

2024

Modern Band Music Teachers' Adoption of a Community Music Ethos in Online Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Bryan Powell

Montclair State University, powellb@montclair.edu

Gareth Dylan Smith

Boston University, gdsmith@bu.edu

Warren Gramm

Lebanon Valley College, gramm@lvc.edu

David Knapp

Syracuse University, dhknapp@syr.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/vrme>



Part of the [Music Education Commons](#), [Music Pedagogy Commons](#), and the [Online and Distance Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Powell, Bryan; Smith, Gareth Dylan; Gramm, Warren; and Knapp, David (2024) "Modern Band Music Teachers' Adoption of a Community Music Ethos in Online Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Visions of Research in Music Education*: Vol. 46, Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lib.uconn.edu/vrme/vol46/iss1/7>



Bryan Powell

Montclair State University

Gareth Dylan Smith

Boston University

Warren Gramm

Lebanon Valley College

David Knapp

Florida State University School of Music

Modern Band Music Teachers' Adoption of a Community Music Ethos in Online Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic

ABSTRACT

At intersections of popular music education, music technology, and community music practices, music teachers in the United States adapted to teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically from March 2020 to March 2021. The purpose of this research was to better understand the perspectives of modern band teachers regarding the opportunities and challenges of teaching music during the pandemic. The researchers interviewed four teachers who taught modern band (popular music) in public schools in geographically and demographically distinct parts of the US and found that each educator adopted a community music ethos in the online environment. An analysis of emerging themes from the interviews indicates that modern band teachers incorporate a community music ethos through facilitating communal music-making, actively intervening to curate experiences for learners, utilizing music technology, and engaging music of existing communities. The authors acknowledge numerous challenges arising from remote learning, while recognizing opportunities that arose for

Powell, B., Smith, G. D., Gramm, W., & Knapp, D. (2024). Modern band music teachers' adoptions of a community music ethos in online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 46, 109-126.

meaningful alternative approaches to school music education. Further research is needed to understand what practices, understandings or approaches from pandemic teaching might apply to in-person teaching.

Keywords

community music, COVID-19, digital audio workstation, facilitation, modern band, pandemic, popular music education, remote learning.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic had an immense impact on school music programs and affected educators' teaching and children's learning, as isolated, at-home teaching and learning experiences became the norm to mitigate spread of the virus (Hash, 2021). In the United States, most schools transitioned to remote teaching in March 2020 with little time for teachers to prepare to facilitate music learning through online means (Cayari, 2020). While all teachers and learners were impacted by the transition to remote learning, this shift was perhaps especially dramatic in music education due to a near-ubiquitous culture of group music-making and performance in schools. The authors of this study sought to understand music educators' experiences of teaching remotely by exploring practices and perspectives of modern band music teachers in the United States, from spring 2020 to spring 2021. We were particularly interested in learning how and to what extent learning communities navigated the loss of shared, communal learning experiences that became replaced by siloed and separated remote learning (Smith 2020), given that relatively few extant studies explore qualitative data on teachers' experiences of pandemic music teaching.

We were interested in understanding the perspectives of modern band teachers who taught online during the pandemic. "Modern band" is a term used in the United States to describe ensembles and approaches that incorporate popular music instruments (e.g., guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, and technology) to facilitate student-centered music-making and songwriting (Powell & Burstein, 2017; Wish, 2020), using pedagogical approaches typical to informal learning among popular musicians (Green, 2002). According to Green, the core tenets of informal music learning are that music is chosen by and familiar to the learners; learning takes place in friendship groups; students learn aurally; learning takes place haphazardly (rather than linearly); and learning combines performance, listening, composition, and improvising. This study focuses on the modern band context for a couple of reasons. First, recent research has indicated that popular music groups are more likely than other school music ensembles (i.e., orchestra, choir, wind band) to use various technologies including Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs), microphones and amplifiers, and MIDI controllers for beat-making (Powell, 2019). Since the transition to online teaching necessitated that all instruction be delivered through technologically-mediated means, we sought to investigate how teachers of popular music ensembles negotiated this change in teaching

modality. The second reason this article focuses specifically on modern band is because of connections between popular music education pedagogies and a community music ethos (defined below). One example of this connection can be seen in the active interventions between students and an educator in the role of facilitator. Powell (2022) detailed strong connections between community music practices and popular music education in the areas of facilitation, participant ownership of music, inclusivity and social concerns, as well as promotion of lifelong music-making and amateur engagement; we construe such characteristics as a community music ethos.

In a similar vein, according to Cahill (1998, vii), community music “comprises music activities in a community where those activities are controlled by members of that community.” This focus on the decision-making power of participants is a key element of community music where “the starting point is always the competencies and ambitions of the participants, rather than the teacher or leader” (CDIME as cited in Veblen, 2008). Pedagogical approaches in modern band programs embrace this element of community music practices since students are often responsible for selecting songs, creating arrangements, and making musical decisions based on their interests (Clauhs & Cremata, 2020; Powell, 2021; Smith et al., 2018). This is not to say that the music teachers discussed below are *de facto* community music facilitators, since they operate in different contexts and under different imperatives from community musicians. Rather, our argument is that in adopting an ethos more akin to that of community music facilitation than to more normative classroom instruction in modern band, teachers in this study were able to engage students in new ways of making and learning music during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is entirely feasible that such a change in approach could be applied to the work of music teachers operating in areas other than modern band, but the focus of our study is bounded by working with modern band teachers.

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What do modern band teachers identify as effects of online instruction brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic regarding music teaching and learning in their music classrooms?
2. Using the broad perspectives for community music outlined by Higgins (2012), in what ways, if any, were modern band teachers able to engage their students in active music facilitation through communal music making, using the music of the students' communities?

COMMUNITY MUSIC ETHOS IN SCHOOLS

Expanding on the sociological concept of “community” (Tönnies, 1887), Bellah et al. (2015, p. 323) described “community” as “a group of people who...who participate together in discussion and decision making, and who share certain practices that both define the community and are nurtured by it”. The notion of ‘community’ in community music can encompass any people who share common interests, experiences

or backgrounds and is not limited to geographical boundaries (Veblen, 2008). The concept of community music beyond geographical borders was foregrounded during the COVID-19 pandemic when online communities performed and wrote songs together and engaged in communal music-making for the common good (MacDonald et al., 2021). In school settings, the use of conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Google Classroom brought together students and teachers who were geographically distanced from each other but connected through the virtual classroom. In many ways, the fact that students and teachers were Zooming from, and into, each other's living rooms, bedrooms, and other personal spaces connected educators more closely to the communities of their students. Moreover, this served to create *de facto* community as teachers and students interacted in ways quite different from habitual practices in physical classroom spaces. Educators practiced care for and *with* students (Hendricks, 2020) as all present shared in the new, apparently horizon-less, collective trauma of living and working in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic (Walzer, 2021). We argue, therefore, that "online music communities... function[ed] as significant spaces of community music activity" (Waldron, 2018, p. 109) during this period.

This music learning and music making was "deterritorialized" and "multilocalized" (Pignato & Begany, 2015, p. 111). Unlike most school experiences where students and teachers leave their homes to meet at a separate school location – often set geographically, culturally, and aesthetically apart from the communities of the teachers and especially the students (Froehlich & Smith, 2017)—online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic brought students and teachers together into a "third space" or "third room" (Moir et al., 2019). It is important to clarify that not all online music experiences should be thought of as having a community music ethos, and simply bringing together students in a compulsory school setting does not embrace a spirit of community music exemplified by e.g., Howell et al. (2017). Notions of what constitutes community music are hotly contested among theorists and practitioners; for instance, Higgins (2012) explicitly departs from earlier, broader definitions of community music (e.g., Veblen, 2008). In this paper, we have chosen to work within Higgins' understanding of community music because it emphasizes an "intervention" (Higgins, 2012, p. 3), and our findings demonstrate how teachers intervened in complex, unpredictable, and traumatic situations to facilitate music making experiences with their students. This perspective of community music as an active intervention involves a music leader or facilitator and participants, and is not tied to a particular genre of music. It is an "intentional intervention, involving skilled music leaders, who facilitate group music-making experiences in environments that do not have set curricula" (Higgins, 2012, pp. 3-4). We examined the practices and perspectives of four modern band music educators to see how they incorporated community music practices into their teaching during the pandemic using student-chosen music and loops (music of the community) to facilitate collaborative music making (communal music making) while serving as facilitators (intentional intervention).

Compulsory school music programs are not usually considered to embrace community music ethos or practices. Higgins and Willingham (2017) noted, for instance, the “music as ‘open-door’ policy” that often characterizes community music, and which they contrast with non-community music approaches, noting that, “not all music experiences are hospitable” (p. 48). These authors point also to the culture of competitiveness and excellence that can be pervasive in school music, and perhaps especially in the United States; Higgins and Willingham (2017) contrast this with, “A community music perspective [which] would include other priorities, such as asking if the musicians are enjoying themselves, do they find the music uplifting, is the audience engaged and finding the music beneficial?” (p. 49). They go on to explain that, from a community music perspective, “The social, inclusive and musical aspects are of equal importance. In contrast with traditional performance conventions, the ranking of talent and competition often results in denying students more than serving them” (Higgins & Willingham, 2017, p. 49). The voluntary aspect of most community music experiences sets it apart from most compulsory school education; however, Schippers (2018) stated that while much community music-making continues to flourish as “organic practices” (p. 23), community music can also take place as institutionalized music-making. The incorporation of non-formal education which is often a focus of community music facilitators can also be seen in school settings. The nonprofit organization Musical Futures promotes non-formal teaching within compulsory school education where teachers function as musical leaders and facilitate skill acquisition through practical applications of musical concepts, classroom workshopping and whole-class performance (Musical Futures, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

To better understand practices and perspectives of modern band teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, we sought to conduct a case study of four modern band teachers. We conducted online Zoom interviews with four K-12 (primary to secondary) public (state-funded) school modern band teachers. Each of these teachers represented a separate case for this case study. The lead author of this article obtained ethics review approval from his university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) before contacting potential participants. Each potential participant was sent an email with an invitation to participate in the study. The language of the email was approved by the IRB and outlined the scope of the study, as well as the voluntary nature of participation, and pertinent details about the duration and benefits of the study. These teachers represent a convenience sample as they were previously known to one of the authors through their affiliation with the non-profit organization Little Kids Rock. The participants were chosen because they represent a diverse sample in terms of geographic location and age-level taught. One of the authors spoke with each teacher for approximately one hour using semi-structured interviews which yielded rich data (Bresler & Stake, 2006; Robson & McCartan, 2016; Wengraf, 2001). Being cognizant that the online nature of

the interviews conducted through computer-mediated communications impacts the nature of the interaction (Salmons, 2011), the researchers chose to use Zoom because videoconferencing platforms such as these allow for a conversation that more closely resembles “the natural back-and-forth of face-to-face communication, including verbal and nonverbal signals” (Salmons, 2011, p. 2).

The interviews were transcribed and shared with the teachers to ensure accuracy of the data through member checking. We then used descriptive and in vivo coding to identify data salient to the research questions. These codes were then shared and discussed among the researchers to determine important themes (Saldaña, 2016). Initial *a priori* themes were added to emergent themes from the literature, which were then combined and condensed into the themes discussed below. These themes were then used to distill transcripts down to shorter descriptions that represent the participants’ teaching contexts, practices and perspectives during remote teaching, and their approaches to building community among their modern band music students. These themes and descriptions were then further explored in the analysis section below. The themes comprised: issues with access to technology; professional development; student engagement; and community music interventions. The names of the teachers and any specific details about their schools have been anonymized.

FINDINGS

We present below descriptions of participants’ respective contexts and teaching experiences. These descriptions were created to portray teachers’ perspectives, while focusing on the themes that emerged during our coding. These themes included technology, professional development, student engagement, new opportunities, and community. These teachers’ experiences are not necessarily generalizable, but generalizability is not the objective of case studies (Stake, 1995). Rather, what follows is a “study of uniqueness,” conducted “in a disciplined and scholarly way” (Bresler & Stake, 2006, p. 271). We embrace the understanding that analysis of qualitative data is a multi-layered hermeneutic process, where the reader is trying to make sense of the researcher trying to make sense of the participant making sense of X!” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 41).

Description #1: Rachel

Rachel teaches 6th to 8th grade (ages 11-14) in the South Bronx and considers herself a modern band teacher. Modern band, as noted earlier, is an approach based on teaching music through the popular music of a student’s context. Rachel typically taught popular music through instruments such as keyboard, guitar, bass, drums, and vocals. While before the COVID-19 pandemic, she taught using keyboards, guitars, bass, and drums with a whole class approach she called a “full-on jam session,” during the pandemic, Rachel’s school administration removed her from 6th-grade music to co-teach science and social studies. Rachel noted that her music students often lacked

resources at home, including stable internet and devices on which to learn. Rachel continued teaching online to students who had instruments at home and found body percussion a successful vehicle for teaching rhythm and syncopation for those without instruments. While she would have loved to have sent instruments home with students, her district's administrative policies prevented this. By the end of the school year, each child had their own digital device to use for learning at home.

Over the summer, Rachel participated in online modern band professional development, including a conference at which she shared practices and pedagogies for online teaching with other teacher-attendees. In September 2020, Rachel was a certified Soundtrap educator and led her students to write songs utilizing online DAW Soundtrap without them needing to purchase hardware or software. Students explored creativity through composition and improvisation in the DAW, without need of additional instruments. During the songwriting process, Rachel allowed students to take ownership by having them choose loops, write lyrics, and use any genre that they wanted.

As Rachel adjusted her teaching to the changing needs of her students, technology issues and scheduling shifts presented particular challenges, and she prioritized students' social and emotional needs. For many of her students, school had been a place of safety from hardships at home but the shift to remote learning removed that escape. The abrupt change to remote learning required sizeable pivots in how she would meet the musical, social, and emotional needs of her students. As the school year progressed with online instruction, some communal bonds were fortified as the walls of formal education crumbled, one sibling or pet interruption at a time. While some students were able to express themselves more than when learning in-person, others retreated further into anonymity, for instance never turning on their cameras. These are some of the challenges and successes that Rachel faced when attempting to continue building community through popular music in her, now online, classroom. The unceremonious shift for Rachel caused her to rethink how she would be teaching modern band now that the known ways of instruction were largely unavailable.

Description #2: Brittany

Before the pandemic, Brittany ran a robust music program at a public charter school in Miami-Dade County, Florida. As an ensemble-focused music instructor, she taught chorus, musical theatre, modern band and orchestra in kindergarten to 10th grade (primary to secondary), including every student in the school. Most participated using wind band and orchestral instruments. Brittany received two days' notice to move to online learning with no prior experience. Brittany sent as many instruments as possible home with students. She decided not to attempt to recreate in-person classroom practices and requested school funds to purchase online resource subscriptions to uTheory, Sight Reading Factory, and Soundtrap. The school also loaned students computers, but problems with students' inconsistent internet access and slow devices

persisted. She curated and produced many virtual ensemble performances at the end of the school year through audio and video software that allowed students to record their parts individually.

Ahead of continuing with remote learning in the autumn, Brittany attended online professional development for Google Classroom and online DAW, Soundtrap. Throughout the 2020-21 academic year, Brittany's teaching schedule transitioned to a hybrid model while many ensembles remained restricted due to COVID-19. A notable adjustment in Brittany's teaching was from being focused almost exclusively on large ensembles, to more individualized instruction. Brittany realized many students' potential when they composed music and worked more autonomously. Students became more independent through using music technology and self-driven assignments, including previously shy and more reluctant students. Some of her lesson examples included developing instrumental tracks in Soundtrap and encouraging student creativity through myriad facilitated assignments using the DAW with varying levels of student-created and pre-made audio clips, commonly known as loops. Brittany used the online DAW Soundtrap to have students record their parts for a virtual ensemble as well as learn the skills to edit and mix audio. Brittany also began writing her own songs about her students and sharing those with them to allow them to feel connected to her and the music class. These examples highlight ways in which an online music-making and learning community emerged in response to teachers' facilitative interventions, using informal and non-formal learning despite the remote format (MacDonald et al., 2021). It is also noteworthy that although online DAWs such as Soundtrap are often used in schools to make popular music tracks using the available loops, many of the teachers in this study used Soundtrap's recording function to record parts for virtual ensembles and student-chosen songs.

Brittany noted the emotional toll the pandemic took on students. Some who had been heavily involved in music prior to the pandemic became apathetic and displayed unprecedented emotional turmoil and others found no success with online learning, appearing to exhibit new signs of depression and anxiety. Brittany attributed this to what she perceived as the possibility of unstable home relationships combined with apparent technological frustrations. In response, her priorities regarding what truly mattered for her students shifted and she became more sensitive and empathetic. She found that online instruction brought introverted students into community as some social barriers were removed such as peer socializing and in-person activities which may catered to more extroverted students.

Description #3: Gale

Gale teaches 7th and 8th grade modern band, music technology and concert (wind) band in a rural school in New York where music is compulsory for all. She sees students every other day for 10 consecutive weeks of the year. Before the pandemic, she would spend the first six weeks with electric and acoustic instruments and the

remainder on music technology, composition and recording. In March 2020, Gale received two days' notice that she would be teaching online for the first time with her students. Many did not have access to the internet or reliable devices, so troubleshooting technology soon became a pedagogical priority for Gale, along with supporting students and colleagues with challenges of online instruction. Gale became a Google certified trainer, and from summer 2020 found modern band Facebook groups and other online music learning communities helped her integrate more music technology into her virtual classrooms. Challenges persisted, including some families' hesitancy due to privacy concerns in online learning. Nonetheless, Gale saw unique opportunities for her students in online learning.

Introverted students seemed more comfortable voicing opinions, asking questions and communicating with peers and their teacher; they were eager to speak up and seek help, and assumed greater ownership of decision-making processes. Conversely, other, more extroverted students began struggling, so Gale developed projects that encouraged social opportunities, such as students interviewing neighbors and family members about their music history and preferences. Furthermore, Gale encouraged students to compose collaboratively using online DAWs. Previously reluctant students were now highly engaged in songwriting and hip-hop activities, allowing a new community of learners to thrive. Several participants, including Gale, also mentioned incorporating songwriting projects including writing original rap lyrics into their remote music instruction.

Gale worked with her students to create a collaborative virtual performance between her students and a local community orchestra. The online learning environment allowed her to work with pre-established partners in a new way that did not rely on schedules or availability. Gale further built community by collaborating with local adult musicians to put on virtual concerts and master classes. Gale plans on cultivating this culture of creative collaboration into the future.

Description #4: Manu

Manu is a full-time elementary school music teacher in Los Angeles County, California and also teaches older children in modern bands. Manu's students play keyboards, drums, guitars, ukuleles, and other popular music instrumentation and technology. When COVID-19 forced their district to remote learning, Manu was given three days' notice, during which time he distributed instruments to his almost 750 students. Only a few had instruments at home, and most lacked devices for remote learning for several weeks until the school district supplied them.

With those who were engaged online, Manu interacted musically and non-musically, checking in on their well-being to maintain their community. Manu made music with students over Zoom through activities including body percussion and play-along videos. The latency present between participants in Zoom presented a challenge for real-time music making; the students would often mute their microphones while

Manu demonstrated body percussion rhythms for the students to then practice with their microphones turned off. He urged students to try to make something good of the sudden, alienating switch to remote learning. Manu noted the trust of many students who were often willing to unmute and demonstrate what they were working on during virtual classes amidst abnormal and disruptive home learning conditions.

Over the summer break, Manu prepared for more remote teaching, knowing that accessibility of instruments and technology remained an issue for many students. Manu sought resources, best practices and tools for engaging remote instruction, from a national community of educators via social media and websites. He credits the community of selfless educators as the lifeline that kept him thriving in the new school year.

Forced to move from students playing together in large groups, Manu concentrated on teaching music ‘fundamentals’ such as dynamics, pitch and rhythm, using Google Song Maker to encourage music creation among young students, while his middle-school students found success with Soundtrap and Ultimate Guitar. Manu and his students also created six or seven” different virtual performances focusing on covering songs that the students had a hand in choosing. The transition to online teaching and learning allowed teachers like Manu to introduce new projects. Manu described how he facilitated opportunities for students to participate in online ensemble experiences. Through a deliberately collaborative approach, Manu’s students remained engaged and accountable for their own submissions for the success of the group. While some students were more reserved or even absent during remote instruction, many consistently showed up and participated. Manu maintains that skills such as recording and editing music videos will remain parts of his curriculum moving forward as they increased engagement and enjoyment.

THEMES

Issues with Access to Technology

A common theme, mentioned by all participants, was students’ lack of access to dependable technology and a steady internet connection. This challenge was especially prominent in March of 2020 as not all students had access to a school-provided laptop. While this situation was likely common across public schools in the United States, it presented particular difficulties for music teachers, who, unable to engage children in in-person singing or other ensemble music-making, used online DAWs and other internet platforms to engage students with both established and novel teaching methods. All four modern band teachers interviewed for this study required students to access online DAWs, which depend on a stronger internet connection than, for instance, Google Classroom or other non-music platforms because of the need for online-based DAWs to process large amounts of high-quality streaming layers of audio.

Professional Development for Modern Band Teachers

Each modern band teacher that we interviewed sought out professional development at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to better prepare them to facilitate music teaching and learning online. Participants identified several avenues for this professional development including music teacher and modern band Facebook groups, self-paced DAW training (e.g., Soundtrap Certified Educator training), and conversations with other music teachers. Brittany shared that she attended ‘a million webinars’, recalling that the training on Google Classroom and Soundtrap were the most useful for her teaching. Manu and Gale both referenced relying on music teacher groups on Facebook such as the Music Teachers group (over 37,000 members) and the Little Kids Rock Teachers group (over 2,000 members). Rachel recalled attending a series of professional developments offered by her school district on songwriting using online technologies, noting this was the first professional development session she could recall that focused on student songwriting.

Student Engagement in the Online Modern Band Classroom

Each participant in this study shared slightly different experiences regarding student music engagement during the time of online teaching. Some teachers noted that the transition to online learning caused many students to disconnect from their classrooms altogether. For example, Manu recalled many of his elementary school students not showing up to his online music classes, or if they did, “they would have their cameras off, and you can’t tell if they were engaged or participating.” Brittany also mentioned having students who, “dropped off the face of the earth” when her school switched to online instruction. In regard to the students who did not turn on their cameras, Rachel reached out to many of them to connect, and in doing so began to better understand the challenging home lives of many of her students. Through these discussions, Rachel, “learned a lot about what their situations actually are and why they don’t ever turn their camera on, and that was almost more alienating for them to never come to class or be able to turn their camera on.” Gale shared that some of her extroverted students were really struggling because they were missing the social aspect of being in person at school.

While some students struggled to participate in music class during the pandemic, others seemed to benefit from the change in modality. Gale shared that she had students who she struggled to reach in the in-person classroom environment because they were introverted or passive but were, “thriving in the online environment and are the ones that are reaching out and communicating asking questions.” According to Gale, these students are embracing not having to be around the peers that make them so uncomfortable in the first place; “they feel that they have more of a voice and a choice in things.” Rachel mentioned a similar observation and shared that some of her more introverted students were, “actually coming out of their shell” during remote instruction because more-dominant personalities were absent from the learning environments.

Community Music Intervention

Use of online DAWs such as Soundtrap and BandLab allowed teachers to facilitate music learning experiences that were connected to music of students' communities, emphasizing, "people, participation, context... and diversity" (Higgins, 2012, p. 4). Students were able to select loops from DAW sound libraries, connecting to music that was relevant to them. Stephanie shared that her students incorporated reggaeton rhythms into their compositions. Similarly, Rachel encouraged her students to write songs inspired by their own musical preferences and their experiences during the pandemic, and Jose facilitated virtual drum circles using rhythms prominent within the Hispanic community. Seeking to connect her students with people from their communities, Gale created a project where students interviewed a member of their community to learn more about their musical preferences and identities. Through this activity, Gale shared that the students were better able to both build community and connect with the music of their communities.

Higgins (2012) identifies several attributes of community music facilitators, including their recognition that participants' social and personal growth are as important as their musical growth. This was a recurring theme among interviewees for this study. Each teacher expressed empathy for their students and recognized the challenging realities that faced their students. The teachers sought to use musical activities to connect with their students and provide a way to support the social and emotional health of their students. Students' musical growth was secondary to the social and personal connections that the teacher sought to facilitate. While such an ethos of care is hardly new to music teachers, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how essential it is for effective practitioners to "care *with*" their students by "attuning to others' feelings as well as their values and goals" (Hendricks et al., 2021, p. 2, emphasis in original). Each of this study's participants demonstrated renewed focus on "love, care, and curated community" (Lee & Smith, 2023). An intentional focus on such kindness in teaching practice has been observed in the broader educational domain in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; for instance, Bielefeldt (2021) noted that "by embodying kindness in their practices, (engineering) faculty serve as role models for students that kindness has a place" in instructional work. This was evident throughout the data we gathered.

Community music facilitators work within flexible facilitation modes and are committed to multiple participant/facilitator relationships and processes (Higgins, 2012a and b). This flexibility was evident in the teaching practices of the modern band teachers during the pandemic. The participants each reflected on how each student's situation was unique. Some students had access to reliable internet and a laptop while others did not, and some students had a quiet place to work and participate in class, while other students did not have the same luxuries. Differences in the home environments of each student required teachers to embrace a commitment to multiple relationships and processes in their music instruction. Throughout their work teaching

music during the COVID-19 pandemic, the participants in this study also exhibited several other aspects common among community music facilitators including the desire to enable accessible, informal, and non-formal music-making opportunities for their students, fostering confidence in students' creativity through their songwriting, and embracing the variety and diversity of music that reflect and enrich the cultural life of the students and their communities.

CONCLUSIONS

While scholars have documented similarities and overlap between popular music education and a community music ethos (Powell, 2022), the transition to remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique opportunity to observe how teachers were able to facilitate their modern band music classes while embracing this community music ethos. Again, we note that this does not make these music teachers necessarily community musicians, *per se*, because they worked in professional and social contexts quite different from those in which community musicians operate; nonetheless, we find the parallels and the comparison helpful in articulating and understanding how these modern band teachers engaged with students in a particular time and place in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All music teachers who participated in this study facilitated communal music-making using the music of the students' communities through intentional interventions (Higgins, 2012a). It may be useful for music educators to understand how some music teaching and learning practices in schools can mirror welcoming, inclusive aspects of a community music ethos (Higgins & Willingham, 2017; Howell et al., 2016). With many music education practices in schools often characterized by top-down, teacher-led approaches (Allsup & Benedict, 2008), there is value in understanding the places in which music facilitation and shared ownership between teachers and students exist (Hendricks et al., 2014; Knapp et al., 2023). In the cases of four modern band teachers that we interviewed, the assignments and projects were not always co-developed with the students; in the majority of the cases, students' musical interests guided development of lessons. Cremata (2017) stated that the popular music teacher-as-facilitator, "employs constructivist learning approaches through student-centered experiential processes" (p. 64), mirroring the role and ethos of community music facilitators who structure activities according to participants' individual goals.

The teachers in this study all reflected on how they came to know their students in new ways. By connecting with students daily in a "third room" (Moir et al., 2019), teachers saw into many of their students' home lives and home communities. The teachers reported that the students' family members would sometimes join in with music-making in lessons since their students were often sharing space with siblings, parents, grandparents, and extended family. This may have enabled music education to be more pervasive within home and familial communities. While a student's music education may previously have taken place primarily in the classroom, families were

sharing in music making experiences in ways that they had not done prior to the advent of widespread online distance learning.

We hope that some of the data or thematic analysis herein prove intrinsically interesting and prompt reflection and/or further research among readers so that colleagues in the profession may continue to learn from one another's accounts and experiences of teaching and learning music during this unique moment in our lives and careers. Devastating though the pandemic has been in many regards, there may yet be salutary pedagogical and musical takeaways for music educators. While it remains to be seen which aspects of online teaching and learning might carry over to in-person instruction in different contexts, it is clear that online participatory music teaching and learning practices can inspire musicking relevant not only during challenging and uncertain periods like the COVID-19 pandemic (Cayari, 2020; MacDonald et al., 2021; Thomas et al., 2021), but also during times of thriving and prosperity when practices and a community music ethos can be explored in welcoming music classrooms.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The music teachers interviewed for this study each spoke of incorporating technologies such as online DAWs, Chrome Music Lab, and video editing software for virtual ensembles. Future research could focus on the extent to which these technologies persist once instruction moves back into a fully in-person modality, and perhaps especially on ways in which teachers maintained a focus on community (Higgins, 2012a; Higgins, 2012b) and care (Hendricks et al, 2021; Lee & Smith, 2023). Similarly, the teachers spoke of new projects that they facilitated during the COVID-19 pandemic focusing on songwriting, lyric writing, and community collaborations. Future research can examine the extent to which these music creation projects and collaborations carry over to a post-COVID-19 teaching environment. There is also a need to examine the practices and perspectives of non-modern band teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is possible that the successes and challenges detailed by the teachers involved in this study do not mirror those of other teachers in other contexts. Since modern band teachers are more likely to incorporate music technology into their instruction when compared to concert band, choir, and orchestra teachers (Powell, 2019) it is possible that the transition to online music teaching and learning was easier for modern band teachers than for other music teachers. Future research – both quantitative and qualitative–can help scholars and practitioners to better understand the perspectives and practices of music teachers in diverse contexts, and thence to guide relevant pedagogy and research. Lastly, we suggest that by looking at more music instruction practices through the lens of a community music ethos, and the kindness and care that come with this, researchers might come to focus on central affordances and benefits of music facilitation and learning that are not always core to discourse in our profession.

REFERENCES

- Allsup, R., & Benedict, C. (2008). The problems of band: An inquiry into the future of instrumental music education. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 16(2), 156-173. <https://doi.org/10.2979/pme.2008.16.2.156>
- Bellah, R. N., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (2007). *Habits of the heart, with a new preface: individualism and commitment in American life*. Univ of California Press.
- Bielefeldt, A. R. (2021). Kindness in engineering education. *2021 ASEE Virtual Annual Conference Content Access*. <https://peer.asee.org/37416>
- Bresler, L., & Stake, R. (2006). Qualitative research methodology in music education. In R. Colwell (Ed.), *MENC handbook of research methodologies*. Oxford University Press.
- Cahill, A. (1998). *The community music handbook: A practical guide to developing music projects and organisations*. Currency Press and Music Council of Australia.
- Cayari, C. (2020). Popular practices for online musicking and performance: Developing creative dispositions for music education and the Internet. *Journal of Popular Music Education*, 5(3), 295-312. https://doi.org/10.1386/jpme_00018_1
- Clauchs, M., & Cremata, R. (2020). Student voice and choice in modern band curriculum development. *Journal of Popular Music Education*, 4(1), 101-116. https://doi.org/10.1386/jpme_00016_1
- Cremata, R. (2017). Facilitation in popular music education. *Journal of Popular Music Education*, 1(1), 63-82. https://doi.org/10.1386/jpme.1.1.63_1
- Froehlich, H., & Smith, G. (2017). *Sociology for music teachers: Practical applications*. Routledge.
- Green, L. (2002). *How popular musicians learn: A way ahead for music education*. Ashgate.
- Hash, P. M. (2021). Remote learning in school bands during the COVID-19 shutdown. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 68(4), 381-397. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429420967008>
- Hendricks, K. S., Roesler, R. A., Chaffee, C. C., & Glawe, J. (2012) Orchestra student leadership: Developing motivation, trust, and musicianship. *American String Teacher*, 62(3), 36-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000313131206200306>
- Hendricks, K. S., Einarson, K. M., Mitchell, N., Guerriero, E. M., & D'Ercole, P. (2021). Caring for, about, and with: Exploring musical meaningfulness among Suzuki students and parents. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, Article 648776. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.648776>
- Higgins, L. (2012a) *Community music: In theory and in practice*. Oxford University Press.
- Higgins, L. (2012b). The community within community music. *The Oxford handbook of music education*, 2, 104-119.
- Higgins, L., & Willingham, L. (2017). *Engaging in community music: An introduction*. Routledge.

- Howell, G., Higgins, L., & Bartleet, B. (2017). Community music practice: Intervention through facilitation. *The Oxford handbook of music making and leisure* (pp. 601-618). Oxford University Press.
- Knapp, D. H., Powell, B., & Smith, G. D. (2023). Music teacher perceptions of modern band and Little Kids Rock: A qualitative study of programme outcomes. *Music Education Research, 25*(2), 121-135.
- Lee, A. F., & Smith, G. D. (2023). Where is the love, y'all? Punk pedagogy in high school choir. *Research in Education, 115*(1), 100-115.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523723115260>
- MacDonald, R., Burke, R., Nora, T. D., Donohue M. S., & Birrell, R. (2021). Our virtual tribe: Sustaining and enhancing community via online music improvisation. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.623640>
- Moir, Z., Ferguson, P., & Smith, G. D. (2019). Real time, Remote, interactive recording sessions: Music production without boundaries. In R. Hepworth-Sawyer, J. Hodgson & M. Marrington (Eds.), *Perspectives on music production: Producing music* (pp. 194-208). Focal Press.
- Musical Futures. (2020). Schools.
<https://www.musicalfutures.org/community/schools>.
- Pignato, J. M., & Begany G. M. (2015) Deterritorialized, multilocalized and distributed musical space, poietic domains and cognition in distance collaboration. *Journal of Music, Technology & Education, 8*(2), 111-128.
https://doi.org/10.1386/jmte.8.2.111_1
- Powell, B. (2019). The integration of music technology into popular music ensembles: Perspectives of modern band teachers. *Journal of Music, Technology & Education, 12*(3), 297-310.
- Powell, B. (2021). Equity in music education: Addressing equity and social justice in music education through modern band: Opportunities and challenges. *Music Educators Journal, 108*(2), 57-59.
- Powell, B. (2022). Community music interventions, popular music education and eudaimonia. *International Journal of Community Music, 15*(1), 7-29.
- Powell, B., & Burstein, S. (2017). Popular music and modern band principles. In G. D. Smith, Z. Moir, M. Brennan, S. Rambarran, & P. Kirkman (Eds.), *The Routledge research companion to popular music education* (pp. 243-254). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315613444>
- Robson, C., & McCarton, K. (2016). *Real world research, fourth edition*. Wiley.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Salmons, J. (2011). *Cases in online interview research*. Sage Publications.
- Schippers, H. (2018). Community music contexts, dynamics, and sustainability. In B. L. Bartleet and L. Higgins (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of community music* (pp. 23-41). Oxford University Press.

- Smith, G. D. (2020). “Yeah, we all here tryna flourish”: A reflection on a symposium on eudaimonia and music learning. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Perspectives in Higher Education*, 5(1), 123-129. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jimphe.v5i1.2510>
- Smith, G. D., Gramm, W., & Wagner, K. (2019). Music education for social change in the United States: Towards artistic citizenship through Little Kids Rock. *International Journal of Pedagogy, Innovation and New Technologies*, 5(2), 11-21.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Sage.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.
- Tönnies, F. (1887). *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. Buske.
- Thomas, M., Norgaard, M., Stambaugh, L. A., Atkins, R. L., Kumar, A. B., & Farley, A. L. (2021). Online involvement for Georgia student teachers during COVID-19. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.648028>
- Veblen, K. K. (2008). The many ways of community music. *International Journal of Community Music*, 1(1), 5–21. https://doi.org/10.1386/ijcm.1.1.5_1
- Waldron, J. (2017). Online music communities and social media. In B. L. Bartlett & L. Higgins (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of community music* (pp. 109–130). Oxford University Press.
- Walzer, D. (2021). Fostering trauma-informed and eudaimonic pedagogy in music education. *Frontiers in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.647008>
- Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing: Biographic narrative and semi-structured methods*. Sage.
- Wish, D. (2020). Popular music education and American democracy: Why I coined the term “modern band” and the road ahead. *Journal of Popular Music Education*, 4(1), 117-125. https://doi.org/10.1386/jpme_00017_1

About the Authors

Bryan Powell is Associate Professor of Music Education and Music Technology at Montclair State University and the Chief Program Officer for Music Will. Bryan serves as the Executive Director of the Association for Popular Music Education and is the past-Chair for the NAFME Popular Music Education Special Research Interest Group. He is the founding co-editor of the *Journal of Popular Music Education*, co-author of *Popular Music Pedagogies: A Practical Guide for Music Teachers* (Routledge), series co-editor for *Contemporary Music Making and Learning* (Intellect Books), and editor of *The Modern Band Handbook* (OUP).

Gareth Dylan Smith is Assistant Professor of Music, Music Education at Boston University. He drums with pianist Austina Lee, with Welsh alt rock artist Stephen Wheel, in electro-fusion outfit Build a Fort with Zack Moir, with eco-conscious songwriter Dan Sheehan, in MUD Drums with Martin Urbach, in new wave band Black

Light Bastards, and with Blondie covers band Dirty Blond. Gareth delights in making improvised music in nature. His album, *Permission Granted*, was released in 2024. Gareth's publications include *A Philosophy of Playing Drum Kit* (Cambridge, 2022) and *I Drum, Therefore I Am* (Routledge, 2017).

Dr. Warren Gramm is the Director of Music Education and Assistant Professor of Music at Lebanon Valley College as well as the journal administrator for *The Journal of Popular Music Education*. Warren taught middle school general music in NJ and serves as a guest clinician for various modern band events in the state of Pennsylvania. He completed his doctorate in music education at Boston University with a focus on peer mentoring within popular music ensembles. In his spare time, Warren loves live music, musical theater, and photography and is supported by his wife Kelly and two children, Matthew and Catherine.

David Knapp is an Assistant Professor of Music Education at the Florida State University College of Music, where he teaches music technology, modern band, and philosophy of music education. His research interests include community music with marginalized communities, vernacular music making, steel band, and music technology. His research has been published in the *International Journal of Community Music*, *Music Education Research*, the *Journal of Popular Music Education*, and *Research Studies in Music Education*. Though much of his work has used qualitative methods, his most recent work has examined the use of web-based digital audio workstations using machine learning.