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"They All Come Out of It With Something": Commonalities among Non-Performance Music Courses at High Schools in the United States

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Abstract

Existing research on non-traditional and non-performance music courses focuses on individual teachers or programs, and thus a broader perspective may shed additional light on the benefits and challenges associated with them. For this investigation, we used a collective case study approach to uncover issues and trends affecting secondary non-performance music courses. Through a maximum variation sampling technique, we selected three secondary music educators teaching a total of four non-performance music courses. Data sources included a class observation of each course, individual interviews with the participants, artifacts from the courses, and a focus group interview including all of the participants. Results indicated that the skills and preferences of individual teachers that teachers implemented for administrative rather than academic purposes had a substantial impact on students who enrolled in the courses. We also discuss implications for pre-service and in-service music teachers and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Music Education, Non-performance, Curriculum

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From the beginnings of American school music education, the focus of the profession has been on large performing ensembles (Mark & Gary, 2007; Reimer, 2003), usually bands, orchestras, and choirs (Schuler, 2011). Despite their prevalence in school music programs, however, some scholars have suggested that these ensembles may not be the best way to develop students' musical abilities and understanding. Music education scholar Charles Leonhard (1999) contended that the intense focus on performance in many music programs was a symptom of an "elitist virus" that resulted in "the development of students who learn only to perform and rarely develop the broad understanding of music that constitutes music literacy" (p. 41). Similarly, David Williams (2011) noted that the idea that ensemble participation contributes to individual student learning is not documented, and the large-ensemble model itself may be contributing to declining enrollment in music courses. While ensemble courses may provide excellent musical opportunities for a certain number of students, the majority of students in secondary schools choose not to participate in them (Shuler, 2011; Williams, 2011).

Although some authors (e.g., Jellison, 2004; Miksza, 2013; Trollinger, 2006) have supported the continuation and even the expansion of the large-ensemble model, an increasing number of music education scholars have called for a revitalization and augmentation of the existing music education curriculum to include more diverse and participatory music courses (e.g. Draisey-Collishaw, 2007; Freer, 2011; Green, 2002, 2008; Kneiter, 2000; Reimer, 2003, 2004; Regelski, 2014; Walker, 2005). Non-ensemble music courses may attract a broader range of students by offering opportunities to explore musical roles that are relevant to students' interests outside the school setting, while simultaneously allowing students who are or have been enrolled in ensemble courses to develop and transfer musical skills under a variety of circumstances (Nielsen, 2013; Tobias, 2012). Besides, these courses may help students to

develop a sense of empowerment and allow teachers to better meet the complex and diverse needs of the student body, thereby aiding music teachers in creating and sustaining a favorable social-emotional climate for all students in their programs (Carlisle, 2008; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003).

Despite these benefits and ongoing calls for change, however, there has been little evidence that music course offerings are being expanded or revised (Abril & Gault, 2008; Matthews & Koner, 2017). One possible explanation for the relative scarcity of nontraditional music courses lies in teachers' perceptions of and attitudes toward these types of courses. Juchniewicz (2007) and Garrett (2009) both conducted research to describe secondary ensemble directors' perceptions of and attitudes toward non-traditional music courses (defined as those outside the traditional ensemble model), as well as what motivated teachers to offer or not offer these courses. Taken as a whole, the results of these studies suggest that in many ways music teachers' attitudes toward nontraditional music courses may be "uniquely individual" (Garrett, 2009, p. 20). There were a few commonalities among participants' responses, however. One common trend was that individual school situations and contexts had a strong impact on music teachers' decisions to offer or not offer nontraditional music courses. Participants in these studies reported that a personal interest in the subject matter was the most substantial factor that motivated teachers to offer these courses (Garrett, 2009), but their perceived lack of training or preparation to teach nontraditional courses negatively affected their motivation to include these courses in the curriculum (Garrett, 2009; Juchniewicz, 2007). Poor administrative support and inadequate facilities were also among the factors that music teachers in both studies said would most deter them from offering these courses (Garrett, 2009; Juchniewicz, 2007). Another trend was that even in nontraditional music course offerings, music teachers tended to focus on a

familiar “performance-and-notation” paradigm. Both instrumental directors (Juchniewicz, 2007) and choral directors (Garrett, 2009) reported that the non-traditional courses that they most preferred to teach included music theory as well as some performance-oriented courses such as jazz band, percussion ensemble, and musical theater.

While performance-oriented courses, even those outside the ensemble model, necessarily privilege the role of performer, non-performance courses may provide particularly rich opportunities for curricular expansion by allowing students to explore more varied musical roles. Nielsen (2013) investigated a non-performance music technology course that included both students who were also enrolled in performance ensembles and students who were not. Through their participation in this course, both sets of students were able to develop their musical creativity in ways that were not available to them elsewhere in the curriculum (Nielsen, 2013). Similarly, Tobias (2012) conducted an intrinsic case study of a songwriting and technology course and suggested that well-constructed non-performance courses may encourage students to explore multiple types of musical engagement, developing a *hyphenated musicianship* (Théberge, 1997) by embodying a variety of musical roles at once. Tobias (2012) argued that by expanding course offerings beyond the performance arena, music educators might be able to reach students who are traditionally excluded from music programs and allow all students to develop more multifaceted musical understandings.

Despite the potential benefits of non-performance course offerings in music education, the body of research on these courses is limited. Further, much of the existing research on non-performance music courses has consisted of individual case studies profiling a single exceptional or noteworthy course or program (e.g., Nielsen, 2013; Tobias, 2012). Very little research has been done to examine commonalities or trends among these courses. While detailed

examinations of individual programs can provide valuable insights into the potential of non-performance music courses, a collective case study design incorporating several settings may provide broader and more transferable information about the general state of these course offerings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018), potentially leading to more broadly applicable implications for practice and future research. Accordingly, the purpose of this research was to investigate the commonalities between several non-performance music courses, offered at the senior high school level, and the attitudes and motivations of the individuals who teach them. Three specific research questions guided this study:

1. What commonalities might exist among non-performance music courses?
2. What might be teacher motivations, attitudes, and perceptions regarding the implementation of non-performance music courses?
3. How might non-performance courses interact with local educational contexts?

Method

Research Design

We utilized a collective case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to investigate and compare four non-performance music courses at three separate high schools, with particular attention paid to these courses' relationship to the broader music curriculum and the overall school community. Collective case study designs allow researchers to compare multiple perspectives on the same issue, enabling them to draw conclusions that might not be apparent from a single case, while still investigating each case in more depth than is possible in other research designs (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). This research design allowed us to examine these courses from a variety of perspectives, including the diverse perceptions of the participants as well as our perspectives as researchers (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This diverse

array of viewpoints provided a more complete understanding of the phenomenon under consideration and may improve the transferability of the findings of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

We used a purposeful maximal variation sampling method (Creswell & Poth, 2018) to select potential participants who could provide a diverse array of perspectives on the issues under investigation. To do this, we used our personal and professional networks to identify three high school music teachers who were teaching non-performance music courses at the time of the study. Participants represented diverse geographical regions of a single midwestern US state. Although the number of cases used in collective case studies may vary, it is common to use no more than four or five cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To broaden the data pool, we selected potential participants who represented varied personal and educational backgrounds, teaching specialties, and were teaching in schools with varied characteristics. The non-performance music courses taught by the participants also represented a variety of outcomes, classroom environments, and pedagogical approaches, which further added to the diversity of our sample and our data sources. This diversity helped to provide us with a variety of different perspectives on and rival explanations for the issues under consideration, which helped to strengthen our conclusions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Below, we provided brief descriptions of the participants, their schools, and the non-performance courses that they taught.

Once we identified potential participants, we asked if they would be willing to take part in the study. All three participants indicated their willingness to participate and were asked to sign an informed consent document. Participants provided a letter of cooperation from their school principals, to satisfy Institutional Review Board requirements. All participants selected pseudonyms, which we used throughout the presentation of data.

Participants

Elizabeth Strong was in her second year as the choir director at a small junior/senior high school in a rural Midwestern district. During the school year in which research activities took place, she taught three junior and senior high school choirs as well as seventh- and eighth-grade general music classes and high school music history, music theory, and guitar classes. Before accepting this teaching position, Ms. Strong taught elementary general music for four years in another small school district and completed a Master's degree at a local university. In person, Ms. Strong was energetic, displaying a great deal of enthusiasm for both her students and the subject matter. She had an obvious rapport with her students and related some stories about her interactions with them before and during study activities.

Ms. Strong was teaching two non-performance classes (music history and guitar) at the time of the study. She also taught a music theory course, but that course was not offered when conducted this study. The music history course that she taught had been added to the curriculum by a previous music teacher, and Ms. Strong admitted to some challenges in teaching this course. It was organized primarily as a lecture course with paper-and-pencil assessments, although Ms. Strong had made an attempt to include more interactive elements such as listening assignments and technology-based activities to help students explore the content. The guitar course was more heavily focused on skill-building and music-making, although it still had strong music literacy and theory components. Ms. Strong indicated that students spent a substantial portion of this course practicing individual skills and repertoire and that more advanced students had opportunities to tailor their assignments and repertoire selections to their individual performance goals.

Barry West was in his sixth year of public school teaching. During data collection, his teaching responsibilities were split between a semi-rural high school about 25 minutes outside a major metropolitan area and the associated middle school just down the road. He taught band at both schools as well as music theory and music appreciation classes at the high school. In conversation, Mr. West projected an air of relaxation and deliberation and projected a calm and authoritative demeanor in front of his classes. Despite his reserved manner, Mr. West was enthusiastic about music teaching and about finding ways to serve his students better, and at the time of this study was pursuing a Master's degree in music education to improve his skills and knowledge about his subject.

Mr. West was teaching a music theory course at the time of the study, and also offered a music appreciation course that was not ongoing at the time of the study, and we did not observe it. The music theory course was a traditional academic course, with a focus on lecture and paper-and-pencil work. In contrast to the knowledge- and understanding-based focus of Ms. Strong's music history class, however, the majority of student work in this course was centered on building discrete skills and applying those skills in musical contexts. Class activities included an increasingly complex set of skills and concepts, and students were asked to practice these skills in a variety of different ways. When appropriate, they were also asked to apply their new skills and abilities to their musical activities both inside and outside the classroom.

John Brant was in his fifth year of teaching and the second year in his current position. He taught 5th-12th-grade band, 7th-12th-grade choir, and high school music theory and music history at a small, rural school district serving approximately 1,000 students. At the time of the study, Mr. Brant was also pursuing a Master's degree in music education as he sought to grow professionally and better serve his students. Mr. Brant was relaxed and friendly in conversation

and in the classroom, with an easygoing demeanor that put his students at ease and encouraged them to learn. It was clear, however, that he had strong convictions about his profession and how to best serve his students, and his teaching reflected this philosophy.

At the time of the study, Mr. Brant was teaching a course that was organized in two semi-autonomous segments: music history and music theory. Only the music theory segment was ongoing at the time of the study, and so only this segment was observed. Mr. Brant indicated that he viewed these courses as enrichment for those students already involved in performance ensembles, and the curriculum structure and pedagogical approaches of the music theory course reflected this. He presented music theory content in a way that facilitated connections to performance activities, and the structure of the course emphasized music theory concepts that were strongly applicable in large-group ensemble settings.

Data Collection

Researchers conducting collective case studies often draw on a variety of data sources to strengthen their conclusions and improve the transferability of their findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). In this study, we used four different data sources—individual interviews, site observations, documentary evidence, and a focus group interview—to gather a broad range of information about the individual cases and overall phenomena. We collected data throughout two months in the spring of 2015. In the first phase of data collection, one of the researchers observed one class meeting of each non-performance course, which was taught by the participants. During all observations, we adopted a "nonparticipant" role (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and did not directly interact with students or their teachers during the observation period. While observing, we took detailed fieldnotes about the class setting, atmosphere, and activities, and paid particular attention to how teachers and students perceived the courses and how they

situated them within the music program and the school community. As soon as possible after each observation, we took time to complete and expand these fieldnotes, in order to provide a detailed and rich description of the setting we observed (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

Next, the researcher who observed each course conducted a one-on-one interview with the teacher of that course. These interviews occurred shortly after each observation and were intended to expand upon our notes and to provide additional information that was not available through observation. These interviews lasted from 15-30 minutes depending on the amount of information provided by the participants and were recorded and transcribed in their entirety. Questions asked in the one-on-one interviews included information about how and why the non-performance courses were initially added to the curriculum, the teacher's attitudes toward these non-performance courses, and more detailed information about the types of learning activities and assessments that were used in these courses. The researchers also asked the participants to clarify and expand upon specific teaching strategies and materials they used during the observed lesson. Although we did not ask specific questions about non-performance courses not currently being taught by the participants, both participants provided information about these courses during the interview. From the participants, we collected a variety of documentary evidence from the courses under consideration, including syllabi, sample assignments, and sample assessments.

Finally, using SKYPE, we conducted a focus group interview with all of the participants. Focus groups can provide information that is not available through one-on-one interviews by allowing participants to interact with each other and develop mutually negotiated positions and statements (Berg, 1998; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This allowed us to take a more passive role during the focus group while the participants stimulated discussion with each other and challenged each other's positions and ideas. The interview was video recorded by one researcher

and audio recorded by the other, in order to allow for accurate transcription. The video recording was used as the primary data source for transcription, since video may provide additional information not available through audio recordings and allow for more accurate interpretation of participants' ideas (Barbour, 2014). In several segments of the interview, however, technical problems such as internet connectivity issues resulted in some participant statements not being clearly audible on the video recording. In these situations, the audio recording was used as a backup data source to fill in the missing information.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study took place in several phases. First, we considered each case individually, working to gain a thorough understanding of each one before considering them collectively (Yin, 2018). We also used a system of analytic memos (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to document our thoughts to identify codes, which we used a throughout the open coding process. Once we completed the initial open coding pass, we conducted another coding pass to draw additional connections between the codes and to identify those codes and categories of codes that might be most central to the research questions posed in this study. During this "axial coding" phase (Strauss, 1987), we examined codes and groups of codes in more detail and attempted to determine how various codes could be considered in relation to each other (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The analytic memos collected during the first coding phase, as well as additional memos written during this phase, helped to guide the process of data organization and analysis.

After axial coding for the intra-case analyses, we conducted a joint axial coding session with the complete body of data collected in this study, including the focus group interview

transcript. In this coding session, we reconciled our individual codes, categories, and memos with each other's conclusions and with the overall body of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). During this process, several broad categories of data began to emerge as central and consistent to all phases of analysis. These broad themes formed the major findings of the study (discussed below). In addition, several subsidiary themes and categories appeared and were considered to complement and supplement the core themes.

During the entire process of data analysis, we took steps to reduce researcher bias and improve the trustworthiness of our findings. The most important of these was the use of triangulation between different data sources and between the researchers themselves (Creswell & Poth, 2018). We used information from each data source to interrogate and corroborate our findings from the others, which helped to increase construct validity (Yin, 2018). Furthermore, we used investigator triangulation (Yin, 2018) to challenge and refine each other's perceptions of the data, especially during the final phase of data analysis. In addition, we sought member checks (Creswell & Poth, 2018) throughout the data collection and analysis process, including during the final focus group interview where we allowed participants to interrogate not only our perceptions but those of the other participants as well. Finally, our attempts to recruit and consider a diverse sample of participants and "rival" settings (Yin, 2018) provided opportunities for us to discover and consider evidence that might not have been present in a study of similar cases (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

Findings

Three major themes emerged as central concepts linking the various non-performance courses examined in this study: Individualization, Administrative Functions, and Student Impact. These themes were present in each of the courses and were supported by a variety of subsidiary

codes and constructs. We present and discuss these themes individually here, but note that each of these themes interacted with the others in diverse ways.

Individualization

The results of this study indicated that individual interests and abilities of the music educators who taught them shaped the content and objectives of the non-performance music courses we observed. Because of the lack of standardized or generally accepted curricula for these courses, the content and design of each course were generally at the discretion of the individual teacher. All participants in this study indicated that their individual beliefs and opinions shaped the non-performance courses that they taught. Courses that had been designed and implemented by the participants' predecessors were often revised and reshaped by the current teachers to reflect their abilities and philosophies better. For example, Mr. West indicated that he had revised his music theory curriculum in order to suit his technological and student-centered viewpoint, which differed from the more traditional format that had previously been used in that course. Similarly, Ms. Strong noted that she was constantly "trying new things…trying to rework some things to make it better for the kids" (Individual interview). She explained that she had expanded her music history course to cover more modern music, whereas under a previous teacher it had focused almost exclusively on the Western classical tradition.

When their schools chose to institute new non-performance courses, participants suggested that teachers' philosophies and instructional styles not only played a role in the course design but often affected the choice of which courses to offer. All of the participants made some reference to their own or their predecessors' preferences when discussing why their non-performance classes were added to the curriculum. Mr. West noted that his music appreciation course was likely created "because that's what the current director then was comfortable doing.

They asked him probably what classes he would want, and he came up with the music appreciation course that he had designed… I think knowing him, if they were to say, like hey, we want a guitar class, I think he would have said, 'find somebody else to teach it'" (Individual interview). Likewise, Ms. Strong said "They wanted me to teach AP music theory, I was like, okay, first of all, I need some more training, and we're – no one's ready for that. [laughs] But how about instead we do a [non-AP] music theory class?" (Individual interview). Participants also suggested that in some cases, a teacher's attitude toward or ability to teach certain non-performance courses might affect the hiring process: "The guitar class was new my first year, and I think part of the reason they hired me was because my Facebook profile picture was me playing guitar. Because he [the administrator] made a comment about that in my interview" (Ms. Strong, Individual interview). The structure and content of these non-performance music courses seemed to be affected by the interests and abilities of the individual music teachers.

Although the participants in this study agreed on many points, they had markedly different opinions regarding the role of non-performance courses in the music curriculum. While Mr. Brant and Mr. West regarded non-performance courses as a valuable but not indispensable part of the curriculum, Ms. Strong argued that non-performance courses should always be offered in order to draw additional students into the music program. She also noted that non-performance courses often provided a gateway into the music program for students who were not currently enrolled in performing ensembles and that students who took her non-performance courses often subsequently enrolled in ensembles. In contrast, Mr. West stated that his non-performance courses provided a source of musical enrichment for students who chose not to enroll in performing ensembles: "My goal for that is just to make it as positive of a musical experience as possible, not necessarily to recruit them for band but just to make sure…they get

something out of it" (Focus group interview). He related several stories about how students had used the knowledge they gained in his non-performance courses to enhance their own musical experiences. Finally, Mr. Brant suggested that non-performance courses often served as "enrichment courses for those advanced students already in the music department to help further their music education beyond the performance setting" (Focus group interview).

In many ways, the most consistent element of the non-performance courses observed in this study was their inconsistency. Participant statements suggested that non-performance courses could change dramatically when music teachers left or new teachers were hired; these changes included both the actual courses that were offered and the structure and content of any courses that were retained. The curricula for these courses were developed individually, without reference to other teachers' practices or course designs, and teachers often combined materials and ideas from a variety of sources when designing their curricula. Finally, individual teacher motivations often played a substantial role in determining whether and which non-performance music courses were offered.

Administrative Functions

Another pervasive theme in this study was the finding that at the school or district level non-performance music courses were often used to serve administrative purposes rather than to achieve academic or curricular goals. For example, Mr. West believed one reason that his music theory course was added to the curriculum was that the previous band director needed an additional class assignment to complete his schedule: "They needed some kind of fine art credit to offer…they were looking for more music classes and I think they were looking to assign the current band director with another teaching prep" (Individual interview). Ms. Strong suggested a similar motivation for the implementation of her own music history course: "They had an extra

period and no one wants to go do another lunch duty or something, so they're like, how about music history?" (Individual interview).

The participants also stated that this administrative view of non-performance music courses, especially as it related to filling out student schedules or completing graduation requirements, often led these courses to become a "dumping ground" for students who might not be motivated or prepared to succeed in them. According to Mr. Brant, "When I get a student that's dumped in my class, they're usually a struggling student that doesn't have the knowledge but needs the fine arts credit" (Focus group interview). Similarly, Mr. West said that "For me it took failing a student who plagiarized all of their music history assignments for guidance counselors to realize that this wasn't just a course they could put people in" (Focus group interview). All of the participants related that they had made efforts to cultivate relationships with the guidance counselors at their schools in hopes of reducing the number of students who were inappropriately placed in their non-performance courses. Participants also suggested that in many cases, administrators, other teachers, and even students may not have had a thorough understanding of the work they did or how their music courses contributed to student learning: "It's not like they're negative about it, they just don't care" (Ms. Strong, Focus group interview). Further, participants suggested that this problem was more pronounced in the non-performance courses than it was in their performance ensembles. These participant experiences further support the conclusion that many educational stakeholders at these schools may not have been focused on the pedagogical outcomes and curricular benefits of non-performance music courses. Instead, stakeholders may have viewed these courses as placeholders or hole-fillers, which may have reduced the impact and value of these courses to the school and community.

Student Impact

Although teacher preferences and administrative goals drove the structure and content of the non-performance courses observed in this study, the courses had a strong impact on the students who enrolled in them. We did not gather information from the students enrolled in the observed courses, and so we were not able to directly measure this student impact, but it was reflected in both the statements of the teacher participants and in our own observations of the courses. In the courses observed for this study, the diversity of musical goals and viewpoints among the students helped to create classroom environments that were markedly different from performance ensembles and could, therefore, provide musical outlets for students who might not be reached by the traditional music curriculum. A possible explanation for this is the varied backgrounds of the students who took these courses, as well as the vast assortment of reasons that students were motivated to enroll. While participants noted that some students were placed into these courses for administrative purposes, as noted above, they also suggested that other students chose to take them in order to support their own personal musical goals.

Each participant in this study related stories about students whom they believed had been dramatically affected by their participation in non-performance music courses. Mr. West spoke about a group of students at his school that had formed a rock band and took his music theory class together to improve their musicianship and composition skills. Although several of the students found the course very challenging, Mr. West was impressed with their motivation and commitment to learning about music. He said, “Even if they’re getting just beat up every single day with the knowledge in the class, they, they look forward to learning more” (Individual interview). After the course was over, the students invited him to attend a gig that they had been hired to perform, so that he could see their new skills in action. The other participants told similar stories about their own students, noting that they believed many students who might not

have chosen to participate in traditional music ensembles had valuable and meaningful experiences in non-performance classes.

The student impact of the observed non-performance courses was also reflected in the amount of student interest in them that the participating teachers reported. Mr. Brant reported that enrollment in his music theory class had more than doubled from the previous year, and Mr. West explained that “students encourage other students to take [music theory], they say ‘hey, I took this music theory class.’ They kind of promote it within themselves” (Focus group interview). Ms. Strong’s guitar course had proven so popular in its first year that the school was adding a second course for more advanced students: “It's totally word of mouth. It's people going and talking about guitar class, people wanting to take it a second time” (Ms. Strong, Focus group interview). All three participants emphasized the importance of student recommendations and word-of-mouth publicity about their non-performance courses. Although these courses were often not formally advertised to the school community, students who had taken the courses often encouraged others to register for them because of their own positive experiences. The ongoing evidence of student interest in these courses, combined with specific examples of students who have had meaningful musical experiences in them, suggest that these courses may have had a substantial impact on the students who enrolled in them.

Implications

In this study, we included the themes of Individualization, Administrative Functions, and Student Impact that encapsulated the challenges and the benefits of the non-performance courses. The first two themes suggest that the design and implementation of these courses may often be dictated by considerations other than student preferences or student learning needs. Despite this, the third theme suggests that these courses may nonetheless have a positive impact on those

students who choose to enroll in them. Thus, our findings illustrate both the potential benefits of non-performance music courses and some of the significant barriers to realizing those benefits.

Before considering these implications in more detail, it is important to note that this study had several important limitations. We considered only a small sample of music teachers and non-performance course offerings in a single region of the United States. In addition, we spent only a short amount of time at each site, and it is possible that we did not gather all available information about the courses under consideration. Our findings regarding student impact are based on teacher reports rather than direct student input, and the participants may have been incentivized to highlight the benefits of these courses to their students. Finally, the transferability of conclusions drawn from case study research is limited, and readers should carefully consider which parts of our findings might be most applicable to their own settings. Given the diversity of the participating schools and the consistency of our findings, however, we believe that this small-scale study may still carry some implications for the music education profession and for future research.

One of the major findings of this study was that the structure, content, and curriculum of non-performance music courses may often be based on administrative needs or on teachers' personal preferences rather than on the needs or preferences of students. This is consistent with previous findings that teachers' personal interest in the subject matter was among the strongest motivations for offering nontraditional music courses (Garrett, 2009). In addition, our results supported Garrett's (2009) contention that music teachers' attitudes toward non-performance music courses are "uniquely individual" (p. 20) and suggested that the non-performance courses these teachers offer may be equally individual. In order to maximize the value of these courses, however, it may be helpful for music teachers and administrators to place more emphasis on

students' needs and desires when considering the implementation of a non-performance music course. While Tobias (2012) emphasized how non-performance music courses could be used to encourage students to engage with diverse musical roles and develop a "hyphenated musicianship," the focus on administrative and teacher preferences in developing the courses we observed for this study may limit the potential for these courses to drive student engagement in this way. By designing non-performance music courses that are more strongly connected to the musical backgrounds and goals of the students who will take them, teachers and administrators may be able to better encourage students to take on diverse musical roles and develop the hyphenated musicianship recommended by Tobias.

If music teachers are to design courses that are driven by relevance to their students rather than by their own preferences and comfort level, they must be both willing and prepared to take on the challenges that will result. Juchniewicz (2007) and Garrett (2009) found that even when considering nontraditional course offerings, most ensemble directors preferred to teach courses that fell within the traditional performance-and-notation paradigm. Additional experiences with non-performance music courses might help to cultivate broader curricular preferences among music teachers. In particular, expansion of the undergraduate music teacher preparation curriculum to include more information on non-performance courses would likely be helpful. When the participants in this study were asked in the focus group interview about their preparation to teach non-performance courses in their undergraduate programs, all three were moved to laughter. The inclusion of specific coursework focused on planning and teaching non-performance courses may help teachers feel more comfortable including these courses in their music programs. In addition, districts that plan to implement non-performance music courses may benefit from offering targeted professional development for the in-service teachers who will

be teaching these courses, since these teachers may not have received training in this area during their undergraduate degree programs.

Future researchers may be able to expand on the findings presented here in a variety of ways. First, investigations of larger numbers of teachers and courses are necessary to improve the generalizability of these findings. The addition of student voices and perspectives would also help to expand upon the results presented here and may provide contrasting viewpoints. Additional quantitative research on the number and types of non-performance courses currently being offered, student enrollment in these courses, and other characteristics of the courses may provide additional clarity about the current state of the music curriculum. Finally, in the present study there was a suggestion that participant opinions and attitudes toward non-performance music courses may have differed based on their teaching area. Although the constraints of the current study did not allow this difference to be fully investigated, it may be helpful to determine whether such a distinction does exist.

As educational systems continue to change and adapt to student and societal needs, music programs must do the same. Non-performance music courses can be a valuable addition to the music curriculum, allowing music teachers to provide more diverse and meaningful musical opportunities to students at their schools. Although the implementation of these courses carries a variety of challenges, the lasting impact that they can have on students and their ability to reach a broader student population make them worthy of inclusion in music programs. Through a more detailed understanding of the characteristics of non-performance music courses, teachers may discover new ways to promote individual student learning, increase the number of students enrolled in their music programs, and provide musical experiences that are more relevant to students' lives beyond the school walls.

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