Improving Engagement & Inclusive Pedagogy Within High-School Music Education

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Abstract

Music education has the opportunity to give many mental, cognitive and social benefits to students, especially those in high school who may find themselves navigating challenges associated with adolescence. However, many students aren't continuing to pursue music education post-grade nine, thereby limiting exposure to these unique benefits. Despite the strong intent of teachers to support their students, opportunities may be missed for teachers to truly understand what motivates their students to stay connected to music. My research aims to fill the gap in Ontario high school engagement research by exploring the engagement needs and trends across a schoolboard in Niagara. In my SSHRC-funded qualitative study, instrumental music classes from a variety of grade levels were observed, and then each participating educator was interviewed to learn more about their experiences. This work explores what motivates students to participate in, and stay engaged with, music and music education. This research is framed using a Self-determination Theory lens. Findings suggest that teachers use a wide range of strategies to engage their students, and that their role is to shape the classroom around student needs and grow their initial engagement through teaching according to their class's specific needs. The results implicate teachers to learn from their students' behavioral and emotional reactions to content, and guide how they support their students based specifically on unique needs over only using generalized strategies to estimate their needs.

L'éducation musicale peut apporter de nombreux avantages mentaux, cognitifs et sociaux aux élèves, en particulier à ceux du secondaire qui sont confrontés aux défis de l'adolescence. Cependant, de nombreux élèves ne poursuivent pas l'éducation musicale après la neuvième année, ce qui limite l'exposition à ces avantages uniques. Malgré la ferme intention des

enseignants de soutenir leurs élèves, il se peut qu'ils manquent des occasions de comprendre réellement ce qui motive leurs élèves à rester connectés à la musique. Ma recherche vise à combler les lacunes de la recherche sur l'engagement dans les écoles secondaires de l'Ontario en explorant les besoins et les tendances en matière d'engagement dans un conseil scolaire de la région de Niagara. Dans le cadre de cette étude qualitative financée par le CRSH, des classes de musique instrumentale de différents niveaux ont été observées, puis chaque éducateur participant a été interviewé afin d'en apprendre davantage sur son expérience. Ce travail explore ce qui motive les élèves à participer et à rester engagés dans la musique et l'éducation musicale. Cette recherche s'inscrit dans le cadre de la théorie de l'autodétermination. Les résultats suggèrent que les enseignants utilisent un large éventail de stratégies pour impliquer leurs élèves, et que leur rôle est de façonner la classe en fonction des besoins des élèves et d'accroître leur engagement initial en enseignant selon les besoins spécifiques de leur classe. Les résultats incitent les enseignants à tirer des enseignements des réactions comportementales et émotionnelles de leurs élèves face au contenu, et à orienter la manière dont ils soutiennent leurs élèves en fonction de leurs besoins spécifiques, plutôt que d'utiliser uniquement des stratégies générales pour estimer leurs besoins.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Preface

When I was about to turn eight years old, my parents told me to expect a special, one-of-a-kind birthday gift. On my birthday, I gazed in excitement as several movers rolled an upright piano, courtesy of my great aunt (who had the piano passed down, coincidentally, from her own aunt), into my living room. I was both excited and so intimidated by this object, and I would not be able to grasp the significance it would hold in my life for years to come. After starting community group piano lessons, and soon after moving into private lessons, it eventually became clear to my family and I that the piano was much more to me than a wooden heirloom: it held a sort of safety, curiosity, and magic in between its keys.

I was privileged to experience the wonder of growing up with the consistency a piano provides–it's there for you when you're overwhelmed, need a break from the world, or want to feel capable in times where you feel the opposite. My piano, and the support from my arts-loving parents, gradually unlocked a sort of confidence in myself that the hypersensitive, insecure parts of my younger self had not yet known existed. As I moved through high school, and began learning the saxophone and other instruments, the magic of the piano carried over to the magic of the 'music room', and the friends and mentors that made that space feel unique and welcoming. In the music room, it was safe and cool to be passionate about something, and you could learn and grow with others to further improve, and feel modestly proud in, your musical abilities. This magic soon carried over to other spaces—like the stage, or pit, for performing in the cast/band

for musical theatre shows, at open mics, singing with my siblings, and later, in several post-secondary spaces. It is also worth mentioning that this feeling arguably would not have been able to have been cultivated in more social spaces in high school and beyond, had it not been encouraged both in my home and school communities.

It was not until my third year of university that I really had a personal epiphany of sorts around my career. I was studying community music at Wilfrid Laurier University, and conducting an ensemble group through an arrangement of "Georgia on my mind" [by Ray Charles], when it clicked in my brain: 'this is it.' I thought, if I got to lead others through musical experiences, and watch their musical and personal growth, for my career, that would be quite the happy and fulfilling life for myself. Finding this medium that allowed me to be more emotionally aware and confident in myself, made me all-the-more passionate to help others find the ways music can support them too. I understand that having this realization is the sort of gift and privilege that I had been leading up to for years, and which had only grown with my access to music education. However, the ever-important by-products of my passion for music included increased confidence, feeling more autonomous and independent, and more than anything else, being able to manage my stress and self-regulate.

I believe one of the main reasons that I feel so passionately about exposing students to music education (which has, undoubtedly, led me to this thesis) is because, dramatic as it sounds, I genuinely believe that I would be a different version of myself without music. That's not to say that everyone needs to have this deep, decades-spanning relationship with music that leads up into their career, per say—most high school music students likely won't have that—, but it is this

"what if" of the difference music can make in one's life that has fascinated me. I also consider myself a music-lover first, musician second, in the sense that regardless of when I practice or play, I find myself thinking about, and using music, a lot as I move throughout each day.

Music education is by no means an easily defined term; rather, it encompasses all levels and experiences of the learning of, and participation in, musical activities. Upon hearing the words *music education*, most minds are bound to travel to a specific idea of what that looks like. What do you picture? Perhaps it is related to your past experiences—learning the recorder in elementary school, joining a band in high school, or being a part of a musical theatre production. You might think of the experiences you didn't actively participate in but have observed or beared witness to—a school theatre production, a family member's piano recital, or even an ad for a music school appearing on your television or phone. The truth is, music education can manifest in all these ways and more, and my passion as a music educator and researcher revolves around exploring how those ways can have bountiful effects on the lives of participants.

My personal philosophy around music is that, in assuming that most people enjoy listening to music, pivoting to learning how to produce it oneself shouldn't be this big, intimidating feat that many people (my younger self included) see it as. Music is a medium that is oftentimes so associated with performance, and subsequent pressures that go beyond that, but more than anything playing music is an activity; one that you can do by yourself, without judgement, but only with the curiosity and willingness to try and get better and learn more. Rehearsal provides the opportunity to share that with others, and also to normalize and practice one's set of presentation-related skills, but oftentimes that part—where one has to share in front

of others—can be seen as intimidating and off-putting to students. High school music can also provide this 'safety net' of playing something individually, but also in smaller section groups within a larger class/ensemble; you have an individual responsibility, but you're instead contributing to a shared product, similarly to how one's contributions may impact a sports team, for example. In a band or ensemble, you're not just on your own, you're part of a team.

However, in knowing this potential anxiety students have around performing and sharing exists, how then, can we as music teachers, do everything in our power to reduce it? It would be incorrect to assume we can fully eliminate it; we can only do so much as educators. However, doing our part to create a space that genuinely feels safe, exciting, and engaging while still maintaining educational aims could help us to maximize the interest and engagement from our classes. As music teachers, we are often our own advocates for our craft, and this thesis almost feels like my own form of advocacy work. My focus here is on how educators are, and can, be using strategies that increase active engagement in classrooms—that go beyond just following the 'social rules' of the classroom (ie. Baseline participation) and stay interested in and engaged with learning about music. This was provoked by hearing about decreasing numbers in music education post-COVID-19 which seems to have exacerbated the gap in between elective courses and communities in high schools vs. mandatory courses with more consistent enrolment.

It feels worth noting that this type of advocacy isn't something that all subjects may have to do to an extent; for other subjects (for example, French–the other high school subject I'm qualified to teach), students are required to take it up until a certain grade level, and so teachers already have, give or take, enough students in chairs to begin with. In arts education, however,

we are constantly recruiting to keep those chairs filled, keep our communities engaged, and literally keep our jobs. Without students electing to take our courses, they may not have opportunities (in-school or otherwise) to access the benefits that music education can provide in their lives, and as a negative side-effect, without students taking music courses, I would be out of a job and career.

As I've been writing this work, I've also pondered how to best promote music education without being blind to the privileges and individuality of my own experiences. After all, not everyone may have a strong bond with music, or feel heavily connected to it. I've questioned whether I'm the right person to be advocating for continued music education, and supporting systems that uphold engaging music education, due to my biased positive experiences. I do stand firm in my belief that when one is passionate about something, that will most likely influence them in their opinion of it, as opposed to how others may not share that same opinion. However, should that prohibit oneself from advocating for it? I would argue that having the passion for something, while simultaneously being aware of its many possibilities, is important. Music is a medium for self-expression and endless possibility. I will say that there is extensive research available on the benefits music education can provide to people, and particularly adolescents who are themselves developing, but not yet fully formed, into their future adult selves. Eorola et al. (2014) also identified that extended music education can improve several aspects of the quality of school life, including students' sense of opportunity and achievement, and satisfaction with their school experience (p. 88).

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In continuing to reflect on my own experiences, I realized that I was given the opportunity to learn more about music before high school via taking private piano and voice lessons; this is a privilege that many students don't get, and this helped compensate for the lack of weekly music lessons/programming at my elementary school When it came to learning music in grade nine, the majority of my peers did not yet know how to play instruments, and I heard many voice their struggles on learning something new after elementary school, especially after having limited exposure to learning music when they were younger. There is this 'fear' of music and performing that I have experienced in some form in my life, and that peers have experienced, that I equate in my mind as the fear one has when learning, and subsequently trying to speak, a new language. While there are certainly benefits to learning new things, like languages or music at a younger age due to the "plasticity or receptiveness to environmental input" it has (Böttger et al., 2020, p. 44), the additional positive exposure we have to music before beginning to learn it could also help increase one's curiosity and motivation to learn (Böttger et al., 2020). In other words, we shouldn't let this added 'fear of difficulty' hold us back from learning new things.

In the greater context of this research, fear is ultimately just one factor that could impact students' resistance to learning, or continuing to learn about, music education. What has ultimately brought me to facilitate this study was the curiosity I had in hearing from actual, active teachers in the field about what challenges they observed that students were facing, and to hear about (and hopefully, observe) what strategies and methods they had been using to combat these challenges, negative factors, or overall fears students had around learning music. In a world filled with experienced, talented and passionate music teachers, having the chance to be present in their classroom spaces, interview them, and share their insights with myself and others

is a privilege, and also is something that I think would be invaluable to teachers, both new (like myself) and experienced, to read and learn from.

Furthermore, I hope this work encourages others to continue to be curious, and to open one's expectations up to a variety of possibilities, rather than a single almighty answer, when asking a question or looking to solve a problem. It is my hope that this work challenges others to think about how much the perspective of others with more, less, or different experiences in a given area than oneself has enriched how they can see things and operate in the professional, personal, and perhaps other spheres within one's life. This work aims to invite others to, whenever possible, "turn and face the strange" as David Bowie once sang (David Bowie, 1971), and open oneself up to the curiosity and insights of others.

Introduction

This research project was created and executed with this tenet of openness to learning from the experiences of others in mind, and this dissemination is intended to act as a vessel for sharing the experiences—and multiple ideas/solutions for supporting student engagement—from the front lines: educators and students. This project's main aims are (1) to identify patterns in engagement and participation in music classes between grades 9-12 in high school music education within a rural school board, and (2) to compile a list of strategies and pedagogical techniques used by teachers to engage their students, including those who come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. These have led to my overarching research question: *what strategies can music teachers use to increase engagement and consistent music education participation with upper-year high school students in rural schools?* This project's data

collection took place in fall 2023, wherein six instrumental classes from three different schools were observed, and then their three teachers were interviewed.

Background

Music education has been shown to help grow self-confidence, self-discipline, creativity and innovation, and foster self-actualization and long-term well-being (Hill Strategies, 2010; Ryff; 2019). However, enrolment numbers in music programs often decrease between grades nine-12; one study showed an approximately 25,000 student reduction in grade nine vs. grade 12 music classes across Ontario (Vince, 2007); while there have been no quantitative Ontario studies on this topic since, this highlights the general trend that enrolment can significantly decrease in music elective courses between grades nine-12. Many students end up disengaging from music education in high school, including students who are still interested in music, and who may engage with music in external environments (Saunders, 2010); however, recent research on disengagement trends is missing. Additionally, the majority of music education research is based in urban centers, limiting the current known knowledge in research on engaging students in music education in smaller cities/more rural areas. Less is known about music participation and engagement in rural education programs, in part since rural schools have smaller student populations and a decreased likelihood of having larger ensembles and opportunities to perform in the community (Bates, 2018). While some work has been done on analyzing teachers' qualitative experiences teaching in rural communities (Spring, 2014), little is known about how engagement patterns between grades nine-12 are affected within more rurally-located schools.

With many rural students having their first music creation experiences in high school, studying the trends in engagement and diversity of participants in this setting can help pedagogues gain insight into educational and sociocultural dynamics within music education environments. This research aims to help fill this gap in awareness in research, particularly within the setting of high school music education classrooms in smaller cities within a school board in Ontario. This research also aims to explore and highlight practical strategies for engagement that teachers may have success within their classrooms and provoke self-reflection for current educators hoping to grow engagement within their music classrooms/departments.

Current Study

As stated above, this study aims to identify patterns of engagement within high school education, and compile strategies and experiences gathered by teachers actively working in the field of high school instrumental music education. In Chapter Two–my literature review–I will briefly acknowledge and contextualize Ontario's education system, review the current course structure of the Ontario secondary instrumental music curricula, trends in music education pedagogy (past and present), review identified barriers to accessing music education, and briefly discuss differences between rural and urban educational communities. Chapter Three will focus on the methodology of this work, where I will delve more deeply into my research paradigm of social constructivism, other theories impacting the work's structure, and review the qualitative methods used to conduct the observations and interviews. Chapter Four will contain the analysis, wherein the data collected from the study will be disseminated and grouped into themes based on coding, and in Chapter Five the discussion will discuss the real-world implications and future possibilities of this work.

Chapter Two: Music Education Pedagogy Trends, Patterns and Potential Barriers in Ontario and Beyond

A Brief Introduction to Canadian Music Education History

Before delving into relevant literature and trends related to music education in Ontario and Canada, it is important to contextualize the system in relation to its history. According to Canadian music scholar Dr. Lee Willingham (2007), Egerton Ryerson—who is considered to be the founder of Ontario's education system—was himself a supporter of the arts. Ryerson was seen as the leader behind establishing a full education system in Upper Canada, as well as declaring the need for libraries in schools and a journal of education. Ryerson also had pursuits within the artistic spheres, including leading the establishment of Canada's first publicly funded art collection and Canada's first art gallery (which has now evolved in its most modern form into the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto) (Willingham, et al., 2007, p. 2). Egerton stated in 1848 that "music was worthy of inclusion in the public-school curriculum" (Willingham et al., 2007, p. 2). Over a century later, in 1962, *The Robarts Plan* allowed for Ontario Secondary school students to take either music or (visual) art as an elective; motivation for this plan was linked to the belief that giving students more choice in schools would help more succeed or stay in school by being engaged earlier-on over dropping out. A mandatory core block of courses to take was established in 1974 consisting of English and Canadian studies courses), and Willingham et al. state here that this is a particular moment wherein performance-based music programs did 'very well' (p. 4).

While the founder of the system was an alleged arts supporter, we cannot ignore the fact that Ryerson was also an architect of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system. In 1847, he wrote that "religious instruction was still essential to the assimilative education of Indigenous peoples" (Rollo, 2022, p. 125). While the Canadian school system was being formed the Chief Superintendent of Upper Education in Canada was contributing to the early stages of another system, whose primary focus was assimilation over education. The effects of the residential school system in Canada cannot be overstated, and it is here that it feels necessary to acknowledge the colonial roots of Canada's education system[1].

One contextual aspect to consider is how changes to provincial music curricula have steered the perception and aims of high school music education. A curricular update of note happened in the 1980s, when the *Ontario Schools: Intermediate/Senior* (OS: IS) document highlighted the three main areas that should be the focus of music programs: listening, creating and performing (p. 4). This structure is fairly similar to the three current areas of focus in the Ontario I/S music curriculum used today, which are (A) creating and performing, (B) reflecting, responding and analyzing, and (C) foundations (Government of Ontario, 2010), and helped set both a structural and curricular precedent for the next 40+ years in secondary school music education.

Another potential aspect of influence on both curricula and pedagogical perspectives comes from government documents relating to educational pedagogy. In 1968, Ontario's *Living and Learning* document was published, which called for a more progressive child-centered

[1] The pedagogies which are often upheld in Canada and western musical circles are also based in colonialism, and while an analysis of the curriculum isn't the purpose of this research, it's important to note that this work is connected to these colonial practices and norms.

approach to learning in the Ontario education system. The document, which was created because of calls to evaluate the Ontario school system, also stated that education should balance supporting one's individuality with encouraging them to seek out truth, that self-realization is very important and something which students should hope to grow toward in schools, and that education should focus more on teaching students the 'how-to's of learning rather than giving them repetitive exercises (ie. rote worksheets, for example) over and over to 'master' (Willingham et al., 2007; Bruno-Jofré et al., 2011). In this time period, Willingham et al. (2007) also highlight that many teachers moved toward more facilitative approaches as "guides" (p. 4) and that the classroom planning process was more of a collaborative process rather than solely constructed by the teacher. This likely influenced more modern teaching approaches in the music classroom, in which teachers may follow more facilitative, 'guide-like' approaches.

The other large-scale commission on Ontario's education system arrived in 1995, which contrasted with the approach discussed in *Living and Learning.* *For the Love of Learning* was written at a time where some of the viewpoint of public education had shifted from seeing education as a means to "unity and social justice" to seeing schools as "an engine of the Canadian economy" (Bruno-Jofré et al., 2011, p. 344). This document encouraged, among others, the elimination of grade 13 in schools and the use of standardized testing to keep track of the performance-oriented progress of students in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Bruno-Jofré et al. (2011) also voice the contradictory nature of the document's wanting to support and nurture students' intellectual growth while subsequently listing domains such as creativity under skills to build. In other words, the document framed creativity as a skill that should be grown in an observable way, rather than something to be fostered in a non-performance or test-oriented

environment; this can be further connected to performance-oriented education and assessment. While this document doesn't discuss music education on its own, it does state that the arts can provide experiences that are different forms of non-verbal (ie. rote) literacy, and that they are a part of the "complete" educational experience (Willingham et al., 2007, p. 6). The document might have contributed to a performance-based, but also outcomes-based, curriculum, as well as highlighting music as an essential subject (which it isn't always perceived as). This document bears a strong departure from the facilitative approaches mentioned in *Living and Learning*, and the dissonance between these two documents highlights the changing expectations of the "correct" pedagogical approaches given from the government.

The large gap between these two commissions could also help us understand the changing goals of the government within education as time has passed, which could, again, lead to generational differences in pedagogical approaches to music education. Ontario's educational system and classroom environments are built on this history; from the shift of music education in structural policy to the impacts of policy documents on curricular practices, music (and the arts as a whole) have been evolving in both their perception and pedagogical classroom practices. However, while music classrooms dynamics are shaped by the history of the education system and values, understanding of contemporary ones requires both a review of existing recent literature, and exploring existing experiences within the field via research. In this next section, we will shift our focus to some current structures and trends within high school music today on both provincial and larger scales.

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Music Education Today in Ontario: Structure and Course Offerings

In Ontario, music education is considered to be a learning requirement in tandem with other arts-related courses within the Elementary School System. The Arts Curriculum, which was last updated in 2009, does not make any explicit mentions of music-specific benefits, which may lead to a lack of understanding for Elementary school educators, and subsequent student and parent beliefs around music education. We will discuss more about how social beliefs around music education can act as a barrier to student involvement later in this literature review. The curriculum document does, however, highlight that involvement in the Arts—which are defined as drama, dance, visual arts and music—can help provide students with mediums to self-express and gain awareness of the world and various communities and around them (Government of Ontario, 2009). However, not much else is said about music uniquely other than how musical pieces can allow students to empathize with others; its qualities are grouped in with other art forms, which aren't also given more than a brief introduction to their abilities to help students throughout their learning journeys. While this is section is not intended to criticize the Ontario Elementary School Curriculum, it also seems worth noting that how the Arts are promoted and supported in Elementary School learning can have a direct impact on students' perceptions of the Arts prior to, and during, their advancement to high school.

Once students move to Secondary school, they have the option to take a course in music (usually either instrumental or vocal), although it is not mandatory; rather it is grouped in with another elective (Government of Ontario, 2010). As previously mentioned, the Ontario Curriculum for both music courses for grades nine–10 and 11–12 centers around three areas of

focus: (A) creating and performing, (B) reflecting, responding and analyzing, and (C) foundations. It should be noted that these categories are identical to the other arts courses in this document, with the difference in visual arts simply being that (A) is changed to creating and presenting (Government of Ontario, 2010). Music course offerings include grades nine and 10 instrumental music (AMU10 and AMU20), grade 11 instrumental music at both the open and university/college track level, and grade 12 instrumental music at both workplace-track and university/college preparation level (Government of Ontario, 2010). While these are the courses listed in Ontario's The Arts, Grades 9-10 and 11-12 documents, there are also a variety of other music course codes approved by the Ontario government to be offered based on teacher qualifications, availability of resources and demand for enrollment. These courses can include specialty instrumental music groups (ie. Brass, percussion, strings, guitar, etc.), courses focused more so around singing and vocal performance (Jazz vocals, musical theatre, etc.), and courses on electronic music/diverse musical genres (Government of Ontario, 2023). In summary, many music courses have been approved for use via the government, but their availability at specific schools will depend ultimately on factors including music department funding, qualifications of, and interest of, available instructors, and the enrolment rates within music departments. While this study focuses on instrumental band classes, this section has been included to situate this work amongst the possibilities of music class types across the province, and to acknowledge that course offerings may vary depending on the factors stated above to offer specific courses.

Engagement Strategies and Pedagogy in Music Education

Engagement strategies will be defined for the sake of this literature review as any behaviors, explicit strategies or 'tips and tricks' that one may use to support student engagement.

Axelson et al. (2011) state that the phrase "student engagement" may refer to "how involved or interested students appear to be in their learning and how connected they are to their classes, their institutions, and each other" (p. 38). This can take many forms in music education. Signs of engagement in an instrumental music classroom might look like, but are not limited to, students answering questions in class, asking questions about a particular musical piece, or playing their instruments. However, engagement and, by extension, enjoyment/enthusiastic participation, might be harder to define in a class wherein doing a kinesthetic activity such as playing your instrument isn't voluntary, but rather something which you are graded on. A clear example of engagement shared by Wang (2021) is set in an environment wherein students feel 'empowered' to try their instruments out, and then work to find which sounds they feel 'fit' or sound good together and problem; Wang (2007) also states that this 'problem-solving' approach, wherein they're looking to make 'good' sounds out of their instrument and improve their tone, is a form of engagement (p. 3).

Music education structures, pedagogies, and materials have also often been built off of, or taken from, methods of learning music created by others. Before discussing trends in pedagogy, reviewing a brief history of several popular music pedagogies will help contextualize current trends and the evolution of music education over time. Several methods which have left an impact include the Kodály method, the Orff method, and more recently, Musical Futures.

The Kodály method was created by Hungarian musician and teacher Zoltàn Kodály (1882-1967), who began his career as a composer who coined his genre of music to be "real Hungarian art music" (Göktürk Cary, 2012, p. 181). He gained considerable recognition for his teaching methods, particularly for introducing younger children to music, and one of his known

tenets and phrases was that "children must learn to read music when they learn to read" (Göktürk Cary, 2012, p. 182). Kodály also believed that singing was the best way to learn music, and his four main goals of music training method were to allow children to learn as much about music as possible, to give them the awareness of music as a language, to link music to its culture, and "to make available to children the great art music of the world" (Göktürk Cary, 2012, p. 183). The three main tools Kodály used are the tonic solfa system, the coinciding hand signs (originally created by John Curwen in 1870), and rhythm duration syllables (Göktürk Cary, 2012). All of these three tools are still used in many method books and teachings in North America.

Carl Orff (1895-1982) was also a German composer and teacher, who made works mainly to be used for the stage, including *Carmina Burana* in 1936 (Göktürk, 2012). His music teaching work began around 1924, at the music school, which he collaborated on with Dorothee Günther in 1924, Güntherschule, which was in Munich, Austria (Göktürk, 2012). One focus in the school was improvisation-the art of making up melodies and instrumental parts up on the spot (either solo or as a collaboration), and while the school was destroyed in a bombing in 1945, Orff's methods picked up popularity in 1948 after being present on a broadcast series on Bavarian radio. The main idea of the Orff method, also known as the Orff-Schulwerk method, revolves around music, movement, and language being intertwined and connected, and main objectives of this method included bringing 'immediate joy' to children through music-making, starting with movements and language that is more natural to students as a starting point to build off of, and giving a "completely physical, nonintellectual background in rhythm and melody, thus laying a foundation of experience so necessary to a later understanding of music and musical notation" (Göktürk, 2012, p. 190). One other important piece to the Orff-Schulwerk

method comes from the instrumentation used; this method aims to start out on rhythmic pitched and non-pitched instruments, and instruments included in this are known as Orff instruments- mainly, the xylophone, glockenspiel and metallophones (Beegle et al., 2016). Orff instruments in particular have become popular for use in many elementary classrooms, and Orff instrumentation has also expanded to be included in many method books and high school classrooms.

Musical futures was brought about at the turn of the 21st century, in response to an identified need in the UK for engaging youth more so in music education (Hallam et al., 2017). Musical Futures is a not-for-profit organization which was started by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2003 when they funded an investigation into finding "new and meaningful ways of engaging all young people in musical activities" (Musical Futures, accessed 2024). The work expanded upon Lucy Green's research on informal learning, and three Pathfinder Local Authority Music Services explored various strategies and structures to investigate which might help young people have a high-quality, sustained relationship with learning music (Hallam et al., 2017). The two main ideas this action research promoted using were to informalize more music learning, and to have learning opportunities more personalized for students (Hallam et al., 2017). Musical Futures encourages a non-formal teaching approach, and informal learning[2] to "develop independent learners" (Musical Futures, accessed 2024). This approach ultimately helped to have more informal teaching methods supported by research and implemented into more modern

[2] Their non-formal teaching approach is centered around modelling, wherein the teacher is seen as a "musical leader with music co-constructed by learners), and the informal learning process is based on the teacher acting as a resource and musical model, but standing back and starting with? the learners' individual goals (Musical Futures, accessed 2024, Our Approach webpage)

pedagogy and curriculum. Furthermore, this approach supports bringing more experiential-focused and natural ways of learning into formal environments, and connects to a belief many social constructivists share: that "learning is best supported when a teacher acts as a facilitator and guides students to solve personally significant problems" (Isbell, 2018, p. 41).

A growing trend within music classrooms is incorporating media popular among students, and using popular music as an engagement tool specifically for music education. One study tracked four high school music teachers in the United States who used the integration of popular music as a 'solution' for the lack of confidence and disconnect from content that was trending across their student populations (Vasil, 2019). The study delved further into the "how" of this integration process, and yielded eight main characteristics which teachers exhibited in their curricular transitions: "(1) holistic and gradual change processes, (2) teacher reflection and inquiry, (3) teacher autonomy, (4) enabling institutional factors, (5) use of a variety of supportive networks, (6) student-centered pedagogy, (7) teacher-selected professional development, and (8) a balance of structure and chaos and formal and informal learning" (Vasil, 2019, p. 1). Popular music education may also involve incorporating other genres and related pedagogies into the classroom, including hip hop pedagogy. Gage et al. (2019) tie hip hop pedagogy to having learning stem from the interests of students and demonstrated how it can be used in schools as a tool for students to examine connections and relationships between genres, cultures and working to understanding their reality in a deeper way (p. 22).

Supporting Individual Student Needs

Knowing what characteristics lead to engagement can help teachers know what they are looking to foster in their music classrooms in order to keep students actively learning, happy, and

continuously involved. According to Lang (2021), some themes that connect to heightened engagement in music education regarding adolescents include "enjoyment, choice, freedom, variety, social connections, contextualized learning, and developing confidence" (p. 495). Engagement is also connected to agency, which can further be broken down into the will to, ability to, and power to act. In short, participants in a given activity are developing those three wills (Lang, 2021), while also developing reflexive self-awareness (ie. How 'well' they're doing, what they'd like to improve on, what they're trying to achieve and how they're progressing towards that, etc.). Both engagement and agency can occur in a music classroom, wherein students are actively learning how to play and progress on their instruments; giving students environments wherein they feel capable of agency whilst also hitting the themes discussed above can help meet students where they are at and encourage consistent engagement with music.

Research in music education has also delved into supporting students with disabilities. Jones (2014) conducted a literature review of research regarding supporting students with disabilities in music classrooms and concluded that while this research was lacking voice from the student with disabilities themselves, that having more open-ended musical activities and differentiating instruction are both two general methods for support. Differentiated Instruction (DI) is an approach to teaching and instruction, first coined by Carol A Tomlinson (1999), by which a variety of teaching methods and assessments are used in classrooms as a means of supporting students' individual needs and learning preferences. Tomlinson (2001) states that one can differentiate instruction in three main categories: "content, process, and product" (p. 51). Strategies to support DI in the music classroom for students with disabilities can include having learning centers set up in various parts of the classroom that are prepared with alternative

curricula, having a variety of content options and ways to learn (differentiating content), having activities prepped that can give students space to work independently or with others based on their wants and needs (differentiating process), and having adaptive options for assessment submissions (differentiating product) (Darrow, 2015).

Another trend in education has been to try and meet students where they are and have a classroom environment that promotes safety, growth and transformation. The music mediation model has also been considered recently due to its purpose being on transformation, particularly for those experiencing conflict or hardship in some way (Lorenzo de Reizabal, 2022). The music mediation model looks at, in short, fostering an environment wherein community-wide challenges can be addressed and supported through curriculum that both aims to call in and support students, and curriculum that aims to relieve students of the challenges and issues affecting them. This approach also recognizes that students are experiencing hardships, which can in turn prohibit them from properly engaging in learning without receiving relevant supports.

The phrase 'Maslow before Bloom' also relates to the preparedness and availability of students to learn (Pokhrel et al., 2021). This phrase refers to two needs-ranking systems; the first is Maslow's hierarchy of needs–a pyramid-shaped hierarchy that ranks how one's needs are important and can build on top of one another (ie. Physiological needs, like food and water, must be reached before other needs, like esteem, can be built and grown) (Mcleod, 2023). Bloom's Taxonomy is a similarly tiered system that instead focuses on domains of learning, including remembering, applying and evaluating (Armstrong, 2010). 'Maslow before Bloom' highlights that students' physical needs need to be met before they can do any cognitive engagement/learning. In other words, if someone feels physically unsafe, is under-fed, or is

feeling very anxious and mentally unwell, they would likely be less able to learn or be present in a class to their fullest extent than someone who feels safe, is not hungry or who isn't experiencing anxiety. This framework is often discussed in general education spheres, and serves as a reminder that engagement trends can also vary in relation to student need; when students' physiological needs aren't met, supporting them to ensure they can be met can be seen as an engagement strategy itself.

Other trends in education in general and music education may arise from identified barriers or blocks to learning. Changes in student interests, resources based on financial/location-based availability and inconsistencies in learning environments can (and have) had unique effects on the teaching community; it is likely that within the next five years studies based on post-COVID-19 learning will help identify trends emerging right now which aren't yet identified in research. However, before moving further through this work, it's crucial to identify potential barriers for consistent student engagement in music education, as well as barriers that may prohibit/limit students from entering a music classroom in the first place.

Barriers Limiting Access to Music Education Within Ontario

There are a number of barriers that may limit students' access to music education with Ontario. In Ontario, these barriers can be both structural and sociocultural. One large barrier to music education comes from the restrictions to providing programming associated with limited funding to schools and music educators. Music programs, like all other departments within Secondary schools, are set to receive some form of funding from their respective school boards. However, MusiCounts President Kristy Fletcher stated that the average Canadian school (across elementary and secondary programs) receives less than $500 per year to fund music

programming (Wong, 2023). Music (and other arts) teachers often must seek external funding opportunities to supplement the limited internal funding they receive, in order to sustain the various costs associated with running a music program. Among other costs, maintaining a variety of musical instruments, equipment and classrooms can be incredibly expensive. While many schools normalize having fundraisers, such as concerts, interdisciplinary arts nights (ie. Coffee houses), and others such as selling food or plant products, these efforts can take up a large amount of time and require a much larger amount of time and resources than receiving proper funding.

Ontario does have a large amount of grants to apply for; however, funding has recently drastically decreased. For example, in 2019, the Ontario Music Fund-which contributes to music corporations in support of the Canadian music industry (City of Toronto, accessed 2023), was cut by more than 50%, from $15million to $7million (The Canadian Press, 2019). This funding was cut by the provincial government, which could have set a precedent for school boards to in turn limit their music education funding; it should be noted, however, that this hasn't been found in any literature within this review but is instead a possible side-effect of this reduction in funding. Ontario does have other grant programs-and nationally awarded programs-that teachers can apply for, but these funding opportunities are often competitive due to the commonality most music teachers share: that they don't have enough funding to produce what they feel is the "best" programming for their students.

Music programs in Ontario are also struggling to return from the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic, which left many teachers with closed doors and quiet classrooms for long stretches of time. As classes shifted to remote environments, students were no longer to make

music in shared spaces, and even as classes returned to in-person, masked activities, many music activities were unable to proceed given the risk with air-borne spread of the virus. This has caused both a lack of established participation in elective music classes/band programs and a heightened need to repair/replace many instruments who aged untouched for up to a few years during this time (Wong, 2023). Among other changes, the pivot to online and then later, to distance learning and playing, forced teachers to adapt their pedagogical strategies in supporting students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Strategies for classroom facilitation online could have included the use of more verbal instruction by teachers over modelling behavior on instruments, using online tools such as websites and videos, and encouraging more student independence through the submission of materials remotely (ie. virtual playing tests) for assessments (Hash, 2021). It should be noted that online distance learning, or ODL, had been around in music education before the pandemic, and so teachers may have taken strategies from existing knowledge about online music education to help adapt to their new teaching environments.

However, one could write a separate literature review solely on the additional impacts COVID-19 had on both teachers and students during, and post-pandemic. A 2022 study from Shaw et al., which surveyed music teachers from the United States, highlighted some common themes that one could infer may have affected music teachers in general. Among them included working irregular and/or longer hours to support students, the view of music education not being seen as a 'priority' during the pandemic (which could be associated with the biases and needs of students applying for post-secondary non-music programs, among other factors), and the fear that their students weren't getting a "quality musical experience" (p. 147); 84% of participants somewhat strongly agreed with experiencing this fear.

Another potential barrier to music education comes from simply having restricted access or unequal opportunity to music education based on familial factors. According to People for Education (2018), Canadian schools were 10 times more likely to have $5000+ for their arts budget if the parental population was highly educated than not (p. 5). Additionally, socio-economic status has been cited in connection to academic achievement for education in general, with parental education, occupation, and resources available to the child being potentially impacting factors in tandem with family income (p. 5). Access to high quality education more generally, and access to music education in particular, seems very dependent on social class.

Negative perception of, or a lack of awareness toward, music programs can also pose a barrier to student participation and continuous engagement. While students who receive support from their peers about academic pursuits may be more motivated to engage with them and understand their importance (You, 2011), the opposite may also ring true in some cases. If succeeding in school is seen as "uncool", students may not see the value in trying to succeed over fear of being outcast and having a more difficult experience. Similarly, if the school's music department is seen as 'uncool' or 'unappealing' to certain students, their social influence may deter other students from initially taking music classes or dropping music classes after their grade 9 arts credit has been completed. This perception of music as 'cool' or 'uncool' may depend in-part on what is being taught in classes, and how it connects to what types of music and performance are perceived as 'cool' by adolescents. One study determined that adolescents would rate the likeability of songs as higher when knowing that they were perceived as more popular than others (Berns et al., 2010); this example demonstrates that people may be swayed to

publicly voice their support/interest in things when they know others enjoy and benefit from them.

Another barrier to engagement which teachers in a variety of field may struggle with is expectations created by formally grading/marking the work of students, and their potential motivation to achieve marks they deem to be 'good' or 'successful' with encouraging intrinsic motivation to learn and enjoy music. One recent study from China, which tested university students, found a link between 'sustainable engagement' and academic achievement (Jian, 2022). As students age, their self-determined extrinsic motivation increases (Gillet et al., 2011) meaning that they're more determined to learn in school because of external pressures/desires that are separate from their intrinsic, or personal, desire to learn. External achievement can be largely linked with grades, and so students may choose to withdraw from a course wherein they are getting lower marks in assignments/the course as a whole than they would like. While this can occur in any classroom, in electives wherein students have the choice to not continue taking courses in a particular subject area having a lack of variety in learning opportunities, subject matter and types of assessments can limit opportunities for extrinsic success. This can affect enrolment and potentially alter the person's intrinsic interest in music as well due to feeling discouraged or unconfident about their musical abilities and knowledge.

Tradition can also be seen as a potentially unintentional barrier to engaging high school students in music education. According to Self-Determination Theory, people are drawn to participate in and willingly repeat behaviors that both align with their psychological needs and their sense of self (Evans, 2015). This second piece—aligning with sense of self—can be heavily connected to whether one feels as though what they are participating in relates to their

current life, such as the music they engage with outside of the classroom. As previously mentioned, the involvement of popular music in classrooms has increased as a result of the growing demand to include content that students will enjoy and relate to. While there is much to learn from more traditional elements of music education—such as classical music history and more classically oriented band pieces—the majority of content (to generalize) that is rooted in tradition does not fall under the category of newly released or written music, which is music that students are more likely to know, relate to, and connect more to their sense of self. This need to update music curricula was noted by Juvonen et al. (2012) over a decade ago, citing the changing musical culture in Finland as reasoning to find "new starting points" to work from in curriculum creation (p. 1).

Additionally, the dominance of western classical music in high school music classrooms can lead to student alienation due to the lack of representation of their interests and cultures. In postsecondary institutions, music history is still heavily Eurocentric (Walker, 2020); this may further alienate students initially interested in learning more about music and pursuing it further who don't feel particularly interested in that dominant genre of music. Students may also feel "robbed" of the opportunity to learn about more diverse types of music in a safe and informative way, and students from diverse communities may be alienated from classes because they are not learning about music that they feel represented by/culturally connected to.

Furthermore, it may be harder for people with disabilities to participate in music classroom environments. Out of the four main dimensions of alienation in education (Buzzai et al., 2021), both powerlessness and meaninglessness could perhaps relate to youth who are not feeling connected with in musical contexts. If they are not learning about musicians with diverse

identities/from a variety of genres and interests, they may feel that their social power in the classroom decreases, and also potentially would not be able to find much meaning out of the work due to the inability to connect it to their unique experiences. This could, in turn, be connected to social perceptions of music classrooms; if students aren't connecting with it in some way, such as feeling safe, enjoying themselves or being interested in the work, that would not only decrease the class's arguable effectiveness, but also decrease its popularity and reputation of the music department.

The social perception of music education in Ontario can also be influenced by, and connected to, barriers associated with funding for music departments. It seems reasonable to state that seeing the high need for self-advocacy and articulating the value of music education may influence the confidence, and willingness to continue or start learning about music education, from children. However, music educators are not unaware of the differences in opinion about the necessity or value that music education brings to people; this is something they've had to advocate for throughout their careers. Parents, as well as other potential influences on students (ie. other family members, friends and high school peers) can have unique and largely variable impacts on students' choices; their beliefs can correlate to one's identity, which in-turn can motivate students to make choices in support or, as a reaction against, those beliefs (Pendergast, 2020). For example, if one's parent doesn't see as much value in taking a music course over other courses more aligned with compulsory, required subjects (ie. A math or science elective, for example), they might pressure their child into dropping out of music after grade 9 (as a recently certified teacher and former music student, I have seen this situation play out several times in my limited experiences). Students themselves may not feel as encouraged to

join a music department with less options that appeal to them or engage in–and continue engaging in–music education when it isn't widely supported or encouraged socially and economically in their community.

There are potentially more barriers that could be explored here, but above all one thing is clear: there are many barriers that could be actively prohibiting students from both reaching the classroom door and staying in the music classroom throughout high school. Understanding these barriers, and the difference between those directly impacting engagement vs. restricting participation, is important moving forward in my work to understand the potential climates students are within during their time in high school.

Differences and Similarities Between High School Music Education in Rural vs. Urban Communities

Another area relevant to this work is the specific geographical context of the greater community of the schools participating. This school board is situated in a smaller region in Ontario, and most townships that are a part of it may be considered as rural towns/small cities rather than urban centers. Welsh et al. (2020) state that six categories can be used to define an educational community as 'urban' (or rather, to assess if it doesn't meet the criteria and is more urban), which include focuses on population and enrolment, the specific composition of the demographic, social and economic context, resources, and potential educational inequalities (p. 1).

In acknowledging potential for bias in the perception of more urban vs. rural communities, the term *urbanormativity* was coined by rural critical theorists Gregory Fulkerson and Alexander Thomas (Fulkerson et al., 2013), and highlights the differences in common

perceptions/stereotypes around living in an urban center vs. a more rural community. Urban centers are oftentimes associated with having more progress being made, having better resources, and being more diverse, whereas rural communities then may represent the opposite to many: less progressive, less resources, and less exciting to live in (Bates, 2018). Furthermore, this bias can affect people–including educators– into looking at rural music education from a "deficit perspective" (Bates, 2018, p. 1), over acknowledging the potential assets within their community that can bring unique resources and experiences to their students and programming.

According to Hunt's (2009) comparative music education study, which interviewed teachers, parents and administrators from both rural and urban areas, both areas can have advantages and disadvantages. One such advantage in a rural area could be that due to its size, programming may be more easily presentable in the community and there may be a heightened awareness of it. However, that closeness could also be off-putting to people living in smaller towns because one may be more likely to already know people within music programming, teachers running programming, and others involved than not in a bigger city (p. 39). Another potential advantage of rural communities is the potential to teach students for more sustained periods of time. Although in very rural communities this may apply to teaching both elementary and secondary schooler students music, in slightly larger (but still not quite urban areas) this could include the same teacher getting to instruct students from grades nine-12, or teachers potentially knowing students first through community programming and then supporting them through high school.

Hunt (2009) also noted that both rural and urban educators view advocating for their programs as necessary in order to receive support. Advocacy may be important particularly for

rural music educators because their high school offerings may be one of their incoming students' first opportunities to learn consistently about music. Prest (2011) maintains that due in part to the lack of consistent training in music literacy for incoming and current elementary school teachers, many elementary school students in rural areas don't get to experience consistent music education, including learning an instrument or reading music. While this study was situated in British Columbia, it bears similarities to Ontario. This leaves incoming high school students unaware of musical possibilities, and this is where the program's involvement with/reputation within a smaller community may have a bigger influence on involvement. Among other issues, Prest also highlights the potential challenges that come with rural teacher recruitment, structural challenges (ie. less funding, which may arise from having a smaller student population to begin with), and also any challenges already affecting the greater community (which likely will have an impact on some students).

It should be noted that this area of research is led based off generalizations, rather than hard facts that relate to every given rural and urban community; we cannot assume that every rural community is affected in the ways discussed above simply because of the size of their population. To that same extent, it may be harder to predict trends among communities that may lie in-between the general definition of rural vs. Urban. For example, what kinds of assumptions can we make based on what we already know about communities that have populations of around 30-40,000 people? Those communities may seem to be more urban in comparison to a town of 1200 but would appear tiny to someone in a larger urban center such as Toronto. Taking these research generalizations as such is important when taking into consideration the size of any community one is working within, to rule out any potential bias but also gain a general

awareness of some factors that may impact the lives of—and furthermore, the education of—students in any given area.

In Review

This literature review contains several themes that have helped inform the lens of this research. First and foremost, the influence of past musical pedagogies cannot be discounted, and many aspects and methods of teaching have been passed down to influence modern teaching. In particular, viewing music as a language, connecting it to one's culture and experiences, using instrumentation that supports development in understanding rhythm and melody, and having informal learning in classes can be traced back from Kodály, Orff and Musical Futures. Modern-day trends to support student engagement include incorporating popular music and media into the classroom, and incorporating student choice to support individual needs.

This literature review has also brought awareness to several potential barriers facing students, including financial, social and curriculum-based barriers. While there is no direct addressing of barriers in the interview guide, the study does explore challenges to learning and engagement, which can be related to pre-existing barriers affecting students (inside of outside of the classroom). The review ended with a brief discussion on potential differences in urban vs. rural environments, with the research pointing out that potential advantages and disadvantages due to a community's size, location etcetera are all variable, despite potential biases people may have about community sizes. Research also supports that teachers from both types of communities feel that advocating for music education is a necessary part of their work, further supporting the benefits that publishing information about music education research can have on spreading awareness.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Paradigm

This work follows the paradigm of social constructivism, which states that knowledge is built from and on our experiences (Pilarska, 2021). Constructivism has many specific domains and varied interpretations within its scope, but a few main principles from constructivism are particularly relevant to music education. These include several takeaways from Webster's (2011) review on constructivism in music education: "[1] knowledge is formed as part of the learners' active interaction with the world, [2] knowledge exists less as abstract entities outside the learner and absorbed by the learner; rather, it is constructed anew through action, [3] meaning is constructed with this knowledge, [&4] learning is, in large part, a social activity" (Webster, 2011, p. 36). In an instrumental music classroom, wherein one starts learning, or continues to learn, an instrument, the knowledge that they are learning directly comes from interacting with the instrument and others, absorbing information around and reacting to the instrument, and adjusting aspects of their playing to improve (often in group classroom environments). Viewing the music classroom from a social constructivism lens, wherein learning is a process that individuals experience, but which can be impacted by the social environment in which it occurs, (Wiggins, 2016) acknowledges the potential impacts of both the educator's instructional choices and the environments in which they occur on learning.

Methodology

This work is guided by Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which aims to help explain why people engage with, and are motivated to do and complete, certain behaviors and activities. SDT was coined by Dr. Richard Ryan and Dr. Edward Deci (O'Hara, 2017), and is a macro theory which combines "five interrelated minitheories, including basic needs theory, organismic integration theory, goal contents theory, cognitive evaluation theory, and causality orientations theory" (Reeve, 2012, p. 150). This theory rests its foundation on *organismic dialectic*, which is a concept that assumes that people have natural tendencies to growth. These tendencies can be supported by actions that (1) fulfill their psychological needs, and (2) align with their sense of self (Deci et al., 2002; Evans, 2015). Ryan et al. (2020) believe that people are motivated by actions which can help them feel autonomous, competent, relating to/connected with others, and also actions that they can connect to a part of their personal identity.

This theory alone can help rationalize why people should, and can, engage in music and music education: it can help people learn and fulfill their psychological needs while also providing them with unique opportunities to connect with oneself and the surrounding world. For example, in learning a band instrument, you play the instrument both independently and, in a group, which can help support autonomy and relatedness, while also learning more about how to improve and gain musical competence. At the same time, perhaps one can then go learn a song they really connect with that brings them joy and makes them feel good about themself and that experience (ie. Being able to replicate something they love/relate to). Valenzuela et al. (2018) also found that perceived competence, one of the three identified psychological traits associated with Self-Determination Theory (Ryan et al., 2020), was a big motivator for music conservatoire

students and motivated them both intrinsically and extrinsically, and in a field so dominated by performance competence seems to have particular relevance to the scope of music education.

However, how exactly can this help educators to understand how engagement might be observable, and better yet, function within students? Engagement can be further defined into four observable categories: behavioral (the effort being put in to concentrate), emotional (interest vs. experiencing negative emotions blocking engagement such as being overwhelmed), cognitive (using learning strategies that go beyond a 'superficial' level) and agentic (how much a student is actively trying to engage over passively receiving information) (Reeve, 2012). These are all considerations which have been considered during the data collection and observations, and have helped define how this work discusses and provides evidence for engagement in classroom settings.

Methods

This research was conducted in two ways: through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Each participating teacher's classrooms (two each) were observed for one classroom period (75 minutes) by the primary researcher (myself), during which I took field notes on my computer. Teachers then met with the PI within one week of that observation, with each of the interviews taking place in their classrooms either after school or during their spare period. Within these interviews, a script with 11 questions was followed, but participating teachers were also given the space to elaborate more on their answers due to the open-ended nature of the questions asked (Alsaawi, 2014). Interview questions applied to the activities which occurred during the teacher's observed classroom period, and also asked questions regarding activity enjoyment, strategies they use to engage their students, and challenges faced

regarding disengagement. Teachers were also asked about their learning outcomes for their particular classes and whether their schools had extracurricular opportunities for students to further engage with music. The three teachers interviewed also had a variety of experiences and backgrounds. One educator had been teaching music formally in-schools for over 15 years, one for 10-15, and one for less than 5 (but teaching privately for longer).

The data was then analyzed using thematic analysis, taking influence from Karen Peel's Research Inquiry Framework (Peel, 2020); the process mainly consisted of data collection, familiarization/reviewing of the data, and then coding the data into themes. The semi-structured interviews and field notes were analyzed and coded into larger themes, and then were analyzed both in relation to other observational notes OR interviewees' responses. Analysis also occurred across the two types of data sets.

Notes on the Geographical Location of the Study

It should be noted that we are using the term rural, which itself is defined in vague terms in Canadian policy. According to the *Dictionary, Census of Population 2021* (Statistics Canada, 2022), rural areas are considered those that lie out of population centers, living outside of census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and agglomerations, but the census criteria states that this may include small areas with less than 1000 people in that population. However, a census metropolitan area (CMA) needs to have a population of at least 100,000 with at least 50,000 people in its center (Statistics Canada, 2022). Most cities and townships within this schoolboard sit somewhere in between those criteria: larger than towns of 1000 people, but smaller than cities of 100,000 people. This lack of definition makes it hard to therefore define this broader

area/region where the schoolboard is located in as either being clearly urban or rural; resources shared throughout the schoolboard go to both more densely populated areas and smaller townships. Knowing this knowledge moving forward can allow us to consider the trends of urban and rural schools as perhaps occurring simultaneously in varied ways within this school community.

Project Timeline and Recruitment Process

This project had to undergo two ethics reviews. First, the project was approved by the Research Ethics Board in July of 2023. Then, the other review was done by the participating school board–the Niagara Catholic District School Board (NCDSB), and the project was approved in October of 2023. By the time I had submitted my official application to the NCDSB in August, the Research Consultant/liaison that had been supporting me had changed positions, and so I primarily received support from the Arts liaison. Together, we decided that the best strategy for recruitment with a fairly quick turnaround was to have observations and interviews take place in November of 2023. They sent out an email to all of the music teachers in the board introducing me, and I also created a google form asking for some preliminary information from interested teachers, and to share more information about the study. Teachers were asked to provide their email, the name of their school, what classes they taught, and how many years of teaching experience they had; this gave me a general idea of some classes I could ask to observe, and some background information on the broad experiences of interested teachers.

While four teachers expressed their interest (involving 50% of schools within the board), one teacher was unable to participate and dropped out of the study before starting the consent form and assent form distribution process. However, the other three teachers all made it through

the following three processes: signing of their consent form and distribution of forms to students, observation days (one per teacher), and in-person interviews. One of the educators, "Gigi"[3], initially wasn't able to participate in November, but after I was able to facilitate more research in December, they were still enthusiastic about wanting to help out, and welcomed me into their classroom about two weeks after I reached out to them (mid-late December). Within one month of each interview, interviews were transcribed, and all file storage took place within my locked student Microsoft OneDrive account. Observation notes were taken on my laptop throughout the periods I observed, and then combed through, and any potentially identifying information about students was flagged and redacted before the coding/dissemination process began.

[3] Specific schools and teachers in this public school board have each been given pseudonyms, which will be shared when referring to them in lieu of their real names. Participants were also asked which pronouns they wanted to be used to refer to them, as well as their choice of pseudonym.

Chapter Four: Data Description and Analysis

Notes on the Data Collection Process

The data analysis process can be grouped into three main parts which were conducted in the following order: analysis of observation notes, analysis of the interview transcripts, and then cross-analysis. In total, there were 22 pages of field notes, and 76 pages of interview transcripts which were analyzed, and so 98 pages of data were disseminated in this process. I determined the order of this work, with the rationale being that the observation notes could help familiarize me with classroom trends and remind them of the classroom experiences, before reviewing those experiences in the interview process. Also, analysis of the observation notes started while the final approval of transcripts by the participants was ongoing. It should be noted that this analysis process was iterative, wherein it was repeatedly checked over for the same criteria.

While iterative processes often focus around asking several questions repeatedly to search for 'answers' or related materials in data (Srivastava et al., 2009), I searched for different trends/behaviors in the data (which were determined after facilitating the data collection and re-reading the data), and then analyzed them. In other words, notes for each of the six classes and periods observed were combed through, and content was highlighted anytime it connected to one or more of the following themes: having fun/evidence of enjoyment, words or actions of encouragement, actions/activities relating to engagement and pedagogy, evidence of student engagement, and disengagement or encountering challenges/difficulties. These themes were all determined after completing my literature review. While searching for examples of engagement methods, and evidence of engagement and disengagement already aligned with the aim of the study: exploring engagement strategies, themes around encouragement and challenges were also

included due to the prevalence of both data on supporting individual student needs, and barriers and challenges, in the literature review.

The process of analysis began by reviewing and codifying the observation notes into various categories/themes (as discussed above). The observation notes were highlighted, and additional notes were made on them if needed to aid the dissemination process, but note that the original, unedited notes were also saved into PDF forms to avoid any accidental erasure or tampering with the content in this process. School names have also been de-identified, and the following table can be used to identify the classes observed:

School A (Morgan, they/them)	School B (Ricardo, he/him)	School C (Gigi, she/her[4])
Class 1: Grades 9-10 Instrumental Band	**Class 3:** Grades 9-11 Instrumental Band	**Class 5:** Grade 9 Instrumental Band
Class 2: Grades 11-12 Instrumental Band, 11-12 Guitar, and Music for Creating	**Class 4:** Grades 10-11 Guitar, Grade 10 Voice	**Class 6:** Grade 10 Instrumental Band

In preparation for each observation, students were given consent/assent forms for themselves and/or their guardians to sign, in order to consent to the data collection process. While schools A and B–and their teacher participants, Morgan and Ricardo–were able to print off the forms themselves, school C-and their teacher participant, Gigi, was offered the option of having me come into their classroom several days before the planned observation, and having [Ms. Traynor] distribute the forms myself. This was offered due to the busyness of the

[4] Teachers were asked which pronouns they would like to be used in the research, and these have been used throughout the study to refer to each participant correctly.

observation time, and due to this observation taking place in a different month than the other two schools. As outlined in the attached assent form (Appendix 2), direct quotes from the observation, or direct behaviors correlated to the students, were only recorded if that student had signed the assent form. In other words, students who didn't have the consent forms signed did not have any direct actions noted (ie. Asking a certain question, doing any gestures or communications with peers, etc.). All of the participating students were under 18 years of age, and so the separate consent form for students 18 and over was not used or signed by any students.

I kept track of who had signed the forms, and who had not, and kept this information from the teacher participants, by following this process: 1) Asking the teacher to go into their office, or turn their backs, at the beginning of each classroom observation, 2) Going around to collect the classroom forms, and asking students to afterward briefly raise their hands so I could identify who had brought in forms, and 3) taking temporary notes on where participating students were seated in the room so they were aware of who had consent to be directly observed. It should be noted that these notes regarding seating arrangements, or any other notes taken to temporarily help me to remember who had their forms signed, were deleted from the observation notes and total data, and student names were not recorded, and will not be, shared during this dissemination.

One noted challenge in the consent-obtaining process occurred during the in-person distribution of consent forms. While I had printed the assent forms (due to all students in the grade levels assigned being below 18 years of age) and also had correctly checked that the top form, which was the participation form for the teacher, had properly printed on both sides,

unfortunately the student assent forms were blank on the back page. I made this error known with the teacher when discovered, apologized, and noted what information was missing on the form. I fully briefed the students that the paragraph on dissemination, link to my email (which was also listed on the first form), and spaces to sign were gone from the form. The teacher also helped by instructing students to leave a space for parents to sign the name of their child, and to sign their signature of parental assent. The missing information was double-checked, and after reviewing the needed processes with my supervisor, I got the participant-Gigi, to upload the missing information onto the students' google classrooms for their parents to see. The missing information had also been verbally reviewed with students in their classes prior to them taking the forms home to sign.

Part 1: Classroom Observations

Evidence of students having fun or enjoying themselves seemed to include the ways students interacted with their teacher. Ricardo, for instance, had a back-and-forth rapport with students that was light and joke-y; in one instance, he fired back positivity at a student who was struggling to play due to having a new reed, saying to them "you sound perfect" and making them laugh. Students seemed to respond well to Ricardo's demeanor, particularly in class 3, wherein Ricardo quipped back and forth with students about volunteering for an activity focused on identifying notes played by Ricardo on the piano within a scale, and then trying to mimic the same pattern on their instruments. Humor seemed to be used by educators, and perpetuated around their classrooms, in order to make the mood of the classroom a bit lighter and allow them to connect with students more. Humor is often associated with fun, and it was clear during these observations that copious amounts of laughing, smiling, and making quick jokes are frequent in

several of the observed classrooms, including during the theory lesson in School C's class 6. The class started out with Gigi selecting daily music trivia cards to read to the class, and the students seemed to be conversational throughout, in ways that were generally very on-topic to the class, and/or ways which were politely directed towards Gigi. Fun was even found in reviewing expectations for an assignment, during which Gigi and the students joked around about 'not going too crazy' with the fonts. In School A, Morgan's classes also emphasized their experiences of fun during the playing of repertoire, in particular during class 1. At one point in the lesson, Morgan asked the students whether they liked the piece they were playing, and students piped up that it was fun even though they also deemed it hard. Students also seemed to get a bit competitive during an 'eyes on me' activity, wherein as part of their warm-up they had to stop playing once they were 'cut off' by Morgan's conducting. Students jokingly looked to see who had missed their spots, and it appeared that playing was something they seemed focused on, smiling and enjoying themselves throughout.

Verbal encouragement by teachers was used in all six classrooms and is a category of codifying that was added in after the first scan-through of the data, due to its presence. In-the-moment feedback, either while students were playing or had finished playing, was used by all teachers. Morgan used a lot of positive statements, seemingly to motivate the students and make them feel more comfortable; they encouraged that "just trying is great", and also played with students which was interpreted as supporting them through the playing as well. When asked about their favorite part of music class, several students pointed out Ricardo's nice demeanor and said that he helped them to "understand and fix a problem"; these are examples of teacher encouragement in the classroom.

An additional highlight from Gigi's classes came from her emphasis on including others, and they appeared to try and reduce students' stress and lack of safety through their actions. Ways of communicating this included letting the class know they wouldn't move through to another slide until everyone had finished their notes, reminding them that their exam was over a month away and that they'd help with prep, and also giving the class options for engaging in the theory lesson (ie. if taking notes helped students' learning style that was good, but it wasn't expected for them to take notes at one moment in time until after they got the worksheets). Encouragement was also present in all three classrooms via physical posters and words on the wall. Some posters focused more so on encouragement for playing, whereas some focused on making students feel safe, or informing them of associations and resources for support, particularly for equity-deserving groups (ie. 2SLGBTQ+ youth, people of color, etc.).

Student engagement is an aspect of observations which can be harder to pinpoint from an objective standpoint; unless a student says that they're listening, or are engaged in the lesson, how can one, in fact, tell that they are? Engagement, and furthermore disengagement, will be delved into further in the interview analysis, as questions 7 and 8 (see Appendix 3) ask specifically about engagement strategies teachers use, and when students typically disengage from learning/class. One tool that appears to have been used by all three educators is the tool of engagement via classroom expectations, or how being engaged is seen as the classroom 'norm'. Whether this encourages students to engage at a deeper level (ie. Wanting to learn more about music genuinely), or get them to participate due to social expectations, a method of engagement each teacher had in common was using a call-and-response, conversational style to ask students questions throughout lessons. Gigi also gave students the option, at one point, to raise their

hands regarding whether they thought that the class's inclination in the piece they just played was to speed up, slow down, or if they weren't sure.

Additionally, every single class felt "conversational"—meaning that students would politely engage in conversation with their teachers and peers mid-lesson, often without the 'need' for raising their hands—, except for class 4 (with Ricardo), which had a different, work period-oriented structure. There didn't seem to really be hesitation from students when speaking, but in none of the classes did students say anything that I interpreted as disrespectful or rude to the teacher. While there were also rises and falls in the noise level throughout each class, another common pattern was the lack of talking or chatting to one person beside the other during the majority of discussions; the only main periods where students got off-topic, and would engage with one another (or their phones), happened either during sections where the class was playing, but their section was on a break, or during work periods/times.

When it comes to disengagement, this was mostly observed when students appeared to talk to one another while in the middle of a lesson or moment in class where the general expectation was to pay attention. It was harder to observe disengagement versus appearing to be engaged; even when students are looking at a teacher, one can't always know the difference between paying attention and simply appearing to. Additionally, it was observed that during longer work periods, or times wherein students were working in groups or practice rooms, that they could talk off-topic, check their phones or stop engaging in the task at-hand after a while. I didn't notice much lack of engagement in playing, however; students seemed to play along when teachers instructed them too. However, this provokes an interesting question: what is the

difference between following baseline expectations of participation vs. actively engaging? Furthermore, how can those two facets interact together? This is something that will be revisited during the discussion, and will emerge later on as a related challenge to defining the 'results' of this research.

In elaborating on this idea of 'passive participation', wherein participants can follow along with the teacher, and mimic their actions, but aren't really critically thinking or focusing on music otherwise, there were a few signs of it happening in classes. In class 1, Morgan challenged their class to ensure they were following them for playing cues, as Morgan couldn't see many students making eye contact with them in the initial process. Additionally, during class 4, which was a longer work period, there were moments where students were observed taking longer breaks, and then claiming to have finished their work. While I may have suspected several times that that wasn't true (ie. due to seeing students on their phones and chatting about things that sounded unrelated to their assignment on occasion), there isn't really a confident way to know for sure.

The other category through which content was highlighted came from looking for actions/activities related to student engagement, and how they may relate to pedagogy of teachers. However, I ended up highlighting most of the activities and actions taken by the teachers, including those subjectively interpreted as attending to engaging the class, and it should be noted the classroom activities were reviewed in the interviews. While this initially left this category a bit over-saturated, I was able to comb through and briefly highlight a few moments which have not been highlighted yet above. When observing Morgan, I noticed that during class

1, they referenced the posters on the wall, which had information on dynamics, and they also played trumpet several times throughout that period. I interpret both these actions as methods of modelling, one wherein the environmental resources were referenced, and one wherein Morgan was the resource to follow. One other action Morgan took was the use of a microphone to amplify themself; in a room which can be filled with loud noises, I subjectively interpret this as a tool for students to hear them when needed, without Morgan having to raise their voice.

During class 3, Ricardo at one point, directly asked the students whether they'd prefer to have sectionals time or not, and when several hands went up and people said "yes", he followed the student's wishes. Ricardo also noted during class 4 that the deadline of the composition assignment could be moved depending on student need, which I also interpreted as having flexibility to help support the students. During both classes 5 and 6, Gigi used verbal inquiry to ask the students many questions throughout both the playing period (for the Grade nines) and theory learning process (Grade 10s).

Part 2: Teacher Interviews

It should be noted that for M, the classroom observations took place three days before the interview, and so I looked briefly through the observation notes, and made a recap of each class' activities and structures to help M recap the events of each class. This was read for M, and then they were asked if anything had been missed, and to elaborate more if they wished on those themes. This relates to question two, which can be found in **Appendix 3**. In this section, I will share analysis of the data collected from the interviews; the sections below have been organized into themes that related directly to the interview questions.

Classroom Activity Sequences

For Morgan, class 1 started off with theory, then warm-ups, then working through repertoire, while class 2's structure was similar. The difference, however, arose in that class 2 had band students and guitar students (as well as a 'music for creating' student, who did independent work in the room/the hallway within the classroom), and so the guitar students worked for 20ish minutes on repertoire with M while the band students did work in the hallway/rooms, and then the groups switched places. For Ricardo, class 3 (grade nine-11 band) consisted of warm-up activities, an exercise wherein 2 students at a time competed to repeat a pattern (only containing the first 3-5 notes of a scale) Ricardo played at a piano back to them, and then working through class repertoire. Class 4 consisted of a work period for the composition assignments, which consisted of melody-writing for the guitarists, and lyric/melody writing for the vocalists. Gigi's class 5's class (grade 9 band) began with a warm-up period, focused on reviewing playing test requirements/pieces, and talked through their Independent Study Projects and final exam requirements. Class 6 (grade 10 band) was a theory-focused period, wherein students followed along with an interactive, call-and-response-based lesson on intervals, filled in pre-organized notes, and then talked through upcoming assignment requirements. It's worth noting that this observation day took place in late December just before the break, and so there was added weight on assignment review over playing for Gigi's classes.

In general, each of the 3 teachers followed similar warm-up procedures when it came to instrumental band classes: giving the students a few minutes to warm up their instruments, then coming together to play warm-ups that were usually scale-based and from method books. For class 4 (Ricardo's grade 10-11 guitar and grade 10 voice), there wasn't an extensive warm-up

period due to the work-period nature of the classroom; students were dismissed by row to grab their guitars, or go to the practice room if they were one of the few students in the vocal class, and spent the period working out of their seats, playing to themselves and working on writing down their compositions. In both of Morgan's classes (1 and 2), their warm-ups were actually theory-focused prior to warming up their instruments. Morgan said that starting the class with the same structure: the students sitting down, getting out their theory booklets and doing 10-15 minutes of work and review allows things to flow nicely from a classroom management perspective. They find that, in particular, for class 2 which has grade 11s and 12s, that they can take up different parts of the theory for one grade while the other does work, which helps solidify structure and help the start run smoothly. Other facets of warm-ups which were highlighted included often having warm-ups focused on dynamics (Ricardo), starting the group with long tone warm-ups once they're ready to play as a group, and incorporating elements of improvisation at times (Gigi). Class 6-Gigi's grade 10 class, had a theory-focused period, and the work was introduced by a video to introduce intervals to the group. Gigi said that when teaching about music history, she usually starts by asking students, "what do you know about ____?" to get a feel for their interests and incoming knowledge before starting lessons. With more vigorous warm-ups, Gigi says that students in general are engaged and respectful of the process (especially upper-year students) because they understand the pay-off and benefits of warm-ups. "It's like going to the gym... It's not always necessarily, like, fun. but it's more fun to be good and then, then it's really fun."

Musical Activities Enjoyed by Students

Each teacher highlighted that students all seemed to enjoy playing, with Ricardo stating that their classes were "play-heavy". When discussing why they thought students enjoyed playing, Ricardo said the following:

> "Music is also a physical experience too...So you get that creation aspect, but then there's also that that physicalities that come along with it. It's being part of this like living, breathing experience of performance and music...I think that's just such an inspiring experience, which is why, well, people like you and me get into education, get into doing a post-secondary."

On enjoying the band class experience, Morgan said, "I think they enjoy it because it gives kids a sense of being on a team if they've never been on a team before." Morgan said that for their guitar students, most are split on preferring to play chords versus melody, and so they try to strike a balance between both in their repertoire and learning requirements. Students also, in general, prefer to play repertoire, which consists of the pieces that they play altogether as a class, usually full songs that that learn separately from their warm/up or method book exercises.

The other main type of activities enjoyed by the participants' students were composition-based activities, but some students find them challenging as well (to be discussed below). Activities using software (in the case of Morgan's class-Soundtrap) were enjoyed by students, while Gigi sometimes utilizes soundscapes creations in their class in an effort to reduce stress some students associate with composition. On the day of a soundscape-creating activity, the room is equipped with a variety of additional instruments (ie. percussion-based), and students

have one period to create pieces, in groups, which are then recorded at the end of the period. As will be discussed later, having them do this in one day is meant to welcome students into it, and eliminate the time for hesitation or nerves many have when writing individual pieces over a period of time. One other aspect of learning Gigi's classes enjoy is learning about music history, and Gigi connects this to her personal passion on teaching about a variety of musical genres and histories. Additionally, each teacher highlighted that both they and the students appear to enjoy when they join in to play with their classes, and that it can be a helpful tool for modelling and teaching.

Activities Students Struggle With

Theory.

One commonality that was brought up early-on in their answers by all three teachers was that students often struggle with theory or enjoy it the least out of the types of learning in music classrooms. Gigi stated that while theory was probably on the "bottom rung" if each activity was ranked, but highlighted that eventually, upper-year students can grow to love theory, "because they're like, 'oh, this actually makes me feel smart.'" Challenges with theory can also be linked to how theory activities often present like other activities and assignments in other classes (and so can remind students of aspects of school they don't enjoy, or don't feel good at). Music education courses in the Ontario high school system are usually open to students from all streams of course levels, from academic or even Advanced Placement (AP) students to locally developed/workplace students, which can present a lot of opportunities for students to form a positive relationship with a class based on playing, rather than writing and filling in paper

assignments. However, getting students to then do written worksheets, tests, etcetera that might remind them of aspects of other types of courses could lead to alienation.

This quote from Ricardo sums up the challenge music teachers can face with balancing playing and more academic components:

> "I think it's a challenge that, we as music educators face, is still holding a level of academic respect for what we do [uh] And not just throwing it all away for the, like performance, experience and understanding that we can treat and view music like it's an academic course as well,... and does have value in that. If we lean too hard on that, we'll lose everything, and we shouldn't... we're sometimes scared to like give tests or scared to like say like, 'Oh no, I want a theory exam.'"

Additionally, both Ricardo and Morgan brought up that they often need to remind themselves that theory isn't easy. After learning about more complex parts of theory, they said it can be hard for them to automatically relate to students who find the more basic rudiments hard, so they need to remind themselves of the difficulties that come with learning something brand-new to most students.

Performance.

Another thing Morgan said that some students struggle with is playing in front of others or having to play a piece on their own. Morgan related back to their experience as a more introverted young musician who themself initially struggled to perform on their own growing up, and said that in their classroom, they don't make students do playing tests in front of the class because they can relate to the feelings of fear associated with solo performance, especially on an

instrument they just started learning less than a year ago. Composition was something also brought up by all in relation to students finding it difficult, and both students having a fear of failure, and having to apply creativity were listed as potential causes. According to Morgan, "I make the composition assignments pretty easy that if you follow the instructions like you'll do well. But just kind of teaching that ability to like, be creative and like, have that musicality it's hard to teach." Gigi also said that her students struggle with writing music and said that "so much music has talked about in metaphor and about in their aesthetic reaction and their emotional reaction", and that students can "get confused how to separate those two elements. And it's uncomfortable to pull like what I like from what I can think about it, I think that's the struggle, they don't like to write about it."

Challenges

Immaturity.

Across all interviews, challenges associated with maturity were connected to the younger students. Ricardo said that grade 9 students can, at times, by "vying for attention from each other", which can make classroom management a bit more challenging. Rather than having issues paying attention to the class content, they've experienced students trying to put attention onto themselves, and say that is something that needs to be managed by balancing being an attentive teacher with not giving students additional attention that may motivate them to distract or disengage. He says that these distracting behaviors need to be managed by balancing being an attentive teacher with also trying to reduce or break down incidents that would have these students feeling like they're the 'center of attention.'

Lack of Confidence.

Difficulties can also be linked to the hesitation grade 9s may face when first entering a music class and learning to play. According to Gigi, helping students gain confidence while also learning how to start correctly on the basics of their instrument, like learning the embouchure (how to position your mouth around an instrument correctly so that you can produce a clear tone/sound) or learning (and making mistakes with) the first few notes in a scale. Gigi has also said that she can "see their body awareness shifting", which may increase the awkwardness students experience when first starting an instrument. She also told me that class 5-who now have a confident sound and are a very focused group-were generally very hesitant to make sound initially. However, Gigi also highlights that teachers have the unique opportunity in teaching grade nines to see them transition from being nervous and hesitant to enjoying themselves and having a confident sound; "it's the best feeling. You see them like, oh, or like when you see like even that kid who's, like struggling, how badly he wants to do it right. Like I wouldn't trade that for the world."

When asked to discuss disengagement in their classrooms, each participant highlighted a different example/type of disengagement. According to Ricardo, they think that students may disengage when they're "not feeling like they're picking it up as fast as others...and it's not always whether they are or aren't. It's about how they feel." Ricardo thinks that this may connect to discussions had in the world about talent and how students might correlate a lack of instant success with a lack of talent, which isn't the case. Ricardo tries to structure conversations around discouraged students comparing themselves to other with the lens of the students not

knowing the amounts of hours and hard work other students have put in to get where they are. Or, in his words, "maybe someone did just naturally learn it a little bit faster. But that's OK. Everyone is on a different pace." Disengagement can also come from frustration, and so Ricardo says that balancing the "moving parts" of mentally supporting students who need to be challenged, but then also cheering on the students who may be falling behind or need to work harder to reach certain goals.

Distractions.

Morgan's main link to student disengagement connected to phones, and while they said they didn't want to talk about phones "too much", they recognized that phones seem to be a larger distraction connected to engagement. They try to manage this by either incorporating phones occasionally as a tool (ie. For tuning, looking up chords for a song, etc.) or instructing students to have it away, and tries to relate music to gym by asking students, "would you be out playing like football and have your phone out like mid play?" Morgan also related the question to times of day, and said that period 2 is often the best time for engagement because it's closer to the middle of the day and just before lunch, whereas the end of the day (period 5) is often the hardest to manage. Gigi connected disengagement to classroom presentations, and said that students have struggled in the past when presentations have been more formal (ie. Requiring a powerpoint, standing at the front of the room, etc.). For their class's upcoming Independent Study Projects, Gigi said that she was in the process of asking the students what kind of an environment they'd prefer, and is planning on probably having the group sit in a circle, speak about their work and play their audio clip from their phones in lieu of a large, more intimidating (and potentially easier to disengage from) set-up. She also encouraged students to structure their

presentation to be casual, like how they'd talk/explain it in a Tiktok video, in a bid to make their presentations more engaging to them and others. Gigi also flagged long note-taking as a potential time for disengagement, so tries to avoid facilitating those in their classes.

Noted Engagement Strategies

Sustaining Natural Interest.

Perhaps the most surprising finding of this work, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, is that participants focused more on overarching strategies rather than specific tasks, and spoke of many students' natural interests with music. Ricardo says they try to instill a sense of appreciation for the experience they're getting, and tells students the following:

> "'We're trying to experience the piece while we're going through it right. We're trying to make it an experience. Don't just play the note and think about the next note, like, value the note you're on. Every note you play should have character. Every note you play should be something you're proud of, right?'"

Choice.

Morgan said that a huge impact on engagement comes from the repertoire chosen to play in-class. They said they're happy with how many are currently engaged [in their classes], but that "it would be a completely different class if I didn't, if I picked different music, they wouldn't be as engaged, right?" They also think that instrument choice is crucial, and so ensures to both spend a lot of time helping students decide their instrument, but also having options for flexibility wherein students are able to change instruments early-on if that will lead them to more personal success. When students don't have the option of changing instruments (ie. In guitar),

Morgan ensures to have extension pieces available, so that students who already feel comfortable and engaged with current songs can continue to learn during independent time without feeling left out or bored by their repertoire selection.

Teacher Attitudes.

Ricardo acknowledged that personal self-improvement and growth is very important. He said, “If I hit a point in my career where I'm no longer actively trying to improve myself as a musician, then, I don’t think I should be a music teacher.” He also recommends getting students involved in composition work early to help them see why theory matters and how it’s used, as this can help students engage more with theory rather than seeing it as an abstract subject that doesn’t have purpose to their work.

Gigi identified 2 main strategies that she uses to engage students. The first comes from how they present as an educator; they say the key is to ensure one is passionate about, and excited about, what they’re teaching. “If I am excited about it, they're curious. They wanna know... and if I don't sell it,... nothing's gonna happen.” The other larger strategy they use is exploring play within the classroom, and tailoring those sorts of creative activities to their interests by making learning an inquiry; asking “’what do we know, what can we find out?’” Gigi often integrated activities that appeal to students as ‘fun’ and different from their usual norm, like having karaoke Fridays in past vocal courses, and showing students movies that also connect to seeing the success of experts (like bass player Victor Wooten). Gigi said that having students see some more expert level playing, like learning through her guests or having Gigi herself play with the class, can also be engaging and help them learn new things. On

incorporating expert voices Gigi said: “babies learn how to talk because they talk to adults. And what kind of music would you make if you were playing with musicians?”

Additional Goals and Curriculum Enrichment

Encouraging Students to Keep Playing Music.

Each teacher highlighted that a non-curriculum-oriented learning outcome of theirs was to have students enjoy music, in the hopes of engaging with it in a positive way after class-whether that be in extracurriculars, ways unrelated to school, or in a continuous way after high school graduation. Ricardo feels passionately about wanting to show students that they can also make music outside of the classroom, and hopes in the future that he can be able to help students find performance opportunities outside of the classroom and even school environment. However, due to the often tie-in of music venues with alcohol sales (ie. Bars), this is something that they are still looking into, and hope to find more appropriate, sober venues with local partners that they can recommend for their students to grow. Gigi hopes that all of her students will be equipped to join a community ensemble after graduation, so that they can take their classroom experiences with them to another environment post-graduation if they wish.

Celebrating Student Growth.

Morgan commented on how 5 months really is a short amount of time to learn something, and how they hope that students are able to gain a sense of accomplishment after finishing their courses. They also incorporate classroom playing into their concerts, as do the other educators whenever possible. Each teacher also hopes for students to gain more proficiency on their

instrument, although the levels of proficiency are specified and guided more so by the Ontario curriculum.

Extracurricular Opportunities.

Ricardo's school currently offers students the opportunity to participate in an Honor band, which is paired up with another high school in the area; this is due to the number of students able to participate in band re-growing at the school, and the school is currently unable to sustain having their own concert band. However, the Honor Band also provides a unique opportunity for students to meet and work with musicians from another school, and the band is signed up for some festivals in the winter term. Their school also has a choir, who also perform at monthly mass. This year, Ricardo has also started coaching a younger group of students who are forming a rock band, including with young women, and he brought up how it's important as teachers to set examples for advocating against gender stereotypes around musicians; he noted that by playing into biases around what students might want to play/should be good at and won't be good at; "that's kind of like the traditional ways we pigeonhole people".

At Morgan's school, their students also participate in an inter-school honor band, and have a choir and house band that performs monthly at mass and other school events/music nights (ie. Coffee houses, holiday concerts, etc.). Gigi's school has several music extracurriculars, including a choir (soon to be a 5-part vocal choir), a concert band and jazz band (both of which participate in MusicFest Canada and went to Nationals last year), and a drumline. All three of these teachers have shared aspirations for growing this involvement, and other ensembles

they've had in the past and would like to start back up in the future (ie. Larger concert bands, a jazz choir, etc.).

Personal Teaching Philosophy

I noticed that, in general, when asking teachers whether they had anything additional to share about their work or experiences, that the participants seemed to target their response to both the research in general, as well as myself as a new music teacher. Ricardo discussed both his personal belief/philosophy in how music teachers should be engaging with music beyond the music classroom, and how they're really proud of the work music teachers do; "cause it's the energy we get back from the student and the opportunities we provide to them that is so unique and rare in life...". Morgan also emphasized their belief that music is important because "it can reach a lot of students", and related how people often learn about differentiated instruction to how that's applied by them every day in music education.

Gigi shared that she is super passionate about music education being free and accessible, and that she views music access as an equity issue. She also acknowledged that she sees the confident students and participating students also coming from more higher ranges on the socio-economic scale, and said that "we need to be looking ,and also, honestly, even across races, we need to be really considering all aspects of equity when we talk about like, who is taking music classes and why aren't why or why aren't they, and how can we like encourage all kids to like engage in this?" She strongly believes that music access shouldn't just be limited to whose parents are able to afford to send their children to music lessons.

Part 3: Cross-Examination of Data–Overlap, Distinctions, and Other Things to Note

In reviewing both the observation notes and interviews, it seemed as though, overall and in general, the participants had a high level of awareness of student reaction. In the few moments during observations that I witnessed energy being low (ie. students not watching the conductor during Morgan's class, or students in Ricardo's guitar class work period beginning to get distracted), teachers were both able to address the students and support them in the moment, as well as have an understanding of their engagement needs. Of interest is that while all the teachers ranked theory as a subject students struggle to engage with, there were high levels of participation and evidence of fun as well as active engagement ie. verbally responding, asking questions, in Gigi's class 6 lesson on intervals. This might speak to Gigi's knowledge of her students and her experience as a music teacher.

Upon cross-analysis of my classroom observations and the interview data, there isn't much difference in the data; in interview, the educators' elaborated their perspectives and intentions behind their methods, but their interpretations of the class matched up very well with what I observed of the students-their reactions, interest levels and any evidence of engagement or disengagement shown. What I found most beneficial about collecting two data sets is that I was having my initial observations be followed-up in the interview context. What I may have originally interpreted as a typical reaction to an activity from students–paying attention during a theory lesson, for example–was able to be confirmed or rebuked by the participants during interviews. The interview process allowed for an additional perspective that went beyond me feeling simply like an observing guest in the classroom, and having the opportunity to interview educators and hear their perspectives allowed the data to be supplemented in a deeper way.

From observing their teachings to hearing about their processes behind the scenes, I was able to experience virtually every aspect of the observed classes, other than the one I would gain in being a student myself.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Findings

This research sought out to share insights from the experiences of teachers, and a by-product of this insight-seeking came from the positive relationships built with recipients. In the interviews, I found that I was able to learn about strategies and experiences throughout the educator's careers that stretched beyond their classroom experiences, as well as stretched within, and I consider that an asset to this research. In general, this work shared data rooted in individual classrooms and experiences, with the hope of finding overarching connections across participants and schools. In my analysis, I am drawing upon my research paradigm–social constructivism–, as well as Self-Determination Theory and existing literature. While many unique classroom circumstances were highlighted, as well as similarities, I will share below three substantial commonalities and takeaways that I gathered from this work.

One Strategy Does Not Always Fit All for Classroom Engagement and Management

There appear to be a variety of strategies that work for different people. No two teachers are the same, and no two groups of students are the same. In other words, there is no singular right, perfect way to engage students, or to be engaged as a student, in a music classroom. Rather than one overarching strategy, each teacher participant appeared to lead with the intention of supporting their students and operated through a series of activity-oriented strategies to guide them toward their unique classroom goals, and through their course and student age-related

challenges. While I went into this work open-mindedly, my original thought process was that I would create a finite list of strategies for educators to use that were universally displayed in classrooms, and that a variety of 'solutions' would be proposed. However, my main belief rising out of this work is that, simply put, I wouldn't feel comfortable telling educators to follow a set of rules or guidelines that were amalgamated from the experiences within several schools, and from several classrooms. Teaching is truly a profession that requires consistent adaptation, reflection, and tailoring one's methods to fit the needs of their students.

Adapting one's practice to fit the adapting and unique needs of students can also relate to changes in strategies used in between ages of students. Backed by Self-Determination Theory's tenet that people have natural tendencies to grow, and that they are, in part, motivated to repeat behaviors that align with their sense of self (Deci et al., 2002; Evans, 2015), we cannot assume that the interests and desires of students are stagnant. Adolescence is a time of great change and growth in general, and what interests or motivates students in grade nine might be vastly different from their interests in grade 12 or upon graduation. While this work holds many examples of strategies teachers have used, and continue to use, to effectively engage and support their students, an arbitrary list of "strategies one must use in grade ___" would directly contradict Self-Determination Theory's understandings of one's needs and motivations evolving.

Most Students Are Initially Motivated to Play Music; Teachers Should Aim to Shape and Grow Their Initial Interest

The idea that many students are already motivated to play, and teachers need to shape that motivation rather than start it themselves (ie. through gathering repertoire suggestions,

encouragement through the process, providing performance opportunities, etc.) can be connected to Self-Determination Theory. The idea that music can fulfill the 3 main psychological needs identified by Ryan et al. (2020)–autonomy-competence and relatedness–appears to be backed up based on the learning environments the participants have fostered. Each of them have used strategies to support their autonomy (independent/small group exercises, aiming to help them gain solo comfortability through playing tests but supporting them through growing their group identity), competency (all of the data supporting their levels of verbal encouragement alone) and relatedness (the aspect of the band room, or the guitar classroom, being a communal space, and fostering that through group learning). While one could also argue that some aspects of these elements are innately built into a music room (ie. relatedness, because you can see the direct result of your impacts as a player on the band in real-time), I argue that what the teachers are fostering here is positive relationships with these 3 needs, and positive goal fulfillment in their students.

The Student Experience is Rooted in a Variety of Dynamic Emotions and Reactions

This study also shed light on student experience, not an initial aim of the study in its focus on teachers. This project was able to-thanks to the knowledge of its teachers-gather data on many of the possible states participants can be in a music classroom—happy, excited, engaged, stressed, frustrated, disengaged, etcetera—and has provided context for how those emotions are arising in students. While this study didn't include student interviews, I do believe given the examples seen in observations and heard from educators and students alike that there was some student voice present in this work. The teachers appeared to be very honest in noting trends in their students' behavior and did not appear hesitant to share that students often experience a

range of emotions, beyond happy and perfectly engaged, throughout a given semester, unit or even class period. This study offers a snapshot into the connection between class activities and student emotions, needs, and levels of attentiveness/engagement.

This work also affirmed an assumption I realize had been operating in my brain for a long time: in general, students experiencing more negative emotions (ie. stress, difficulty learning concepts, etc.) were in fact more prone to disengagement than students who appeared to be achieving well in the classroom (ie. following along with the repertoire/lessons, feeling comfortable asking the teachers questions, etc.). The notion that learning is affected by the environment-including environmental factors such as emotional needs and impacts of external effects, is further supported by the social constructivism lens this research is viewed through (Wiggins, 2016). An educator's choices will impact the learning experience in tandem with the students' environment, and this finding affirmed that unique environmental factors that can impact learning are heavily connected to students' emotions and unique experiences that they then bring into the communal learning process in a music classroom.

Limitations

This study aimed to understand and highlight engagement strategies used by teachers and learn more about the needs of high-school students through hearing about (and observing) their classroom experiences. However, this study only included data from six classrooms across three schools within the Niagara Catholic District School Board. Additionally, each teacher had two classes observed, which means that school-specific trends aren't as accounted for as school board-wide/regional trends (although at least they can be compared to one another). There are

also two publicly funded high school boards in the Niagara Region (NCDSB and the District School Board of Niagara), as well as a private school, and this data doesn't account for trends that may differ or be similar to the other high schools in the region within the public or private system.

Additionally, out of the classes which were observed, three included some form of grade nine instrumental music classes (one class was grades nine/10, one nine-11, and the other just a grade, whereas three classes can be considered upper-level classes. While this a fairly even split, the fact that two of the three grade nine classes had other grades involved could make it hard to potentially separate trends and challenges in grade nine classes from the other classes. Sizes of the school populations and cities also varied, which may have had some impact on the trends and experiences of students that hasn't been explicitly disseminated in this data. This research is also qualitative, and so while some general trends in classroom sizes may have been gathered through the semi-structured interviews, trends in enrolment haven't been explicitly tracked for this schoolboard to know the exact decrease in enrolment between grade nine and upper-level instrumental music courses. This study matches its purpose to gather insight into the field, but due to the smaller numbers of participants than could be gathered in a larger-scale quantitative study, more research is needed to generalize trends revealed in the data to the experiences across high school instrumental music education classrooms in Ontario (Adams, 2015).

As discussed above, it would be incorrect to assume that everything interpreted as engagement vs. disengagement in this study is 100% accurate, as students were not each individually interviewed to confirm their actions after each observation. The student voice in this data is limited to what was observed and interpreted in the classrooms, combined with what

teachers shared on behalf of student experiences. As briefly discussed above, this study cannot also fully confirm the difference in students' behaviors when being engaged and interested in the content, versus participating due to obligation or the pressure to follow classroom social norms.

One other limitation is the scope of the classroom-and teacher-experience that I was able to condense into this research. An area of interest for continuing analysis was indicated to me in this work, despite the potential saturation of this type of exploration in the research field in recent years: the effects of COVID-19 on music education. One conversation in particular- wherein participant Gigi alluded to the fact that the pandemic has had lasting effects on the budgets of schools, their band and instrumental populations, and the potential damaging social effects on students, this was grouped to me as a type of difficulty that seemed to go beyond the main scope of this study.

Possibilities for Future Research Expansion

While this initial study's focus was identifying potential classroom trends, including behavioral norms, an interesting area for expansion would be to look at how these classroom norms compare with other classrooms, and how many are also impacted by sociocultural norms. One aspect of this study that was not explored in the dissemination process due to the ethical restraints of the study was the potential for the trends in engagement to relate to the specific areas they took place in, and subsequent populations of the towns/cities in which these schools reside in. I was unable to share with readers data about the specific school populations due to protecting the identity of participants and schools and also did not involve any data on population trends throughout Niagara; comparing socio-cultural norms within cities and/or the

Niagara region with norms in the classroom could be a future expansion on the setting of this work.

Additionally, learning more about music students from equity-deserving groups (ie. 2SLGBTQ+ students, BIPOC students, students from lower Socio-Economic Status [SES] backgrounds, etc.) who are involved in music programs could be an interesting way to expand upon this work. When talking about how students were engaged in the classroom, data wasn't collected on the positionalities of the involved and less involved students, which could add an extra layer to what an "engaging classroom" may be (ie. is culturally responsive pedagogy being used?). Additionally, while part of the dissemination came from looking for evidence of encouragement, support, and ways to help students, so they're engaged (ie. ways for them to achieve, making the learning accessible, etc.), no specific focus (or interview question, I may add) was given to focusing on inclusive practices. This is another area that could be explored, perhaps in a music course designed for, or being taken by, students with disabilities. There are certainly many different avenues that a study like this-wherein one is judging the engagement within a music class-could expand to.

Implications and Impacts

To reiterate from above, the main implication to come from this work comes from the takeaway that the data did not reveal one perfect, correct way to engage students. However, this work did show that the shaping of engagement in music education stems from the relationships students have with their teachers, and that in general, encouragement, having a variety of learning activities in the classroom and fostering opportunities for enrichment in music inside

and outside of the classroom were present in all 3 observed schools. This research, if anything, stands as a sign for teachers to continue learning about the specific needs of the students they're teaching-whether that relates to their instrument groups, ages or shared and lived experiences, and to do their best to continue keeping up awareness of student needs in order to foster an engaging, fun and productive learning environment.

In thinking about the impacts of this work, there are a few groups whom I believe could (hopefully) benefit from reading it; in particular: teachers new to the field (music or not), current music teachers–for reassurance, perhaps some laughs of understanding, and to learn about new possible experiences and strategies to use–, and school administrators. One additional insight I gained from this work came from the discussions had with educators on nerves faced by new high schoolers and/or students new to learning in a music classroom. While this isn't targeted to the school board I worked with here, I think it's clear that a lot of challenges students and teachers face are arising from anxiety and fear. The normalization of playing in band/group environments, above all, could help reduce this coming into high school. Had some students had more exposure to group playing and band/instrumental music programs at a young age, perhaps they wouldn't be nervous to 'put themselves out there' and try a new instrument; or better yet, perhaps the students who were too afraid or uncomfortable at the thought of enrolling in music would've done so. While a lot of funding opportunities are out of the hands of administrators, making them aware of steps they could take to support the student music-making experience—such as advocating for more elementary-school music programming—could help make them aware that they have the ability to advocate for it as well.

In conclusion, I hope that this study has provided some insight into both the music educator-and music-student perspectives. Whether one has picked up some strategies on classroom management and engagement, were challenged by a misconception had about music education and practices, or simply learned a thing or two about music teaching, the ultimate hope is that this research was able to educate readers on the lived experiences, challenges, and opportunities for success that high school music teachers and students experience every day. All in all, I strongly believe that this work highlights not only how teachers can support their students through the music-making process, but also how inherently fun and beneficial it already is-and can be-throughout adolescence and beyond.

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IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY WITHIN HIGH-SCHOOL MUSIC EDUCATION

Appendix 1: Letter of Information and Participant Consent Form-Teachers

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

Improving Engagement & Inclusive Pedagogy Within High-School Music Education
Letter of Information and Participant Consent Form-Teachers

Researcher and Supervisor Introductory Information:

	Researcher	Supervisor
Name	Jessica Traynor	Dr. Bronwen Low
Affiliation to McGill	Masters' student, MA in Educational Leadership	Associate Professor, Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE)
Phone Number	289-697-0399	(514)-398-4527 Extension 09613
Email Address	Jessica.traynor@mail.mcgill.ca	Bronwen.low@mcgill.ca

Project Title: Improving Engagement & Inclusive Pedagogy Within High-School Music Education

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to investigate how high-school music teachers can use pedagogical strategies to support increased engagement throughout both grade 9 courses, and upper-year electives. This research aims to highlight methods of engagement in the hopes of supporting higher rates of enrolment throughout high school music programs, particularly in closing the enrolment gap between grade 9 music courses and grade 10 and up.

Study Procedures: For this study, your selected music class(/es) will be observed during one (75-minute) classroom period during fall 2023. The researcher will passively observe your class and will take electronic field notes, which will safely and securely be stored in the password-protected McGill OneDrive. Within one week after each observation, you will then participate in a 60-minute interview, where you will be asked to reflect upon strategies for classroom engagement, particularly relevant strategies to the school community (which could also be connected to the student population within the Niagara region), and potential strategies you use to reduce/eliminate potential barriers to music education access. The interviews will be audio-recorded using a bluetooth microphone and the researcher's laptop so that every detail can be noted, and the interviews will then be transcribed by the researcher to be used within the research dissemination. The transcripts will be de-identified within 3 months of the interview date, and the de-identified data will be securely stored for 7 years after the first publication, as per the McGill Responsible Conduct of Research policy. Interviews may take place in the teacher's office or classroom, or over Microsoft Teams. Your name will be protected with a pseudonym in all public dissemination/sharing of the research data.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary in this study, and you may decline to answer any question/take part in any procedure. You may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, up until the data has been de-identified, 3 months after the date of the final interview of the study. If you choose to

withdraw from the study, all gathered information will be destroyed unless you approve of its use otherwise. Data will be de-identified within three months after data collection is completed. Once de-identified, data can no longer be withdrawn.

Participant Criteria: Participants must be teaching at least one instrumental music class that can be observed by the researcher. Teachers must have at least 5 years' experience (ie. OCT-certified for 5+ years) in order to participate in the study. The teachers must also have not previously taught the researcher or known the researcher while they were a student within the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

Potential Risks: Teacher and/or student participants might feel nervous when being observed, or self-conscious of their playing abilities. Additionally, teachers might feel nervous or self-conscious during the interview process. However, this research is aimed at gathering information from their classroom experiences rather than interrogating or questioning their teaching habits. Teachers will be able to read and approve their edited interviews before they are published, which reduces the risk of further stress or distress at their information being shared publicly. Participation in this study will not impact the participant's employment, and their name will be protected by pseudonyms for any and all forms of data dissemination.

Potential Benefits: Potential benefits for participation include that positive elements of your creativity, professionalism, pedagogical strategies and more could be highlighted in the research under their school affiliation. Additionally, the school board will be associated with the innovative strategies learned and discussed throughout observations and interviews, which can benefit their public image and help support potential bids for program funding opportunities in the future. Sharing this information will also allow your insights to be shared with other educators and be able to help support other music educators in their work through your shared knowledge.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this study will be confidential. All forms of identifiable data will be stored securely within the researcher's password-protected McGill OneDrive, and only the Researcher and Supervisor will have access to this data prior to de-identification. Identifiable data will not be disseminated, and all identifiable data, including audio recordings, will be destroyed within 3 months of the final interview date.

Yes: ___ No: ___You consent to be audio-recorded during interviews.

Dissemination of Results: The results will be shared in a report presented to the Niagara Catholic District School Board, and the results will also be disseminated in an academic publication. Additionally, this data may be presented in the future at the Ontario Music Educator's Conference. The report presented to the NCDSB will also be publicly available for viewing by members of the NCDSB community, including students, parents, and community members.

Questions*:* If you have any questions about the study, please contact the researcher, Jessica Traynor at 289-697-0399 or Jessica.traynor@mail.mcgill.ca .

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-

IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY WITHIN HIGH-SCHOOL MUSIC EDUCATION

398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca citing REB file number 23-04-052.

For written consent

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals, such as a member of the Research Ethics Board, may have access to your (your child's) information. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____

.....Column Break.....Date:

Pseudonym Selection

Please write in the name below that you would like to serve as your pseudonym. This name will be used in lieu of your name in all publicly shared dissemination of the data.

Participant's Pseudonym: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date:

IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY WITHIN HIGH-SCHOOL MUSIC EDUCATION

Appendix 2: Letter of Information and Participant Assent Form-Students Under 18 years

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

Improving Engagement & Inclusive Pedagogy Within High-School Music Education

Letter of Information and Participant Assent Form-Students under 18 years

Researcher and Supervisor Introductory Information:

	Researcher	Supervisor
Name	Jessica Traynor	Dr. Bronwen Low
Affiliation to McGill	Masters' student, MA in Educational Leadership	Associate Professor, Department of Integrated Studies in Education (DISE)
Phone Number	289-697-0399	(514)-398-4527 Extension 09613
Email Address	Jessica.traynor@mail.mcgill.ca	Bronwen.low@mcgill.ca

Project Title: Improving Engagement & Inclusive Pedagogy Within High-School Music Education

Purpose of the Study: Your child is invited to participate in this research study. The purpose of this study is to investigate how high-school music teachers can use pedagogical strategies to support increased engagement throughout both grade 9 courses, and upper-year electives. This research aims to highlight methods of engagement in the hopes of supporting higher rates of enrolment throughout high school music programs, particularly in closing the enrolment gap between grade 9 music courses and grade 10 and up.

Study Procedures: For this study, your child's class will be observed on _____ during period ____. The researcher will be present in the room, and will take notes on their class's activities, participation and strategies used by their teacher for managing and engaging your class. Your child's name or any other identifiable details about them will not be recorded in the observation notes or used in any public sharing of the study, and any incidents involving students will use the phrasing "one student/a group of students" etc. to keep student identity confidential.

Voluntary Participation: Participation is voluntary in this study. Your child's teacher will not know whether or not they have agreed to participate. Whether you and your child agree or not will not affect your child's grade or their participation in the class. You may withdraw your child's agreement at any time before or up until the class observation and none of their actions/aspects of their participation in the class will be recorded in the researcher's observation notes. Once notes are taken they can't be withdrawn because no names are recorded.

Participant Criteria: Participants must be students enrolled in the observed class. All classes studied for this project will be instrumental music classes.

Potential Risks: Teacher and/or student participants might feel nervous when being observed, or self-

conscious of their playing abilities. However, there are no additional risks to participation in this study.

Potential Benefits: There are no direct benefits to students for participating in this study. The positive elements of their teacher's work will be shared and used to help others. Results of this study will be included in reports of teachers. to support music teachers who want to learn more about how to engage and support their music students.

Confidentiality: Your child's participation in this study will be confidential. Only general observations are being made and no identifiable information about any student is being recorded. All data from these field notes will be stored in the researcher's password-protected McGill OneDrive account, and only the Researcher and Supervisor will have access to the data.

Dissemination of Results: The results will be shared in a report presented to the Niagara Catholic District School Board, and the results will also be disseminated in an academic publication. Additionally, this data may be presented in the future at the Ontario Music Educator's Conference. The report presented to the NCDSB will also be publicly available for viewing by members of the NCDSB community, including students, parents, and community members.

Questions*:* If you have any questions about the study, please contact the researcher, Jessica Traynor at 289-697-0399 or Jessica.traynor@mail.mcgill.ca .

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the Associate Director, Research Ethics at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca citing REB file number 23-04-052.

For written consent/student assent

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. To ensure the study is being conducted properly, authorized individuals, such as a member of the Research Ethics Board, may have access to your (your child's) information. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name: (please print)

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian's Name : (please print)_____

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Parent/Guardian's Signature:

Date:

IMPROVING ENGAGEMENT & INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGY WITHIN HIGH-SCHOOL MUSIC EDUCATION

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. During this interview, I will be asking you 11 questions pertaining to some activities and strategies you use related to your class, as well as questions about the school's extracurriculars and trends in student challenges. This interview is being audio-recorded, but after being transcribed the audio files will be destroyed and the transcript will be stored securely with all other data pertaining to this research. Know that this interview is voluntary, and you can take breaks or refrain from answering any questions. You are also able to end the interview at any time. Do you have any other questions before we start?

1) Describe your warm-up activities when you begin teaching a music class.

2) Describe the activities you did in class today (or while I was observing).

3) What musical activities do your students enjoy?

4) Why do you think they enjoy the activities you just mentioned?

5) What activities do your students struggle with?

6) What is the hardest part about teaching students of this grade level?

7) What engagement strategies do you use?

8) When do students disengage?

9) What are your learning outcomes for this class?

10) Are there opportunities at your school for students to engage in extracurricular music activities?

11) Is there anything more you want us to know about your work or experiences?