like not only do we collaborate but like we enjoy doing it". David also discussed his philosophy of looking at the program, and students, as being in one program.

> I base my own personal success on…are there kids, graduating as seniors, who are band students...are they graduating with the skills they need to be successful…in whatever they do. And do we have a senior class that's proportional to their starting class. Like how much attrition have we had over the years?

Finally, David talks about the team dynamic he and his fellow director share. In the East Middle

and High School Band Program, it takes the partnership of all three directors to make and keep the program's success going. He said,

> We recognize that it is going to take… a team effort. If it was just one person trying to handle this big of a band, it would be really hard… we just we know that it takes a team.

East High School band director Charles had familiar things to say when asked about the band program being considered one comprehensive band.

> We sell it as a whole. It's a team approach from the three band directors…Our parents understand that it's a team effort and that everything we do is built off of everything else…the symphonic band can play the music that they play, they can be chosen for (state convention)… it's not because of what the symphonic band did it's because of what they did every year before they got to this band.

Charles explains why this band program is organized this way and how it continues to work.

> That's been the tradition in the setup of the program, where the team teaching has taken place and collaboration all the way around…it's all under one umbrella.

Charles put his team's identification into a straightforward principle. Charles said, "…it's like those different roles, different collaborations, and still all me…It's not mine versus yours. We have motives. We don't let our egos get in the way here. It's all about we and us".

Rounding out the East Band Program is the middle school director, Ashley. Her thoughts and ideas duplicated those of her colleague. She said, "That is the way that we got to be successful here…All three band directors working together…I just think it's very important everybody in our music program is here". Ashley spoke excitedly about her teaching experience with her fellow directors.

> I love working with my co-workers. They are very supportive. Collaboration to me

means I can call either one of them anytime I need help whether it's with school or, or anything …The kids see him, we see him. And then afterwards…we have a planning and lunch period, and we all three sit in this office and talk about our program and how we can better our program…it's a great time for us to be able to sit and talk about what's going on with…all three of us…that's what collaboration means to me. It's being able to call on each other in our jobs.

Ashly illustrated how her teaching team dynamics work day to day. The students see their collaborative endeavors and help the students see their future in the band program beyond their time with Ashley.

…I talked about the next level of band a lot in my classes because I want them to know that it's not just beginner band that where we need to set them up for continued music experience…The next intermediate band and they are seeing them…We want them to enjoy being in the band and progressing through our curriculum And I think they can do that better by seeing, especially when they get through with Junior High School and go into the high school.

Ashley goes on to reiterate the gravity of time spent by all the directors being present throughout the day and the years with these students. Moreover, their program, beginning through twelfth grade, is successful because they trust, work, and build as one program.

I consider our program a very successful program in that we, we graduate good kids. We graduate musicians and that's a successful program. That is the way that got to be successful here… I believe is through all three band directors working together.

Ashley discussed what it is like for directors not to collaborate or work as a team. In her experience, the students and programs suffer the most if directors avoid the one-program

approach.

> I have seen programs where there's some animosity between directors… they don't work together and I believe it just does not set up for good student morale sometimes…I've seen some programs where they don't eat, they don't talk to each other at all and it's just detrimental to the entire program.

Finally, Ashley made it a point to ensure all constituents involved with the program realized that they were a team and their students were benefiting from their efforts to teach their child as an essential member of the East Band Program.

> …all three of us are at all the concerts and…if I'm leading my concert, I make a point to recognize (the other directors) and let the teachers, let the parents know that we're all on board and they're teaching their child as well.

Summary of Findings

Collaboration among middle and high school band directors was foundational to every student's success in the programs represented in this research. The directors who believe in the significant value of their collaborative efforts are present in one another's band rooms, concerts, events, and daily lives. They build substantial relationships with their staff, students, parents/guardians, admin, and the community where they live and perform. Communication with each of these indispensable groups assures everyone is moving together, wanting to accomplish the shared goals set by the directors across all programs. Keeping the students at the center of their program plans and goals assures the focus is not on building the directors' egos but on building future musicians and better people for the world in which we live. Finally, with the director's mindset of an over-arching, comprehensive program, students, parents, administration, and the community get excited. The beginners are encouraged to build their skills to move up to middle

school and finish strong at high school. Over the years, the program has had many unique and

excellent opportunities to grow and succeed. Collaborating shares the work and makes the

outcomes meaningful.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore middle and high school band director pairs' perceptions of collaboration and its potential impact on the success and growth of their programs. The four main themes derived from the interview data presented in Chapter Four are (a) *Collaboration*, (b) *Building Relationships*, (c) *Communication*, and (d) *Student Centered.* This discussion of the conclusions drawn from the findings will include comparing and contrasting findings with the literature, the essence, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What types of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs?

2. What benefits of collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors contribute to the success of their individual and overall band programs?

3. What hindrances to collaboration do middle (6 -8) and high (9-12) school band directors experience in their individual and overall band programs?

4. What are the similarities and differences in middle and high school directors' perceptions of collaboration?

Once concept codes were assigned to the interviewees' quotes, these quotations were paired with the appropriate research questions. From these concept codes, the following themes surfaced: *Collaboration*, *Building Relationships*, *Communication*, and *Student-Centered*. After organizing these themes in relationship to the research questions, an overall essence for the research emerged. The over-arching essence of this research is the concept of *One Program*.

Collaboration Theme

Cane (2009) stated,

Effective music collaboration consists of equal partnering in the planning,

implementation, management, and assessment among educators concerned in maintaining

the integrity of music as a viable discipline and classroom teachers interested in

providing enhancement of content as well as support for diverse learning styles. (p. 33)

According to research discussed in the literature review, Battersby (2019) concluded that

collaboration among music educators is not standard in our nation's public schools. Battersby

(2019) seemed correct based on my strenuous effort to find research participants nationwide,

hitting multiple hindrances. Now, there could be a multitude of reasons which hindered the

capability to find participants. However, one could theorize that since collaboration is not standard

in music education, finding like-minded educators in the endeavor we call collaboration appeared

more challenging. One way to incorporate this collaboration is by using Professional Learning

Centers (PLCs). The very essence of PLCs represents the core values of collaboration. As band

directors invest in their professional capital, the dividends come in the form of student and

program success. The participants I was introduced to and had the fulfillment of learning about

their programs and relationships proved that there are those music educators who acknowledge the

importance of collaboration and make it a part of their programs every day. As Sutherland (2015)

stated, "collaboration can make possible what was in isolation impossible" (p. 1632). The idea that

we are one program, these students belong to all of us, and we must work together for the

betterment of all constituents was echoed by each pair research participant pair in this study. As

Hanson's (2009) research has proven, our end goal for collaboration should be to improve our

programs and achieve better results.

Two main categories of collaboration were ascertained from the interview data collected; types and benefits of collaboration. The types of collaboration discussed among the band director pairs were *Team Teaching, Performances/Programs, Shared Goals,* and *Vertical Alignment.* The benefits of collaboration included *Student Growth, Recruitment and Retention*, and *Visibility*. Although there was a gap in the research going into this project, the discovery of these themes allowed a return to the literature to obtain previously overlooked related research. This literature was not previously considered until after the emergence of the themes.

Types of Collaboration

Team Teaching. Team teaching is a vital part of the collaborative efforts of teachers. Previous research solidifies this importance (Brenan & White, 2003; Thomas, 2021). Team teaching incorporates multi-faceted layers for teachers to build upon one another's strengths. Teams focus on shared goals and collaborative responsibilities to reach the goals set by the teams (Vangrieken et al., 2015). In teams, teachers gain knowledge from one another, build relationships with one another, their students, parents, and the community, and can increase output because more work is being done by more people (Green & Johnson, 2015). Team teaching pushes for teachers to have time to collaborate to enhance what is happening in and out of their classrooms Anrig (2015). Finally, team teaching helps build teachers' social capital, which builds teachers' support, trust, and professional development based on their time spent collaborating (Hargreaves, 2019).

Bazen and Bailey (2009) suggested building a bridge between feeder and upper programs helps build lasting relationships between students and teachers. They also encourage feeder program directors to become active in both programs, especially by giving them roles and activities with the upper-level program. Atwood (1998) indicated that the high school director spends time at the feeder school with the students, director, administration, and parents.

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Furthermore, he recommends the high school director attend concerts. Hence, the students and parents see the high school director's invested interest in the future of the student's musical careers.

This intention was prevalent in all pairs of middle and high school directors interviewed. These directors were a part of one another's programs. Furthermore, because of their team teaching efforts, students, parents, administration, and the community are invested in helping grow and be a part of something they deem successful. In education, collaboration contains the following components; communication, shared decision-making, administrative/faculty/staff involvement, and students/participants (Gregory, 1995). Some of the themes discovered through the coding process solidify and align with the importance of each of these components. Gardner (2010) contributes a culture that embraces collaboration will help sustain arts programs over long periods. As uncovered in this study, one adjunct of collaboration between middle and high school band programs includes joint performances and programs.

Performances/Programs. While researching related studies in the literature review, the concept of joint performances and programs was not discovered. After coding the interviewing process, this idea of middle and high school joint performances and programs was prevalent among most band director pairs interviewed. A majority of the pairs mentioned the importance of having the students interact with one another. This interaction was essential for the high school students to spend time with the middle school students in some capacity, whether it was joint performances, before or after school practices/private lessons, trips, or participating with high school groups like marching band. This interaction helped the middle schoolers form bonds with the high school students and ease the transition to high school, which is when many students leave the program.
The importance of high school students setting the example for their future band students was reiterated by Morrison (2001) when he talked about how older students, no matter what ensemble,

directly and indirectly, teach the younger, less experienced members expectations for them, both musically and socially. For the students to be a part of the band program's growth, education, and success was a common thread throughout the interviews. Directors saw the importance of their student's participation and involvement in recruitment performances, joint concerts, and leadership opportunities. Research has shown that having the students be a central source of the foundational building of the program benefits the students leading and following (Poolos, 2022). Time must be spent learning, growing, and socializing by students and directors to build that sense of trust, belonging, and family that a band program can offer.

Shared Goals. Shared Goals involve all the stakeholders discussed throughout this project; directors, students, administration, parents, and the community. As discussed in Chapter Two, Gregory (1995) listed shared decision-making as a collaboration component. Although this small mention of shared goals was found, the connection between shared goals and collaboration was not discovered until the coding process. However, given the nature and definition of collaboration, sharing goals for the entire program by both band directors is a logical step to the success of students and programs alike. Band directors must put their egos aside and see their program as a shared opportunity.

A part of sharing is to be open and honest about where the program is heading with input from the constituents involved. All the directors interviewed discussed the importance of sharing their goals for the betterment of the students and program. However, for directors to share goals across the entire program, there had to be some level of trust and respect for all the staff involved in the day-to-day operations of the band programs. The respect of the directors stems from appreciating the unique experiences and perspectives each person presents to the program. Furthermore, directors had to trust one another that discussion and decisions being made had a

central focus on the students, the program, their growth, and their success. Sharing goals across the band program gives all the directors a conjoined purpose. This purpose lies in setting attainable goals and objectives and sharing a vision of the program's unique purpose by working together to move the program in that same direction (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992).

Vertical Alignment. Vertical Alignment was a projected essential aspect of collaboration uncovered in the literature review pre-research. The efforts of the band directors in building a successful program included a working, flexible vertical alignment plan. Bergman et al. (1998) defined vertical collaboration as "planning and implementing the curriculum sequence from one grade level to the next in grades Pre-Kindergarten to grade twelve" (p. 19). Vertical collaboration emphasizes collaboration for sequential instruction, enabling students to move smoothly from one grade level to the next. Setting goals and benchmarks for band students, with the flexibility to change and adapt to the students as they progress differently, is an indispensable tool for band directors to utilize. This flexibility only becomes effective through the band directors' communication and team teaching efforts across the program. Vertical alignment manifested as a prime objective for the pairs interviewed for their programs.

More importantly, the need for respect by all parties involved in the process to have a voice in how to get the students from one level to the next. Moreover, the flexibility of directors at all levels was crucial to the student's progress. Not all students learn at the same pace and process. According to the interviewees, constant communication about student progress helps lead and direct learning at the current level and the next step in the student's progress. The process and structure of vertical alignment are unique to every set of directors and their programs. Collaboration helps these directors share in the process and its outcome. It also helps them share in the decision-making that effects all aspects of the program. Vertical alignment must remain adaptable and flexible to accommodate the

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students sitting in the classrooms at that moment and time (Mattessich & Monsey, 1992). Adopting a vertical alignment curriculum for the band program, 6-12, helps the directors conglomerate their knowledge for undertaking the complexity of vertical alignment (Green & Johnson, 2015). King (2018) concluded when developing a curriculum, vertical alignment and collaboration can contribute to achieving successful student advancement through various grade levels in general and fine arts classrooms.

Benefits of Collaboration

Student Growth. At the center of all the band directors hope to achieve and accomplish lies the one group with the most to learn and gain; the students. In some capacity, every director spoke on the importance of student growth. This growth was not only as a musician but as a person as well. These directors wanted to produce students prepared for the future which lies ahead of them. Band directors are building these students through the band and music. Michalski (2010) stated, "When developing program objectives, community concerns should be high on the list of criteria following the development of individual musicianship and student growth through musical performance" (p.266).

However, it becomes much more than playing the right notes on the page and becomes about the discipline needed to set goals, work with others, be an example, and improve daily. This preparedness helps open opportunities both for the band and the individuals. Allsup (2012) said, "Band educators have an obligation to afford students the opportunity to engage in traditional, classical, and unfamiliar music—as long as the end is student growth, and not simply the survival of the chosen tradition or cultural product" (p. 185). Student growth is planted in the beginning band program. It is then nurtured throughout the middle school years and blossoms as the students continue their growth through high school. This nurturing, caring, and push for excellence takes a team of

directors wanting the same goals for every student in every aspect of the program. Moreover, this is why the directors must be seen, heard, understood, and a part of each aspect of the program from beginning to end.

Recruitment and Retention. Bazen and Bailey (2009) suggested building a bridge between feeder and upper programs helps build lasting relationships between students and teachers. It also encourages feeder program directors to become active in both programs, especially by giving them roles and activities with the upper-level program. Finally, this connection with the feeder program positively influences how excited students and teachers are about continuing their musical experience. According to research, relationships among band directors can be built to improve the education and transition of band scholars from the lower-level programs to the high school level (Roskosky, 2006). Criss (2010) found a sense of community and collaboration helps students commit to the ensemble and any task set before them. The band director pairs interviewed felt their presence in one another's programs, and time spent with students and parents benefited and supported the student's continuation in the band program.

Research also indicated that students continue band from middle to high school when students feel comfortable with the high school band director (Gibson, 2016; Hayes. 2005). They also found that the relationship between students and band directors, both middle and high, contributed to continued enrollment in the band. Research based on the lived experiences of band director Diane Snyder had three core beliefs about teaching band. These included (1) a belief in creating a culture of excellence, student ownership, and compassionate community; (2) a belief in building independent musicians; and (3) a belief in learning from mentors (Staub, 2019, p. 89). These beliefs directly relate to how band directors can recruit and, more importantly, retain students from middle school until they graduate high school.

Most band director pairs interviewed talked of recruitment and retention as a natural occurrence for their programs. The success of retaining students year to year was based on each director's direct and constant involvement with one another programs. This treatment of the program as one from beginning band to twelfth grade meant that each director was working in and with the students at all levels. This familiarity of directors with all constituents leads to the comfort of knowing what to expect at the next level. The next director in the sequence of classes is a familiar face and personality; therefore, moving to the next level of the program is a smooth transition for all stakeholders. These concepts have been previously researched. Roskosky (2006) found that relationships among band directors can be built to improve the education and transition of band students from the lower-level programs to the high school level. Most importantly, Criss (2010) found a sense of community and collaboration helps students commit to the ensemble and any task set before them.

Visibility. Visibility of band directors can include time spent in class, being present and helpful at concerts and other performances, helping at rehearsals and sectionals, or accompanying one another on special trips. Students like support and familiarity regarding transactions and being a part of a group. When band directors take the time to be seen, heard, and helpful, it makes a difference for students continuing in the program. The band directors interviewed spoke about the benefits of the other director being present, helpful, and known by their students. For middle school students, the presence of the high school band director helps them learn about who this person is and how they teach. It helps the high school director start building a vital relationship with students to help them understand that, as a director, they care about the students' learning, growth, and well-being.

For the middle school director to be involved at the high school helps the students have a sense of familiarity and comfort, knowing their middle school director will be with them as they

continue their journey through the band at the high school level. This visibility by all directors helps set the idea of collaboration for the success of not one program over the other but the entire program. Visibility is another one of those themes which appeared to have no research attached, making it another possible starting point for another research project.

Hindrances to Collaboration

All director pairs were asked to discuss concepts that hindered their collaboration efforts. A majority of the responses were overwhelmingly optimistic. Although the pairs could quickly identify hindrances, they were not discouraged or worried about dealing with each hindrance. For each hindrance, the band directors were already or had already put in motion a plan to work around or improve their situation with the hindrance.

The first hindrance discussed was administration. Most administrations are unfamiliar with the idea of or benefits of collaborating band directors. Most directors collaborated to educate and show evidence of the benefits of collaborating with band directors and programs. As with any program, showing the benefits of one program, having the directors' team teaching, and being a significant part of each other's programs is worth all directors' combined efforts. It takes both directors because two sets of administration need to be taught, and these administrative teams are most likely not familiar with the benefits of band directors and their collaborative efforts.

Another hindrance, physical location, is not something the directors could do much about except work on scheduling time to be at one another's schools or programs. Putting together a schedule that considers the director spending time at all locations is no small undertaking. In most instances, one talks about two separate locations, two separate administrative teams, and two separate counseling teams. This separation is where we, as band directors have to present a united front on the importance of spending that time in each other's classrooms. Time spent in one

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another's band room makes scheduling a significant task being there are different locations to consider. Most directors interviewed had already done the leg work and had their schedules working in a manner that benefited all groups or were in the process of working on their schedule for the following year. No matter the hindrance discussed, the directors' positive and collaborative nature made the future outcomes seem highly favorable for all involved.

Building Relationships Theme

In this theme, *Building Relationships* is related to three main groups; students/parents/guardians, band staff, and the community. Having a solid, positive bond with each of these groups contributes to the overall success and growth of the program and each group involved. "Positive rapport is especially useful in cultivating long-term positive student-teacher relationships in the band. If successful, these relationships may last for the school years and beyond" (Poolos, 2022, p. 16). Mikaza, et al. (2010) research on advice for first-year music teachers found that the most commonly cited topics included forming relationships with colleagues, students, and parents; and being organized concerning preparation and communication. Gurgel (2015) research supports the findings on the importance of the band director's relationships with all stakeholders. Gurgel (2015) and the director's interview had the same intentions; directors should be concerned with providing continuous musical success; initializing positive relationships; showing care for students within the framework of who they are and what experiences they bring; and creating a program where the students are just as much a part of the learning and planning of the band as the directors.

The connection to parents/guardians is an equally vital relationship to nurture. Middle school directors have a short time to foster this relationship, so much of their time may be spent building rapport with students. Nevertheless, if a middle school director is involved at the high school, the

opportunity will present itself for the parent/guardian relationship to grow. The same is correct for the high school director. The high school director builds their relationship with the students while they are in middle school by spending time at the school with rehearsals, special events, concerts, and trips. As the parents/guardian see them at these events, they begin to understand the idea of the band being a continuous program through high school. This idea of one band helps with the foundation of building these relationships. Corona (2021) found, "Parent-teacher relationships only help understand our students better and can give us leverage to providing accessibility and more meaningful and effective instruction to them" (p. 7).

Building relationships between middle and high school directors is imperative to their collaborative efforts for the program. With the band directors interviewed, each spoke on the importance of their interpersonal relationship to the success and growth of their program. So many times, as band directors, we isolate ourselves from one another without considering the impact our programs, students, or teaching have on those around us. However, as found from interviewing these successful, collaborative directors in this study, their relationship is essential for the students, parents/guardians, admin, and the community. Collaborative work is a give-and-take relationship between the directors. There must be mutual respect for one another's skills and knowledge set and what experiences they may bring to the program, whether it is their first or fortieth year of teaching.

Relationships are at the core of all we do as band directors. Learning to build, maintain, and trust within the many different relationships is undoubtedly no easy task. Nevertheless, these relationships help build growth and success for students and programs. The relationships built in the band program can impact and last years beyond middle and high school. Therefore, making them a prodigious goal should be a high precedence for all directors involved.

Communication Theme

Communication was discussed as a vital aspect of what band directors do day in and day out. They must communicate openly and concisely with fellow directors, students, admin, parents/guardians, and the community. However, as important and predominant as this subject is, little to no research specific to the themes or concepts found or sought in this research project. Although older, one of the findings of Rothlisberger's (1995) research was "There is a continued need for quality and open communication among the survey groups— band students, band directors, and building administrators— in order to align the curriculum, expectations, and perceptions of the band program." (p. 68). Every director interviewed spoke on the importance and foundational need for open communication. Communication was equally vital to each group; directors, students, administration, parents, and the community. Communication opens the door to sharing ideas, goal-setting, support, and other benefits. When a director shows they want to include everyone on their journey to success, the more likely each of these groups will be ready and willing to step in. Communication is a major contributor to the success of any program.

Student-Centered Theme

At the very heart of any band program are the students. The student's growth and success drive and motivate the program's directors. When the students are at the forefront of the program planning, all the other pieces seem to fall into place. This process is accurate from the middle school through the high school level. Directors must focus on student growth, development, and bookmarks to help guide student progression. However, the key to success with these benchmarks and goals is flexibility in helping the individual student progress through these benchmarks.

Another way to keep the students at the program's center is to allow them to participate in the learning process and activities at all levels. Having high school students run private lessons or

sectionals at the middle school help build relationships and comradery among the students.

These relationships help the transition to high school be more comfortable because they are not

entering into a new space with no connections; they have someone already there they have met and

interacted with before. Concerts and trips are an excellent way for students to participate in the

program. They can help set up concerts, pass out programs, or even plan a joint performance.

Combined trips are another facet to explore. Time spent with other students and directors again

builds the comfort of what lies ahead in the program and gives the older students leadership roles in

helping grow the band program.

There is little to no research focused on the importance of the students being a part of the

growth and success of a band program. When students find a place that accepts them for who they

are and allows them room to learn and grow, it becomes a safe place to call home. Students who

grow up and are a part of the band program from their early beginnings learn the importance of

connections and relationships with all students from beginning through twelfth grade. Students

long to feel they are a part of something exceptional. Furthermore, when they have seen and been a

part of the growth and success, they want success to continue and will work diligently to help make

it happen.

Research Question 4: Similarities and Differences

Based on the data discovered in the interviewing process, Research Question 4: *What are*

the similarities and differences in middle and high school directors' perceptions of collaboration?

became a nonessential inquiry for the research. Their ideals were aligned because the pairs

interviewed were already concise about the importance of collaboration and were practicing

collaboration. Any differences were negotiated and worked out for the betterment of both students

and the program. There was mutual respect for each director's experiences and the expertise they

brought to the program. This respect is the very foundation of what was uncovered in the literature review. Corona (2021) suggested that teaching high standards with solid modeling and effective teaching strategies can lead to a successful band program, open student creativity, and the development of everlasting friendships, musical relationships, and career opportunities. Furthermore, research attributes program success to the directors, retention of students, strong band culture, and consistent curriculum and learning (Asmus, 1986; Caimi, 1981; Capone-Rashcilla, 2019; Contorno, 2011; Olson, 2011).

Summary of Themes

Learning needs to be stimulated and supported to create a culture of collaboration (Hadar & Brody, 2010). According to Hanson (2009), our end goal for collaboration should be to improve our programs and achieve better results. A culture that embraces collaboration will help sustain arts programs over long periods (Gardner, 2010). Nonetheless, a perceived connection exists between a successful program and the directors who work to make them that way (Deisler, 2011). Hanson (2009) speaks about three steps to disciplined collaboration. First, one must evaluate the opportunity for collaboration. Two, one must spot barriers to collaboration. Third, one must tailor solutions to tear down these barriers. There were many revelations in the analysis and coding of the interview data not previously considered. This research unveiled ideas and processes which can be shared and built upon for the collaboration of middle and high school band programs and their director pairs for the success of all involved.

Essence: One-Program

One of the unexpected revelations from the research and analysis was the overarching essence of *One-Program*. Treating a band program as one over-arching program that begins in middle school and progresses through high school appears to be a simple concept, yet it has a prodigious impact on

what guides band directors at all levels. Such an undertaking cannot just happen. Executing and promoting this concept is grounded in all directors' and staff's collaborative efforts.

The high school program's success is primarily rooted in the success of the middle school feeder program. High school directors should be concerned and involved with every aspect of the middle school band program. However, the approach to this involvement is the key to the success of the collaborative efforts. As mentioned by several directors, having mutual respect for each director's experiences, strengths, weaknesses, and ideas is the first step to making collaboration work and benefit both programs. This collaboration comes from the respect achieved from building relationships, open communication, and keeping the students the focus and end goal of all decisions made for the program. Seeing the high school band program as a continuation of the middle school band takes focused, purposeful efforts by the band directors.

Directors must be visible on both sides of the program. Scheduling, time, and location can all hinder these efforts. However, most directors interviewed found ways to work around their hindrances and collaborate within their program's parameters.

Communication plays a vital role in creating and maintaining one comprehensive program. There must be constant talk of goals, benchmarks, programs, trips, and more to help the directors focus on the direction the program needs to head. This same communication is imperative to the other constituents of the program. Students, admin, parent/guardians, and the community must know these goals. The more they know and understand what direction and goals the band is trying to achieve, the more likely they will be there to support the endeavors of the directors.

A one comprehensive band program has one main focus, the students. When the students become the nucleus of all decision-making, goal setting, and planning of a band program, the directors already have an enormous advantage over programs where they only concern themselves

with their program. Students are the main stakeholders in all directors' plans and do. As directors, we want to see our students progress, grow, and become purposeful musicians and contributors to the world around them. In order to reach their full potential, students must also be willing to do the work, put in the time across the program, and significantly contribute to planned success and growth. Involving the students at all levels in many different aspects gives them the ownership and pride they need to make the program thrive and grow even after they have graduated and moved on. The students will learn this from one central source; their directors. The directors must be seen collaborating, communicating, and participating in the program at all levels. Directors need to show investment, compassion, and care for the program and every individual infused within the program. From this collaboration, the concept of one program can build and grow as far as the students and directors will take it.

Implications

Foundational data have been discovered linking successful collaboration with the relationship between middle and high school directors. When two people work together from the same page and with shared goals, the students and programs benefit the most. This study's findings will influence directors to consider whether they collaborate and, if not, how they begin. If there is no collaboration, what obstacles are preventing it from happening? As professionals, we must focus on what is best for our students. Can we overcome our egos or fears of sharing to make a better program for the students and community? Think of the impact on the school, community, and program when everyone sees directors working in tandem and producing outstanding results. There is such a gap in this research literature that more could be discovered and shared. There is much to learn from observing programs that work together and turning these findings into common ideas and functions which could transfer into programs that are not collaborating.

Directors who motivate students with excitement and passion for band and music can also lead programs to improve, become successful, have students who get excited and more involved, and become the program's best communicators; success breeds success. The band director is the most influential factor contributing to successful enrollment within the band program (Battisti, 1989; Caimi, 1981; Goodstein, 1987; Iida, 1991; Justus, 2001; Rogers, 1985). Being a high school band director myself, I am intrigued by the insight into the collaborative efforts of these band directors. Through the interviewing process, collaborative factors began to unfold regarding how the two directors work together and their perceptions of how each other's contributions lead to the success of their programs. In the end, the students will benefit the most from the efforts of the directors' collaboration. As educators, we can work together for this common goal of successful programs students, parents, administrators, and the community can have pride in and support, knowing the investment the directors have made from the start.

Each group of directors interviewed had their own unique teaching/program environment. Some directors teach at a one high school county system, others teach at a school of choice, while others compete for students from all over their county. Nevertheless, no matter their situation, these directors are making collaboration work for them, their students, and their band program with positive outcomes and success. These directors' thoughts and ideas on operating a one comprehensive band program based on collaboration could benefit many band directors nationwide. Almost every director talked about or alluded to programs around them or ones they had previously been in, where collaboration was not anywhere to be found. It is like every program is in and of itself; islands of isolation. Middle school directors think it is not their job to get students into high school band, and high school directors are not making time to get to know the middle school students and the only time they see them is in the spring at recruitment time.

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Directors can grasp the solid foundation principles found through this research.

There are multi-faceted types of collaboration for directors to try within their programs. The four main types discussed by this research were *Team Teaching, Performances/Programs, Shared Goals,* and *Vertical Alignment.* Learning to team teach can be monumental for some directors, especially if they have spent much time alone. However, with team teaching, each director lets go of a small quantity of control over the program. Suddenly, the directors share the burdens and tasks of teaching, growing, and caring for the students and program. Now, there can be different directors, all with different strengths and weaknesses, pulling the program in the same direction. Through joint performances and programs, directors are now getting the most critical facet of their programs involved; students and parents. There are so many possibilities to have students working together. Middle and high school bands can share concerts, practices, private lesson programs taught to the middle school by high school students, combined trips, and a popular one, marching band. Engaging the students in collaborative efforts makes a sensational experience for both sets of students. Friendships are begun, and familiarity with the who's and what's of high school band is no longer a mystery. They become an exciting adventure middle school students cannot wait to join. The only way for a collaborative program to operate and grow is by being on the same page. Directors can do this by discussing and setting shared goals for the program. Having a student growth and success plan becomes beneficial when everyone has input. That includes all staff and even students. If the team cannot visualize the end goal for their work, things tend to slow down and not run as smoothly. However, if the directors have decided this is the path this program needs to take and this is how we will get there, then there is a better buy-in from students, parents, and the like. Finally, like shared goals, Vertical Alignment can help focus on goals and tasks for each school, grade, band, and student. Having benchmarks for students to reach

helps the directors stay centered in progressing the students for positive growth. With the benchmarks, there has to come flexibility. Students progress at different speeds, so the benchmarks cannot be immovable. Vertical alignment becomes an ebb and flow ideal that matches the student and their progress. This flexibility also gives the directors room to discuss strategies for students and groups.

The benefits of collaboration discussed by the band director pairs included student growth, recruitment and retention, and visibility. Each benefit relates to the different types of collaboration and the other major themes presented in this research. The collaboration of directors needs to be centered around student growth. As a band program, students are what make the band program. They are the reason we teach. As stated before, directors interviewed care about who their students are as people and musicians. If the directors showed they cared about the students on a personal level, then the music-making would happen. Every director in the program needs to show the students their worth by helping the time spent together to be meaningful, whether it is through making music or eating at the local Waffle House after a game. Students recognize when directors care, and when they know we care, the work will come, the students will grow as musicians and people, and success will come from all the work. All elucidate the monumental importance of the visibility of the directors at all levels. The high school director should be spending time at the middle school in some capacity. Team teaching a grade level band, helping run after-school sectionals or practice, attending concerts; something that familiarizes the students with who they are and how they make music. In the same inclination, the middle school director needs to work time into their schedule to reciprocate the same plan at the high school level. If the middle school students know they will have the continued support of their middle school director, there is a level of comfort and familiarity for them to grasp when they need it. Then, the concepts of recruitment

and retention are already occurring. The students interact with directors and students alike, and then moving up to the next band level is a smooth and easy transition. Of course, for this to happen takes planning, educating the administration on the importance of shared staff, and a healthy dose of mutual respect for the other directors and their time.

Next, directors need to focus on *Building Relationships*. Building relationships takes time, trust, and above all, respect for other people. A director must build genuine, concrete relationships with their fellow staff, students from beginners to seniors, parents/guardians, administration, and the community of which the school is a part. The primary strategy for helping build these relationships is through *Communication*. Directors must learn to communicate with the staff to ensure they are all on the same page regarding goals, performances, and other procedures in the execution of the program. They must also be open to listening and compromise. Two very distinct characteristics help communication be genuine and sincere. As mentioned, directors must inform the admin of essential events, developments, and celebrations. The more an administration knows about a band program's who, what, when, where, and whys, the more inclined they will understand, help, and support the program. The administration's support is vital in getting a band program what it needs to succeed. An essential part of receiving administrative support is education and communication. Not every admin understands music or music programs. Taking the time to show long-term plans, explaining the importance of requests, educating them on how band programs operate, or inviting them to performances all help bring the administrators into our world as band directors. The more administrators are included, the better they understand current and future requests. Parents and guardians need to know what the admin knows. Keeping parents and guardians informed of events, staff involvement, and celebrations helps them become more involved and willing to help.

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Furthermore, the community needs to hear and see the program. Telling the community about special student recognition, upcoming performances/trips, playing in the community, and getting the community involved in certain aspects of the program keeps the band in the forefront of the community's eye. Community support is beneficial when the band is seeking help from the community in forms for fundraisers, concert attendance, and similar items.

A comprehensive band program must be *student-centered*. If the band director's ego drives the program, then there is not much concern for the students or their growth as people, let alone musicians. If each director in the program places their students first and foremost, then everything else will fall into place. The directors will know what goals to set, programs to establish, and performances to plan based on the students and their needs. When students are the center of the program, the director must spend time with the students, at all levels, to build relationships, help the students grow and prosper on their instrument, and help them see all the virtues of the band program.

All in all, directors building a comprehensive program for beginners to seniors across different schools rely on collaboration to fulfill the goals of their programs. This collaboration necessitates action with staff, students, parents/guardians, admin, and the community. Working together for the student's growth, success, and benefit helps share the load in building a comprehensive program that offers students many opportunities to succeed individually and as a group.

Recommendation for Future Study

This study addressed a gap in the literature about the collaborative and professional relationships between middle school and high school band directors. These directors' programs feed into and rely on one another for growth and success. There is perceived support over barriers to collaboration and cause to deliberate vertical curriculum alignment. Seeking how their shared

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approach to collaboration can affect their programs would be an attainable objective. Nonetheless, more research is necessary to continue filling the gap in the literature.

An example of future qualitative studies would be a case study. The researcher could choose a group based on their school setup. Some examples from this research include one high school county, a school of choice, or a larger county with competition for students from multiple feeder middle schools. A case study conducted on one of these groups would give the researcher an in-depth look into the ins and outs of how that particular group of directors uses collaboration within their entire program for student growth and success. An ethnographic study would allow a researcher to immerse themselves into the different band directors' programs to get a first-hand account of their day-to-day activities and how collaboration leads their teaching, relationships, and decision-making for their students and program. A narrative study would allow a researcher to pick one program and focus on each director. They could comprehensively analyze the program's structure from beginning to end and how each director feeds into their story. Based on the findings of this study, a researcher could develop a grounded theory study based on the idea of *One Program*. Does this theory of treating the band as one comprehensive program, over multiple schools and directors, genuinely reap the benefits necessary for success?

Although the basis of this research is phenomenological, especially looking at lived experiences of directors, one could do a mixed-methods design. A researcher could develop a national survey with a five-point Likert scale to collect quantitative data. The data from the survey could then be analyzed to help focus questions for interviewing future band directors. A researcher could then expound on the current interview process. After collecting the data from the interviews and going through the coding process, one could develop more concrete ideas and procedures on how directors can benefit and use collaboration in their program.

There is also plenty of room to explore the perspectives of the other investors of band programs. Understanding collaboration from the students' viewpoint may open a new area of interest in developing better collaborative directors. Going further, one could include the parents/guardians, administration, and even crucial community members to understand how the directors make one program work collaboratively from beginning to end. As with the focus of this research, seeking ways to help directors be better through working together can impact all involved; staff, students (beginning through seniors), admin, and the community.

Conclusion

This qualitative phenomenological study contributes to the research on the collaboration of middle and high school band directors. Participants' individual and shared lived experiences were explored to find commonalities among band programs where collaboration is present and thriving. Qualitative inductive research methodology was used for analyzing the interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The coding process eventually created repeating concept codes and groups. Throughout the coding process, the trustworthiness of the inductive approach and findings came from peer reviews and member checking of both the interview data, coding process, and theme development (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016; Saldana, 2021).

Member checking and peer auditors (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ravitch & Carl, 2016) verified the trustworthiness as described by Schwandt (2015): *Credibility* assures the reader the researcher has represented and reconstructed the views and responses of those interviewed; *Transferability* is the researcher's responsibility to establish the connections between collected data; *Dependability* focuses on the process of data collection; finally, *Confirmability* is interested in establishing the data is not from someone's imagination but the indistinct findings and

interpretations. Emergent themes, according to Williams (2008), are "a basic building block of inductive approaches to qualitative social science research and are derived from the life worlds of research participants through the process of coding" (p. 248). Creswell and Poth (2018) defined emerging themes as "common experiences of the participants" which provide the "essence" expected from phenomenological research (p. 81).

The benefits of collaboration included *Student Growth, Recruitment and Retention,* and *Visibility.* With collaboration as a foundation, directors can help build their students up as musicians and people. This growth is improved with all directors' presence at all levels of their programs. Because they are such an iatrical part of each other's programs, recruitment and retention happens because students are familiar and comfortable with all the directors involved.

Directors approached *hindrances to collaboration* with a positive outlook. Somethings they could not change, like location. However, they still managed to make collaboration work in many different ways. Another hindrance, administration, was being worked on by educating and communicating with the admin on the importance of collaborative efforts to build a comprehensive program. Finally, scheduling is another hindrance to directors finding a way to do work with after-school rehearsals, performances, and other such ideas. Others were already making plans for the next school year to improve their ability to work in and with all groups in the band program.

Building Relationships was the next emergent theme. Building relationships was connected to all constituents involved in the band program; staff, students, parents, administration, and the community. To build those relationships, the directors must spend time with the groups and build trust and respect for what each group provides to the program. The next emerging them was *Communication.* Directors must concentrate on their communicative skills with Students/Parents/Guardians, Band Staff at all levels, and the community. Keeping these groups

apprised of goals, plans, events, and the program's comprehensiveness helps build support for the program. The final theme, *Student-Centered,* revealed the directors main focus. A comprehensive program begins and ends with the students. Working with, building up, and growing the students' skills and character leads to the collaborative success of the program.

Creating one comprehensive band program was the over-arching essence of incorporating all four major themes. This one program idea entails beginners through seniors and how the directors can recruit, retain, and grow the students as musicians and productive people prepared to be a part of the world outside of school. Band directors must understand how collaborating with their staff, students, parents/guardian, administration, and the community helps create an environment of trust and safety for everyone involved. The program will grow and succeed when students feel wanted, respected, and pushed to improve.

This qualitative phenomenological study describes the collaborative approach of twelve pairs of middle and high school band directors who understand the importance collaboration has on the impact on multiple facets of the program. The four themes, *Collaboration, Building Relationships, Communication,* and *Student-Centered,* offer the building blocks of growing a collaborative, comprehensive program from beginners to seniors. Band directors can learn from these participants' lived experiences and find which aspects might fit into their program to ameliorate the student experience. The participants offered open and honest experiences with collaboration within their programs. Their narrative provides rich examples of how collaboration can not only improve students overall, but also bring success to the band program.

As music educators, we constantly ask our students to collaborate and create notable musical works of art. Students can only accomplish this by adopting the "we and us" mentality and putting the "me" to the side. As their leaders and examples, band directors must stop worrying

about our careers and our selfish motivations to improve our programs. If we look at our programs and put the students first, anything else we want to accomplish will fall into place. Furthermore, we must realize we are not in this alone. Even if we are the sole director of the program, many stakeholders are willing to work, but we have to relinquish control and bring in the help and ideas of others. For those of us who already have that core group of directors as a part of the program, we must gather our fellow directors and begin laying the foundation of a collaborative, comprehensive program. The benefits from this collaboration reach far beyond the classroom and help our students improve at school, in their community, and in their future, no matter what path they may travel. Through this research, I have taken a long look over my teaching career and see what I must do to improve and grow my students and our program. I will learn to open myself up to those around me; my students, staff, administration, parents/guardians, and the community. These stakeholders are the key to our becoming a collaborative, successful program in the classroom, on the field, at the school, in the community, and beyond. I hope that fellow band directors and music educators will stop and take a moment to ask themselves, are they trying to do this alone, or is there a team ready to jump in and work if I would only ask? Based on my findings, collaboration is the stronghold on which anyone can build a solid, successful program that impacts all who are connected with it. We must be willing to take that first step in leading by example the success we can accomplish together.

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IRB Documents

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

Interview Protocol

Participant Name or ID Code: _____

Date: _____

CONSENTING PROCESS:
- Confirm that potential participant received the *Information Letter*.
- Discuss the objectives and procedures of the study.
- Discuss rights of research participants.
- Invite questions.

• *After reviewing the Information Letter, do you consent to participate in this Study?*

  o If **NO**, thank them for their time and consideration and conclude the session.

  o If **YES**: *Thank you for agreeing to contribute to this research study. I'll start the Zoom recording and we'll begin your Interview. Please remember you can skip any questions you do not want to answer and you can stop this Interview at any time.*

1. Tell me a little about your career as a band director.

   a. How long have you been teaching?

   b. What have you taught in your career?

   c. How long have you been in your current position?

   d. Please describe your current position.

2. How do you define the success of your band program?

3. How do you define collaboration within your/a band program?

4. With your current position, how important to the success of your program is the collaboration of the middle or high school band director?

5. In what ways do you feel collaboration is essential in your setting?

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6. In what ways and to what extent is your fellow middle or high school band director involved with your program? Please give examples and details.

7. In what ways and to what extent are you involved with the other band program?

8. Is vertical alignment a part of your collaborative efforts?

   a. If yes, how?

   b. If no, why is it not?

9. Do your band students, parents, administration, and community see you and the other director working   together?

10. How important is it to you for your scholars and your program to see that you are partnering together?

11. What part does collaboration play in the recruitment and retention of students in both programs year to year?

12. In your opinion, what are some factors that contribute to the working relationship between you and the other band director?

13. In your opinion, what are some factors that hinder the working relationship between you and the other band director?

14. Are there any other ideas or comments you would like to contribute about collaboration between band directors and the success of their programs?

• *Once this interview is typed, I'd like to send it to you to look over and confirm if the transcription is accurate. Also, if you are willing, I may contact you with a few short follow up questions.*

• *THANK YOU for sharing your experiences as a collaborating band director. I hope this study will provide useful information to help band directors see potential outcomes of collaboration and open discussion of ways to implement in their own programs.*

Revised 02/01/2022

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DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

(Note: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

INFORMATION LETTER

"Exploring Middle and High School Band Directors' Perceptions of Collaboration and Its Impact on Their Programs: A Qualitative Study"

You have been invited to participate in a research study to understand middle and high school band directors' perceptions of collaboration and its possible impacts on the success for both of their programs. This study is being conducted by Dan Tyner, Ph.D. scholar at Auburn University, under the supervision of Dr. Nancy H. Barry, Professor of Music Education.

What will be involved to participate? If you agree to participate after reviewing this *Information Letter*, an interview will be scheduled via Zoom. ZOOM records both audio and video at the same time. The importance of having both audio and video is to allow the P.I. to be able to see and interpret body language, as well as, tone associated with the answers to the interview questions. You are reminded to protect your privacy by completing the Zoom interview in a private space to ensure conversations are not overheard; to disable "cookies;" and close your device browser during the Zoom interview session. We will ask you to allow us to interview you about your educational and professional career. The Interview will be designed to take approximately 30 – 45 minutes to complete. Your Zoom interview will be recorded so your interview responses can be transcribed to represent your exact words. The recording will be deleted once the interview is transcribed (no longer than 6 months after your interview). You will also be invited to review your interview transcript for accuracy (approximately 15 minutes) and will be asked to be available to respond via email or phone for possible follow-up questions or clarification (approximately 15 minutes). Your total participation time should not exceed 90 minutes.

Are there any risks or discomforts? The only risk beyond normal life is breach of confidentiality. Zoom interviews will be recorded to the AU cloud and saved to the PI's (Dan Tyner's) AU password-protected Box account. Pseudonyms will be used for participants' names and any other identifiable information mentioned during the interviews such as names of teachers or other students, names of schools or colleges, etc. All individual information will be deleted once data collection is complete. No individual identifying information will be retained.

Are there any benefits to yourself or others? You will not receive any direct benefits or payment for participating in this study. However, this is an opportunity for you to share your own lived experiences as a collaborating band director. The results of this project will be used in a Ph.D. Dissertation and may be disseminated in peer-reviewed professional publications and/or conference presentations. Because this is a study of specific band directors who work together in the same district, all data, including names of participants, school and district affiliations, and state, will remain confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Your privacy will be protected through this de-identification of all data, which will also be encrypted and stored in a secure location.

Will you receive compensation for participating? There is no compensation for your time.

Are there any costs? There are no costs to participate.

If you change your mind about participating, you can skip any interview questions you do not wish to answer and can stop the interview at any time by stating you no longer wish to participate. If you choose to withdraw, your data will be withdrawn from the study. Your decision about whether to participate or to stop participating will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or the Department of Curriculum and Teaching.

Any personal data obtained in connection with this study will remain confidential. We will protect your privacy and the data you provide by deidentifying (redacting or using pseudonyms) any names, locations, or other identifiable personal information. Deidentified information collected through your participation may be disseminated through professional publications and/or conference presentations.

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If you have questions about this study, Please ask them nor or you may contact Dan Tyner, principal investigator, at dgt0009@auburn.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Auburn University Office of Research Compliance or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334) 844-5966 or e-mail at IRBadmin@auburn.edu or IRBChair@auburn.edu.

HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE IF YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT. IF YOU DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE, THE DATA YOU PROVIDE WILL SERVE AS YOUR AGREEMENT TO DO SO. SAVE A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS.

_____

Investigator's signature   **Date**

Daniel Garland Tyner

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Email

Subject: Request to Participate in Research Study

Dear Middle and High School Band Directors,

You have been invited to participate in a research project that will provide very useful information about middle and high school band directors who impact one another's programs. This study is being conducted by Dan Tyner, Ph.D. scholar at Auburn University, under the supervision of Dr. Nancy H. Barry, Professor of Music Education. If you decide to participate, we will ask you to allow us to interview you about your educational and professional career. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete via ZOOM. The interview will be recorded. You might also be contacted following the interview for follow-up questions for clarification or to confirm conclusions.

The results of this project will be used in my dissertation as a requirement for my Ph.D. program and may be disseminated in peer-reviewed professional publications and/or conference presentations. Because this is a study of middle and high school band directors that collaborate together and your names or schools may be identified or recognized by others, I will have all information that connects either you or your schools remain confidential. I will make every effort to protect your privacy through the de-identification of data through the use of pseudonyms. All data will be stored in a secure location.

Your decision to participate (or not to participate) will not jeopardize your future relationship with your school, Auburn University, the Department of Curriculum and Teaching. Note that you may withdraw from participation at any time, without penalty.

As a result of your voluntary participation in this project, middle and high school band directors, music educators, and further researchers could begin to see the effects one another has on the perspective programs as well as help further research into what factors contribute to the success of the programs and band directors.

Please see the attached Information Letter explaining about my research and what it involves for you as a potential participant. If you are willing to assist me with my research, you may contact me, Dan Tyner, principal investigator, at 478-737-8418 or dgt0009@auburn.edu to set up a time for our interview.

THANK YOU for considering this request! You are welcome to contact me if you have any questions. Your assistance is appreciated. I'll be happy to share my findings with you.

Sincerely,

Dan Tyner (Cell: 478-737-8418, email: dgt0009@auburn.edu)

Ph.D. Student

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