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### Hey, Teacher, Leave Them Kids Alone: Facilitation in Modern Band

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## Hey, Teacher, Leave Them Kids Alone: Facilitation in Modern Band

### Cover Page Footnote

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# Hey, Teacher, Leave Them Kids Alone: Facilitation in Modern Band

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to examine a single modern band to discover how an ensemble director/facilitator implemented a student-centered pedagogical approach. Applications of facilitation are presented within the study. The group was co-constructed through an approach of shared power and championing of student voice. Modeling was a key tenet of learning and communication between the ensemble's members and facilitator. Students shared knowledge, opinions, and suggestions for the ensemble's direction. Findings include the significance of a relaxed atmosphere in which student agency, autonomy, and democratic decision-making were defining characteristics of the ensemble. Data analysis revealed musical and social benefits through a democratized and deterritorialized approach. Pedagogical suggestions for music education include increased autonomy and student agency in music classrooms as well as pathways for teachers to develop facilitation and peer mentoring skills.

## Keywords

facilitation, peer mentoring, modern band, popular music education, student agency, student centered

## INTRODUCTION

Learning in school music ensembles has historically been teacher-centered and teacher-driven (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Williams, 2007). Conductor-directed ensembles and classroom instruction often revolve around passing knowledge from teacher to student (Jorgensen, 1997) - or what Freire (1968) called the "banking" concept of education - and focus on aspects of music-making that do not prepare students to make music outside of professional ensemble membership (Kratus, 2019). Students are not often given opportunities to share their knowledge with each other in ensemble settings (Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012; Gilbert, 2016) or determine what

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they learn (Stavrou & Papageorgi, 2021). Along with these limited avenues for student voice in ensemble settings, director-chosen repertoire infrequently reflects students' interests and desires (Kratus, 2019).

When given the opportunity to engage with their peers and operate as agents of their own direction within a constructivist approach, student learning can be advanced in many ways (Harrington, 2016), even though students have been discouraged from bringing their own knowledge into the classroom (Kratus, 2019; Resnick, 1987). As Dewey (1933) stated, in such instances, "The teacher is a guide and director; he steers the boat but the energy that propels it must come from those who are learning" (p. 36). According to Rodriguez (2009), a redefinition of a teacher's role is needed if student-centered learning is to exist on any level within an educational setting. When a teacher becomes more of a facilitator of learning, this type of redefinition becomes possible (Cremata, 2017).

A facilitator, as understood in this study, is an official classroom/ensemble educator within a school setting who shares power with students, encourages democratic decision-making, and co-constructs an ensemble/classroom experience with their students rather than for them. While there have been many advancements towards a more democratic music classroom (Allsup, 2003; Georgii-Hemming & Westvall, 2010; Gould, 2008), I aim to provide examples of how this can be done, building upon the work of scholars in popular music education (Giddings, 2008; Powell et al., 2017), authenticity (Kallio et al., 2014), and democratic music education in the United States and internationally (Kallio & Väkevä, 2017; Powell et al., 2017). I do this through a case-study in which I identify integral and substantive approaches that put established theory into practice. I have not aimed to discover if facilitation exists in this study's location but rather to better understand the ways in which it is implemented in modern band. For this study, in conceptualizing democratic education, I recall Allsup's (2003) statement regarding democratized education as "practice [that] should incorporate the rights and opinions of both teachers and students. It must, according to Freire (1995), 'characterize an epistemological relationship'" (p. 379).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research that aids in contextualizing this study is centered on informal learning in music, teachers acting as facilitators, and modern band as an ensemble and approach. These three areas of study help to better understand this research since a teacher who acts as a facilitator of learning necessitates the use of informal learning tactics. Since facilitation has been a field of study in many other areas, it is also important to understand its application through the lens of modern band.

### Informal Learning in Music

Popular music and informal music learning practices are closely aligned (Vasil, 2019). Green (2002, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2014) and Folkestad (2006) have played a primary role in defining informal learning in music education with seminal texts on how

music learning occurs outside of the classroom. To codify this approach, Green and Walmsley (2006) identified five characteristics of informal learning: unstructured leadership, learning with peers, aural replication, student music selection, and an incorporation of composition and improvisation. Through facilitated activities, students learn in myriad ways without realizing they are learning and with no explicit reference to learning that may occur (Davis, 2013). Jaffurs (2004) observed that a greater level of learning and engagement for students could be achieved through informal learning.

Characteristics of informal learning in music are learning from recordings by ear, through “purposive listening” (Green, 2006, p. 61) and collective group and peer learning where musicians rehearse informally, compose haphazardly, and learn from each other through various exercises and predicated practices. Söderman and Folkestad (2004) showcased these types of practices in an examination of hip-hop musicians and their methods. Informal learning and acquiring skills and technique in music are accomplished through watching, modeling, and copying peers along with aurally replicating recorded music in small and large group settings with peers and those more musically advanced.

### **Studies on Teacher as Facilitator**

A teacher acting as a facilitator of experiential learning is not a new concept or one that is limited to a particular region of the world (Marrou, 1982). Rogers (1969) found that students, in general, were more likely to retain knowledge over a longer period if they were active participants. “The facilitator helps a group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions” (Cremata, 2017, p. 64). Facilitation aids in democratic and diverse learning in music classrooms (Cremata, 2017) and can be related to coaching (Watson, 2011); a classroom coach leaves room for student autonomy while providing support as needed. Crow (2004) noted a facilitator needs to approach the context with care, understanding that educators are called to vary their instruction to benefit students. Opportunities for democratic learning through facilitation enable students to learn decision-making practices more fitting for a 21<sup>st</sup> century education (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2010).

Facilitation can lead to an increase in student enthusiasm and creativity when students are given the chance to construct their own learning in an environment rich with student agency and democracy (Cremata and Powell, 2017; Knapp et al., 2022; Nazario, 2021). Cremata and Powell (2017) found that students needed direction and guidance from their facilitator but found increases in music creativity with “support from a music teacher who facilitated music experiences for the students, and student-to-student peer mentoring, experiential learning, and collaboration” (p. 311). Shieh (2010) also found benefits in a model of education where students had agency and learning happened experientially, claiming that movement away from a traditional model opened more possibilities for learning. Wiggins and Espeland (2012) argued that music creation and music learning are inherently social processes when viewed through a constructivist lens as well. Facilitation, according to Dillon (2007), leaves room for

students to develop socially through interactive music-making with their peers, through which higher-order thinking skills develop. Empowering students and supporting agency, then, may more readily occur when the teacher pulls back from being the only source of expertise in the classroom (West & Cremata, 2016).

### Modern Band

The term *modern band* began to emerge around 2017 in the U.S. (Byo, 2017; Powell et al., 2017; Randles, 2017). Modern band programs utilize instrumentation often comprising, but not limited to, guitar, bass, drums, keyboard, ukulele, music technology, and vocals. With curricula characteristics that include learning by doing and an emphasis on peer interactions, with the teacher as a facilitator (Smith et al., 2018), modern band teachers often encourage aspects of peer mentoring and informal learning, encouraging students to develop musical and social competence in ways more aligned with how they learn outside of schools (Wiggins, 2016).

Modern band has also been described as a school-based ensemble that plays popular music and a classroom methodology that is meant to remain student-centered, inclusive, and culturally responsive (Powell & Burstein, 2017). With influence from informal learning and popular music performance in education within the United States, practitioners aspire for ensembles and approaches referred to as “modern band” to be seen as an equally relevant and justifiable approach as compared to other music education ensembles and methodologies (Powell, 2021, 2022). Modern band practitioners cultivate student-led approaches using informal techniques and rote learning (Clauhs, 2018), utilizing instruments inclusive of guitars, drums, technology, vocals, and keyboards (Dorfman, 2020; Powell, 2019). Modern band pedagogy incorporates scaffolding and approximation as means of “embracing opportunities for differentiation” (Burstein & Powell, 2019, p. 46) and exemplifies the “changing role of the music educator to embrace the role of *facilitator* instead of *director*” (p. 46).

Pedagogy and approaches in traditional school ensembles are steeped in decisions made by directors (Powell, 2018) and curricula chosen without influence or input from learners (Clauhs & Cremata, 2020). Powell et al. (2017) and Kallio (2017) posited that music educators have historically given preference to certain styles and have stood as a hegemonic structure that perpetuates dominant musical styles in classrooms. In modern band contexts, students are more engaged in their learning through the performance of songs they choose (Randles, 2018, 2020) or write themselves (Smith & Gramm, 2022) with increases in student enrollment, including those in marginalized populations. Powell (2019) and Knapp et al. (2022) found that modern band opportunities increase student agency, while Smith et al. (2018) found that integration of modern band approaches led to curricular change that brought about more student participation, eagerness for learning, and inclusivity of students who are marginalized in today’s public schools. Approaches akin to modern band “invite students, music teachers, and music teacher educators to take risks, learning alongside one another, and address 21<sup>st</sup>-century knowledge and skills through engaging with the music that students choose

and create” (Vasil et al., 2018, p. 1). There is a need to better understand facilitation in modern band settings.

### Research Questions

To better understand how modern band practitioners embody the role of a facilitator, the following research questions guided this investigation:

- (1) In what ways, if any, do participants mentor each other in the context of a modern band?;
- (2) How does peer mentoring play a role, if at all, in the overall musical growth of students in modern band?; and
- (3) What role does the facilitator play in creating an environment that nurtures peer mentoring and the sharing of knowledge between students?

### METHODOLOGY

To better understand how facilitators operate within modern band, I utilized a case study method (Stake, 1995). This study was bounded as I observed one class at one site from September 2019 to February 2020. Because my research questions sought “to explain some contemporary circumstance – i.e., ‘how’ or ‘why’ some social phenomenon works” (Yin, 2018, p. 4) – the case study design allowed me to examine the complexities of facilitation and peer mentoring and then portray these characteristics. Using interviews, observations, journals, and a collection of artifacts, I hoped “to understand what [was] going on” (Stake, 1995, p. 46). Qualitative research of this type is appropriate when trying to comprehend a complicated context by going to the place where it happens (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### Site Selection

To identify a site for the study, I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) determined by availability, location, and learning environments. I sought a context where a modern band facilitator supported and encouraged student-centered learning. Criteria for site selection included the prerequisites of regular modern band rehearsals with a facilitator who had been teaching for at least three years. I determined that there was a high probability of facilitation and student-centered pedagogy after phone conversations with an educator at Washington Ave. Arts High School (pseudonym).

The site was located in a dense urban center in the northeast United States where I aimed to study students who varied only slightly in age. The school housed students in grades 9-12 ranging in age from 14 to 18 years. The ensemble was an elective for any student and met during normal school hours once per week. This study’s participants have all been given pseudonyms and each provided written assent or consent (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in a process approved by an Institutional Review Board.

## Data Collection

I collected data through observations (utilizing recorded audio and written notes), individual and small-group interviews, and artifact examination (lyric, chord, and lead sheets, guitar chord charts, and tablature). Interview questions posed to individuals are included in Appendix A. Notable questions to students were: What is it like to have someone besides the teacher helping out with the instruction in the classroom?; If you find yourself helping your classmates play songs and learn parts, what is that experience like?; If you have had other students help you to learn how to play something, what was that experience like; and When you are rehearsing modern band in school, what is your interaction like with your peers? Notable questions to the group's instructor were: Do you find students helping each other in the ensemble during school rehearsals?; When you are rehearsing in school, what is the interaction like between your students during rehearsal time?; and What is the experience like for you as an educator when you have given students a larger role in their own educational experiences as compared to traditional ensembles or classroom settings?

Observations depicted the context, conversations, participation, and direction from the group's facilitator, "Dr. Anderson." I followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) protocol and guidelines to adequately prepare for and transcribe my observations. I conducted individual, semi-structured interviews with seven ensemble members of varying ability and experience levels and one full-ensemble interview with all student participants midway through the observation process. I also undertook individual interviews with the facilitator, which included open-ended questions related to student-centered instruction and facilitation. Interview questions were semi-structured to allow for tangential topics and discussion. I allowed participants to skip questions they were uncomfortable answering, and they were allowed to speak freely if other related topics were discussed. The group interview occurred with all 12 ensemble members where I encouraged open dialogue and discussion regarding the themes of questions asked. The ensemble consisted of one sophomore, six juniors, and five seniors. Students' abilities ranged widely, and the majority had instruments for practicing and used the group rehearsal time to help one another and solidify parts and song structures. All students had prior experience in the ensemble except the sophomore participant.

## Analysis

After gathering data, I coded extensively and found emergent themes using Creswell and Poth's (2018) "data analysis spiral" (p. 185). During this process, I "engage[d] in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. One enters with data of text or audiovisual materials (e.g., images, sound recordings) and exits with an account or a narrative" (p. 185). This aided me in better understanding the larger context of the data. I kept transcriptions on a password-secured laptop and included no identifying information in the transcriptions. Guided by the research questions and rationale, I coded for emergent themes and organized them to present the



findings of this study in the final report so that an audience would be able to clearly comprehend the information being presented.

The theoretical framework of Communities of Practice (CoP) (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), with pedagogical underpinnings of peer mentoring (Goodrich, 2007, 2016), enabled me to better understand how data reflected musical and social phenomena; facilitation led to a co-constructed ensemble with old-timers and newcomers as peers who mentored each other. Research that examines the peer-to-peer interaction within a modern band ensemble (due to facilitation) may lead to a better understanding of ways in which peers work collaboratively and share leadership, two aspects of an educational CoP (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As Mok (2010) articulated, “Band members do not simply learn their parts on their own. Instead, at every stage of their band’s rehearsal they are working collectively to acquire skills and compose together” (p. 182). Moreover, this mutual accountability is a defining tenet as participants strive towards common goals (Wenger, 1998). Lave and Wenger (1991) determined that a Community of Practice exists where group members rely on collaboration and the exchange of information as a primary tenet of learning.

## **FINDINGS**

The five thematic sections here highlight the type of ensemble curated by Dr. Anderson. This modern band was characterized by student-centered repertoire and nonformal learning techniques akin to aural learning and notation commonly found in popular music (lyrics, chord sheets, and tablature). The group concentrated on learning “Californication” by Red Hot Chili Peppers and “Day Tripper” by The Beatles for their winter concert and most of the data, analysis, and discussions pertain to these songs. Students and facilitator jointly selected repertoire. Instrumentation included guitars, bass, drums, keyboards, music technology, and vocals. Aural and visual modeling were key tenets of how Dr. Anderson facilitated the group. For many students, this accurately portrayed how they might learn on their own, enabling learning to happen more naturally. The information shared aims to show how Dr. Anderson facilitated learning with students. Dr. Anderson shared his knowledge with the group in a relaxed way that informed students and encouraged active participation by stepping aside, giving students room to collaborate as peers.

### **The Facilitator**

Dr. Anderson would most aptly be described as a facilitator of learning rather than a formal director. Given modern band’s focus on popular music, a student-centered approach lent itself to the most authentic approach possible within a school setting. Dr. Anderson made decisions to keep the group focused and productive while utilizing nonformal learning techniques (Mok, 2010). He used aural and visual modeling and shared his knowledge with the group in ways that informed the students rather than giving them ultimatums. Dr. Anderson’s relaxed, informal instruction style

enabled students to co-construct the ensemble using varying learning methods germane to popular music education (aural learning, non-traditional notation, etc.). Students occupied important roles in the group in that their opinions were heard, they consistently aided peers, and helped decide how each song would sound. As Dylan (acoustic guitar) said, “I think [communication is] a main part of the band ‘cause [sic] if you don’t communicate with each other, you don’t know how to go or where to go with the music.”

As part of his approach, Dr. Anderson encouraged student socializing during ensemble rehearsals, which became meaningful for students such as Joan, who said, “I don’t talk to people often so when I came to modern band freshman year, it kinda [sic] helped me... after we started playing the pop songs, I started to make more friendships here.” The atmosphere was relaxed and inclusive of student autonomy and agency. Students engaged in as much instruction as the facilitator. Dr. Anderson maneuvered between nonformal and formal roles within the ensemble. His approach was humorous and light-hearted, adding to the relaxed atmosphere among students which may have allowed for more student-to-student interaction. Dr. Anderson led the group in ways that may not typically be found in more traditional large ensemble contexts and provided a supportive space for positive, enjoyable, student-centered learning.

### **Navigating the Tasks of a Facilitator**

Dr. Anderson often operated in between formal and informal approaches as a facilitator (Folkestad, 2006), depending on the task at hand. He provided verbal prompts such as “Can you play softer next time?” or “Can we try it again from the chorus?” to continue his implementation of nonformal learning methods. He maintained an atmosphere free of judgment, and, while in charge, he never exercised this in a demeaning or derogatory manner – as is often the case in popular music education contexts (Powell, 2021).

Most students relied on Dr. Anderson to keep rehearsals moving. When he wished for students to start the songs, he would begin with “Let’s get going” or “Let’s take it from the beginning.” The formal side of his instruction also included being the final decision-maker when it came to transitioning between songs or bringing the group to consensus if they could not on their own. This aligns with Cremata’s (2017) observation that “facilitators create safe contexts for learning and conditions optimized for self-guided, self-directed, discovery-oriented, experiential education” (p. 64). As rehearsals progressed, Dr. Anderson’s facilitation centered on keeping the ensemble in the correct place if students became lost. For instance, he often remarked, “here comes the chorus” and “back to the verse.” He would also casually call out chord names to help students when necessary. While learning was haphazard at times, student engagement was evident and democratized learning occurred.

Dr. Anderson gave students advice on how best to learn chords and provided options for them to make autonomous decisions. In popular music education, students

are often encouraged to approximate to match their ability and experience levels (Burstein & Powell, 2019), such as when Dylan was struggling with an F Major 7 chord during “Californication,” to which Dr. Anderson suggested, “If the F Major 7 doesn’t work for you, try playing an F power chord.” This approach aligns with Cremata’s (2017) suggestion that perfection should not be the sole goal of the ensemble or each musician; the facilitator helps students get close to the musical qualities of a song. These facilitative tactics were mostly present in the early stages of learning a new tune, while later, Dr. Anderson left more room for peers to mentor each other.

Throughout the group’s rehearsals, Dr. Anderson helped to adjust aspects such as volume levels, guitar and keyboard chord voicings, drum kit fills and styles, and to decide which members of the group had the opportunities to take solos. He often polled students for opinions before helping the group agree when decisions were needed. Dr. Anderson worked with the guitarists during one rehearsal to solidify their strumming patterns and asked each of them to demonstrate their strumming pattern choices and then they collectively decided on which the group would use. As Smith and Gramm (2022) described, this type of engagement and group decision-making can enhance learning and relevance for students in a non-threatening environment. Kenny, a student, remarked that he “actually got better by teaching another student” and that “it was nice to help” during the peer mentoring process.

### **Aural and Visual Modeling as Means of Facilitation**

When the group began learning a new song, students typically learned riffs or song parts at home through YouTube and came to class to play them for peers. It seemed that most students started their learning at home and then brought their skills and suggestions to the ensemble for refinement and group discussion. For example, Dylan (acoustic guitar) said, “I learned the riff off of tabs and it told me what notes to play.” Dr. Anderson gave students chord charts that documented song structure, lyrics, and chords.

Dr. Anderson used nonformal learning strategies – first modeling what and when to play, with notation introduced later (Green, 2002). He consistently used modeling to develop students’ aural skills and expedite learning rhythms, riffs, timings, vocal lines, and entry points. Dr. Anderson often played recordings to demonstrate structures and sounds, as is common in learning popular music (Green, 2006; Smith, 2022). He called out phrases like “Listen to this part coming up” and asked questions to engage students in active listening. If the group could not come to consensus regarding aspects of a song, Dr. Anderson would bring back the recording for reference. The students and facilitator thus approached learning popular music within a classroom more closely aligned with how popular musicians learn on their own (Green, 2002).

While listening, students would often follow and play along with chord and lyric sheets while Dr. Anderson emphasized qualities such as dynamics, melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, and accents. For example, when introducing “Californication,” he urged Aaron, the group’s drummer to, “Take a listen to the opening of this and try to

get the tempo down.” Dr. Anderson would sing the melody of “Day Tripper” or “Californication” to guide vocalists like Joan musically and stylistically. Implementing these practices helped diversify and differentiate learning. Dr. Anderson rarely wrote directions, instead calling out chords and playing the rhythm on his guitar for students.

He commonly deployed visual modeling of this sort, often demonstrating guitar hand positions, keyboard fingerings, and rhythmic and melodic phrases. For instance, during the initial stages of learning “Day Tripper,” Dr. Anderson said, “Guitarists, look at me for the left-hand fingering for this riff, it’s really important.” The group relied heavily on this type of learning, where the visual component dealt with tactile and logistical execution of parts. This facilitative tactic helped highlight multiple ways that students could learn from the instructor and each other (Rogoff et al., 2016) as part of the nonformal learning environment. Modeling, copying, and mirroring served to reinforce the nonformal learning aspects of the group and position it as a non-traditional ensemble. These tactics may have been important for Dr. Anderson to demonstrate for the group to copy while he stepped aside to enable student-directed learning.

### **Sharing an Educator’s Knowledge**

Dr. Anderson conveyed information with an informal style of sharing knowledge without strict guidelines. He engaged conversationally, like saying, “Watch out [that] you guys aren’t slowing down there,” instead of making demands. Throughout data collection, I did not observe a single instance in which he demanded students learn in exacted ways or overextended his authority. Mutual respect was evident in peer interactions. Dr. Anderson was open to learning from students and invited them to share with one another. In doing so, he validated students’ knowledge and perspectives. Dr. Anderson found an appropriate balance of power in the space, affirming Clauhs et al.’s (2020) recommendation that modern band students and facilitators work together. Had Dr. Anderson been overly directorial, there would have been little room for peer learning. These interactions created a community where students felt comfortable critically discussing the group’s direction.

Dr. Anderson left adequate room for students to explore their own learning and creativity independently and through peer mentoring but shared his knowledge with them when pertinent. He often walked around the rehearsal space, helping students with incorrect chord shapes, suggesting they should try playing differently. Less experienced guitarists like Gabriella and Dylan often benefited from this type of knowledge sharing. Jeff (keyboard), Brian (bass guitar), and Aaron (drums) were part of these types of exchanges when keyboard chords proved problematic, a bass riff needed tweaking, or a drumbeat needed adjustment. Dr. Anderson remarked:

I just try to be more of a model. Like, when I just sit with the ensemble and sit with them and, when they need something, I am there or if they want to look over and see what I’m doing, I’m there.

Through his modeling, he embodied more aspects of facilitation. Dr. Anderson led guitarists through more possibilities of playing different chords than those written (approximation), remarking, for instance, “if you don’t want to play the full B chord, try just playing the power chord over three strings.” Such explanations combined formal and informal learning (Ho, 2014).

### **Learning through Experience**

By giving students the opportunity to learn through experience, Dr. Anderson embodied the role of facilitator, incorporating certain tenets of nonformal learning, reflecting ways that learning occurs outside of school settings (Higgins, 2012). He thus guided students and often left them to figure out musical issues as peers. He said, “There is a type of relationship there [between students]. I don’t know, but it’s all being communicated on their own level, not like a teacher would.” Clauhs et al. (2020) wrote that, “the music teacher must also negotiate when to inject themselves in the rehearsal process, and when to step back and allow the students to collaboratively solve problems” (p. 4). Dr. Anderson did this by using most of his instructional time walking around, observing, and gently correcting as needed. For instance, while rehearsing “Californication,” Dr. Anderson let Kenny (electric guitar) work through a guitar solo on his own to gain experiential knowledge in formulating phrasing and note choices, only helping him briefly. Joan (vocalist) knew this type of looser instruction was important to the ensemble’s learning, noting that:

It’s good, because at the end of the day we’re not always gonna [sic] be in school and [Dr. Anderson’s] not always gonna be there for us, so we kinda [sic] need to learn how to be more independent because in life there’s not gonna be someone there to always say you have to play it this way or that way.

As Dr. Anderson integrated himself as a member of the ensemble, he was able to facilitate and guide unobtrusively. For Aaron (drummer), Dr. Anderson would nod his head to imply rhythmic suggestions while leaving him space to explore. He sat among the acoustic guitarists, playing through their parts as an ensemble member. As the ensemble became more cohesive over the time I observed the group, Dr. Anderson took a more backseat approach, interjecting less, watching, or counting the group off and letting them play a song from start to finish. Dr. Anderson thus provided many avenues through which nonformal (Mok, 2010) or hybridized (Smith, 2013) learning practices influenced and guided experiences for students.

Dr. Anderson’s approach led students to convene with each other in many ways through student autonomy and mutual decision-making processes. For instance, Kenny said:

I get confused a lot in music because I’m really clueless, so I’ll ask my best friend for help when that happens. I’ll ask them “How do you play this again?” I ask because sometimes I have no idea what I’m doing, and they show me how to play it.

Dr. Anderson allowed student voices to be heard (Smith et al., 2018) in a democratic and mutually respectful learning environment.

## DISCUSSION

The title of this paper is intentionally striking. While music classrooms will always need educators with formal training, a facilitative approach and leaving kids alone (to some extent) enables social and musical learning to occur in different ways.

### Research Question 1

The first research question of this study was: In what ways, if any, do participants mentor each other in the context of a modern band? Multiple students in the group noted that sharing opinions, critique, and feedback among peers was more closely aligned to “speaking their own language,” as the students claimed.

Facilitators have a chance to engage their students in ways that go beyond accurate musical performance, as may commonly be the desire for schools in the United States and internationally. As Cremata and Powell (2017) noted, “The teacher/facilitator ... fostered student agency, autonomy, and life-wide/long musical learning spaces for his students. He focused on individual students and their collaborations through deterritorialized student-centered learning” (p. 311). Through modeling, facilitators such as Dr. Anderson can come closer to authentic approaches to learning popular music. As Green (2006) wrote, “Perhaps we should aim, not for the authenticity of the musical *product*, but for the authenticity of the musical learning *practice*; in other words, not for ‘musical authenticity’ but more for ‘music-learning authenticity’” (p. 114). Facilitators provide context for this to occur.

### Research Question 2

The second research question was: How does peer mentoring play a role, if at all, in the overall musical growth of students in modern band? Dr. Anderson facilitated learning and included student voices in decision-making processes and co-construction of the ensemble. Through cultivation of a welcoming and relaxed learning environment, Dr. Anderson encouraged students to voice their opinions, make decisions democratically, and aid peers. Joan said that peer critique “helps me because then I realize I’m not the only one who notices it, so we all get that feedback from each other.” By Dr. Anderson sharing the authority given to him as the group’s formal instructor, and validating students’ voices, learners were empowered to mentor each other and share knowledge and experience. Kenny said, “What I see on the board and read it [sic] and the teacher explains it to me, I don’t understand, but when someone else tells me, I hear it, I know what I’m doing.” It was evident that musical growth increased in ways that may not have been possible if all the direction, critique, and opinions had come from Dr. Anderson. Students in the ensemble noted musical growth in what they were playing, how they played it, and their approaches when mentored and instructed by their peers.

### Research Question 3

The third research question was: What role does the facilitator play in creating an environment that nurtures peer mentoring and the sharing of knowledge between students? Dr. Anderson played a crucial role in crafting the environment that made democratic learning and knowledge sharing between students possible. As I sought to study an environment that encouraged peer mentoring, and knowledge sharing between students, it was evident that Dr. Anderson's facilitative approach provided a context for nonformal learning and students to help guide the direction of the ensemble and the learning that occurred. The findings of this study suggest a facilitative approach can be a beneficial tactic for diversifying instructional methods, democratizing learning, and amplifying student voices in a secondary school modern band context. It became evident that through Dr. Anderson's facilitative approach, students benefited musically and socially. Based on interview data presented, the peer interaction and mentoring that was encouraged in the group provided avenues of learning and dialogue that would not have been possible in a teacher-driven ensemble void of student input or direction.

### Implications for Practice

Greater implementation of facilitation might improve music education practice. Teachers might also aim to better understand nonformal learning pedagogical strategies if they want to diversify their methods and reach students in diversified ways. Facilitation can combat hegemonic instructional practices and structures, especially those found in large ensembles. Therefore, professional development focused on nonformal learning should be provided more robustly. Micro-implementations of facilitative approaches may provide evidence as to how the tactic is beneficial even in formal ensemble settings. Since modern band is akin to popular music ensembles outside of school settings, learning strategies like these are normative and ordinary. Having practical knowledge of how to incorporate and implement nonformal practices into classrooms may help bring greater awareness to educators of its musical and social benefits.

Many studies have been conducted surrounding the musical and social benefits of incorporating facilitation. However, teachers may remain unprepared with practical, real-world applications in K-12 classrooms in the United States and internationally if they have not been made aware of how to foster student agency, democratize learning, and approach teaching as facilitation. While established teachers may be searching for pathways to include these types of pedagogical practices, collegiate education programs may still be doing tomorrow's teachers a disservice by foregoing training in nonformal tactics and methods. University education programs should move away from concentrating on preparing students for the music classrooms of decades past. With a high concentration of effort towards teacher-centered large ensembles in the United States especially, little room is left for practical teaching strategies that involve awareness of non-traditional methodologies like those described herein.

By including nonformal topics in collegiate courses, educators lend justification to techniques that may seem contrary to the commonly held definition of a teacher.

Leaving room for students to interact with each other, engage in mentoring, and embrace sharing knowledge between peers, increases the potential for them to develop empathy and leadership skills. Finding ways for students to work with each other to aid in group success is beneficial to all parties. Enabling small group leaders, peer mentoring advisors, and democratic decision-making are all ways that facilitation can benefit any ensemble. These techniques can help a group to work together to become problem solvers. If educators seek meaningful and constructivist music experiences with retention of knowledge through active participation, they must involve their students in active and progressive ways. This begins with stepping aside and amplifying student voices in democratic spaces.

### Future Research

Future research is needed to determine whether factors that appear in this study are present in other modern band programs and popular music learning contexts in the United States and elsewhere. This study was conducted in an urban-centered, public high school with students of an older age for public school settings. As modern band represents a relatively new approach to teaching music in the US, there may be multiple benefits to understanding how these approaches manifest themselves in other types of school contexts (e.g., rural, suburban, international) and grade levels, especially in elementary settings in which the developmental stages of children may not permit such autonomy. Facilitation is a productive, student-centered approach that has been gaining traction. It remains my hope that educators may see the benefits of implementing an approach that provides students with experiences that further musical and social skills in the context of popular music ensembles and beyond.

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