**SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS IN THE SCHOOLS – YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW (SEPPS):**

**A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE TIED TO DEMOGRAPHICS, STAYERS, MOVERS, AND LEAVERS**

Demographics Characteristics and Career Paths for Music Teachers:

*A Review of Literature*

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Introduction

There is optimism about the future. Scholars from a variety of disciplines are conducting more research than ever on teacher education... We must continue to openly discuss and debate the role of teacher education in a democratic society such as the United States (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, pp. 756-757).

This manuscript examines the scholarly literature to shed insight into the demographics characteristics and career paths taken by music teachers.

In 2005, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner edited the seminal book, Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education, which examined characteristics of our nation’s teachers, where they teach, and the influence of demographic variables. Gaining an understanding of how these and other factors relate to the progression of teachers’ career paths is critical, as Cochran-Smith and Zeichner report an average teacher turnover rate of 30 percent, with 6 percent never returning to the profession.

With the dean and associate dean professing interest in determining the influence of school of education alumni in the schools and on student learning, the Neag School of Education (herein, Neag School) at the University of Connecticut introduced an initiative -- A Spotlight on Education Professionals in the Public Schools - Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (SEPPS). This initiative includes a review of literature (including information from professional organizations, NCES, AACTE, state departments, journals, etc.) of the demographic characteristics and career paths that are representative of educators from each field. This review would provide information such as background characteristics (including gender, race/ethnicity, age, type of employment), factors prevalent among stayers, movers, and leavers, and projections of future trends in the
field. While Cochran-Smith and Zeichner’s (2005) piece is now considered seminal, in many ways the information in this manuscript and accompanying documents updates the information from that 2005 book, and further elucidates field-specific teacher data (e.g., elementary, bilingual, world language, and music education). It also includes information about educators who are not teachers – including school counselors, school psychologists, and principals. Also, throughout this manuscript, we borrow from the writing of Billingsley (1993) in the area of special education to apply to the terms used across educators in all fields. As recommended by Billingsley (1993) and now illustrated in figure 1, “stayers” (retainees) is the label given to those who remain in the same position in the same school between school years; “movers” (transfers) refers to those teachers who stayed in a position but transferred to another school (in the same or a different school district), or who transferred to another type of teaching position; and “leavers” includes those who left the profession, for reasons such as retirement, finding another job in a different field, returning to school, or taking a job other than teaching at the school (e.g., school administration).

Figure 1: Educators’ career path as stayers, movers, and leavers.
Music Teachers

Music education is a field typically populated by people who were exposed to and grew up performing, listening to, and creating music during their formative years. A love of music and a desire to share this with others is largely influential in a person’s decision to pursue a career in music education (Jones & Parkes, 2010). Recently, there has been a downward shift in the percentage of music educators who stay in their current position, compared to data garnered in 2000-2001 (Russell, 2012). Proposed changes to the National Standards for Music Educators are underway (National Association for Music Education, 2013), which may influence the content and skills taught in preparation programs, as well as evaluative systems currently in place.

A considerable body of research has grown over the past 10 years, evidencing the benefits of music education on student learning. The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) was created in 1995 by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U. S. Department of Education in 1995 (AEP, 2008). Recently, the AEP conducted an extensive review of evidence-based literature and concluded that “music education equips students with the foundational abilities to learn, to achieve in other core academic subjects, and to develop the capacities, skills and knowledge essential for lifelong success” (AEP, 2008). Research findings highlight that positive relationships exist between music and spatial skills (Rauscher & Zupan, 2000; Spelke, 2008), verbal skills (Forgeard, Winner, Norton, & Gottfried, 2008), mathematic skills (Helmrich, 2010; Spelke, 2008), memory (Roden, Kreutz, & Bongard, 2012), general intelligence (Hyde et al., 2009; Johnides, 2008; Neville et al., 2008), and school performance (Wetter, Koerner, & Schwaninger, 2009).

Music education’s entrance into the public school curricula dates back to the early 19th century with the influence of Lowell Mason on the Boston Public Schools. Mason stressed the
importance of music on cultural development, as well on the cognitive and expressive growth of individuals (Neelly & Yakimowski, 2013). Music education has remained relatively unchanged since 1838, yet transformative efforts initiated at the turn of the 21st century continue to evolve, including an emphasis on problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and imagining (Neelly & Yakimowski, 2013).

Music education has been included as a core academic subject since the passing of No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 (Rupert, 2006). With its notable benefits on student achievement, the majority of states have adopted requirements for instruction in music universally for all students. Specifically, the AEP reported in 2012 that 49 states have adopted standards for elementary and/or secondary arts instruction, 45 states require arts education at the elementary level, 41 states required at the middle level, 45 states require the arts or offer arts alternatives for high school graduation, and 31 states have identified the arts as a core academic subject (AEP, 2012).

Music education is also lauded for its contributions to student college readiness (Rupert, 2006; Rupert, 2009). Several reports have evidenced higher math and verbal scores on the SAT (The College Board, 2012; Rupert, 2006; Rupert, 2009; Vaughn & Winner, 2000). In particular, students who took four years of arts related coursework in high school scored significantly higher in reading, math, and writing, with scores over one hundred points higher in each area than students who took only one year of arts related instruction in high school (The College Board, 2012).

The adoption of arts education by states provides students access to music education; however, equity and the quality of instruction have been scrutinized. Students in lower socio-economic community areas are least likely to receive music education at the same hourly
instructional rates or with the same variety of course offerings as their peers in higher socio-economic communities (Abril & Gault, 2008; National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). This inequity is largely a function of a strained economy, as local boards of education are faced with burgeoning needs and tightened budgets. Districts may retain music education; however, the number of contact hours students have in music, and the availability of an array of music courses, have diminished as positions are cut (Abril & Gault, 2008).

Advocacy for music education programming is necessary. To best advocate for its strengths and benefits, it is necessary for educators in the field to join the movement toward accountability (Shorner-Johnson, 2013). The ability to show evidence related to how music education makes a difference in student outcomes is pivotal. Shorner-Johnson (2013) highlights the imperative for music education advocacy efforts, including the need for a defined vision of student knowledge and skill acquisition to be obtained, as well as outcomes that evidence music education’s effectiveness.

Issues explored in this document highlight the condition of music education today. Included will be the characteristics of music educators, shortages of music educators, as well as discussion of retention, migration, and attrition rates of music education teachers.

**Characteristics of Music Educators**

High school graduates who choose to pursue a career in music education are predictably those who studied music throughout their elementary and secondary school years. Exposure to music in the classroom, through private instruction, and through a variety of music elective experiences provides the motivation for prospective music educators to share their passion with young people. Jones and Parkes (2010) draw attention to several previous studies which suggest
rationale for why students choose to pursue a career in music education. Motivational factors include:

- love teaching and/or sharing music;
- they love music, including music making, performing, listening, and creating;
- they want to make a difference in the lives of their future students and, often, they want to be a role model;
- and/or there has been an influential person, usually a music teacher, who has helped them decide to pursue a career in music education. (p.42).

The study on motivation for prospective music educators completed by Jones and Parkes in 2010 supported earlier studies suggesting that teaching music becomes a part of their identity, separate from their music performance identity (Jones & Parkes, 2010).

A study comparing the attributes of K-12 music teachers to other teachers was conducted by Gardner in 2010 using a nationally representative sample. The sample included 47,857 K–12 teachers in the United States, of which 1,903 identified themselves as music teachers (Gardner, 2010). Results showed higher representation of males in music education (39% males in music, compared to 24% males in other teaching fields) and less diversity in race/ethnicity (89.6% white music teachers, vs. 84.9% white in other teaching fields), with lower percentages of all minority groups represented (Gardner, 2010). Additionally, the results indicated that music teachers participating in the study were less likely to be employed full-time (62.9%) in comparison to teachers of other disciplines (93.5%) (Gardner, 2010). Regarding location or setting, Gardner reports,

> Music teachers were more likely to work in suburban schools (44.5%) than were other teachers (42.0%), and music teachers were less likely to work in urban schools (24.9%) than were other teachers (29.7%). In addition, music teachers generally worked in schools with lower percentages of minority students (pp. 115-116).

As stated previously, students from lower socio-economic communities receive music instruction at differing rates and with fewer options to choose from than their peers in higher socio-
economic communities. It follows that with reduced access to equitable instruction, less advantaged students have fewer interactions with music educator role models. Research suggests having had an influential person teaching them early on has much to do with motivating students to become a music teacher (Jones & Parkes, 2010). This inequity across economically different communities becomes a concern for diverse representation among music educators.

**Shortages of Music Educators**

Data revealing the number of music educators currently teaching in the U.S. is slated to be released by the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) in July, 2013. Music has not been identified by the Department of Education as a nationwide Teacher Shortage Area for the 2013-2014 school year; however, individual states do report shortages of music educators (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Instrumental, vocal, and general music are shortage areas for 2013 in approximately 20 percent of states and territories, including, Alabama, Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). This represents a significant decrease from the 2008 report, which stated 24 states (nearly 50%) declared teacher shortages in the area of music (Hancock, 2009). At the time of that report, the Office of Postsecondary Education requested funding to increase the number of students matriculating into teacher preparation programs (Hancock, 2009). Shortages of music educators are less of a widespread problem, yet shortages still persist in some states across the country.
Retention of Music Educators

Several researchers highlight the critical nature of retaining teachers from year to year, including the effects on program stability, student achievement, and quality of teachers (as cited in Hancock, 2009). Music teachers who indicate their intention to stay in their current position have been studied recent in recent years (Baker, 2007; Gardner, 2010; Hancock, 2009; Russell, 2012). When asked about their projected career plans, the majority (72.2%) of secondary music teachers participating in the Russell (2012) study responded they planned to stay in their current position within one year, while less than half (45.7%) planned on staying in their position in five years. The results from this study are in contrast to those based on 2000-2001 data from the NCES, reported by Hancock (2009) as 90.2 percent predicted they would stay in the same school the following year.

Job satisfaction in music education has been associated with a perception of high level support from administrators (Baker, 2007; Gardner, 2010), and this is supported in literature on teachers of other disciplines as well (Ingersoll, 2001). Gardner reports that music teachers are especially sensitive to a lack of administrative support. This sensitivity is connected to a concern that many music courses are electives rather than requirements, therefore music educator positions are viewed as nonessential (Gardner, 2010). In addition to administrator support, other factors influencing retention rates of music teachers include parent and community support, and salary (Baker, 2007). Examples of parent support, as defined by study participants, include chaperoning trips, attending concerts, promoting publicity, decorating for concerts, providing food for students, helping with uniforms, and supporting in fundraising activities (Baker, 2007). Community support was identified as attending music concerts (Baker, 2007). Research supports that music educators who teach full-time are generally more content with their job and predict
they will remain in their current position within the next one to five years (Gardner, 2010; Russell, 2012).

**Migration Rates of Music Educators**

Important data to consider concerns the migration of music teachers, or the move from one school to another. This distinction from those who leave the field altogether (due to retirement, health, continued education, or other careers) is necessary to gain a more clear understanding of the contributing differences. The NCES created the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASSS) and the Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) to gain more accurate information on national teacher estimates (Hancock, 2009).

Hancock (2009) analyzed NCES data from the 2000-2001 TFS in his study on the migration of music teachers compared to non-music teachers. The data reviewed was coded into four migration pattern categories, 1) same school, 2) different school/same district, 3) different district/same state, and 4) different state. Based on this data, results evidenced that those who moved from their current music position were generally similar to results for other teaching professionals. Specifically, “5.8 percent [music educators] moved to schools in a different school district within the same state, whereas 3.3 percent [music educators] moved to schools in the same district” (p. 100). The report suggests likely reasoning for why music teachers who moved from their current school stayed within district or within state, including inherent challenges associated with relocating to a different state (e.g., certification, costs), identity developed with state music associations, as well as personal relationships that exist for the teacher within the state (Hancock, 2009).

Music educators who indicated their intention to move to a different teaching environment or location in the most recent study available (Russell, 2012), reported the greatest
amount of dissatisfaction in their current school. Additionally, they reported being responsible for teaching more minority students and students with special needs than their peers who intended to remain in their current position or leave the profession altogether (Russell, 2012). Research conducted more than ten years ago on the turnover of all teachers in general portrays findings that are not so dissimilar today, including administrative support, student discipline problems, limited input in school decision-making, and low salaries (Ingersoll, 2001). NCES data from 2000-2001 analyzed by Hancock (2009) highlights that twice the number of music teachers moved to a different district altogether, over those who stayed in their current school district.

**Attrition Rates of Music Educators**

Music teachers who leave the profession altogether do so for a variety of reasons (e.g., retirement, health concerns, continuing education, and different career). In review of a recent study, Russell reports an attrition rate of 18.6 percent within one year of the survey and 39.4 percent within five years (2012). The majority of respondents intending to leave the profession in both one and five years are for retirement reasons, 7.5 and 20.3 percent respectively. Leaving music education for pursuit of continued education or school administration is cited as the next highest percentages, at a rate of 2.9 percent for one year projected leavers and 7.6 percent for leavers in five years (Russell, 2012). Russell notes those leaving music education for administration as a positive in the pursuit of better retention rates because former teachers are likely to promote administrative support for teachers in the arts. Compared with non-music teachers, research supports that music educators are more likely to leave teaching for continued education pursuits and then return to music teaching (Hancock, 2009). Such literature suggests
attrition rates are less likely due to organizational concerns and more likely motivated by personal and professional issues.

Regarding attrition rates, it is important for districts to conduct exit interviews with teachers when they move or leave the profession. Gaining a clear understanding of the rationale for mobility will aid administrators as they seek to improve retention of a valuable workforce. It is argued that attrition and migration rates of music teachers need to be continually reviewed by teacher preparation programs as well (Madsen & Hancock, 2002).

Responses to Attract and Retain Music Teachers

Initiatives to attract and retain teachers are being implemented by states and local districts. The reduction of teacher shortage areas from 1999-2000 compared to 2013-2014 reported by the U. S. Department of Education would suggest attraction and retention initiatives are having a positive impact. Connecticut, for example, has recommended attraction and retention efforts such as minority teacher incentive grants, school to career initiatives which emphasize teaching, and expanding the alternate route to certification (CTDE, 2002). Research is needed to discover the impact of these initiatives to attract and retain teachers in the state. Based upon recent results regarding minority representation among Connecticut music teachers little to no change has been observed.

It is suggested by Hancock (2009) that while many states and local districts encourage retention through a variety of financially beneficial incentives for classroom teachers, “similar efforts for music teachers are rarely available” (p.102). It is important to explore the connection between financially driven incentives and the observable factor of higher rates of part-time employment for music teachers compared to non-music teachers. It is plausible that because the majority of music teachers are employed in their districts part-time, or split between multiple
schools, district administrators are not providing the financial incentives to stay. Given the extensive literature base supporting the benefits of music education on student achievement, and the adoption of music as a core academic subject through NCLB, consideration is needed to promote greater full-time instruction across settings and locations.

**Summary of Yesterday and Today Music Teacher Characteristics and Tomorrow’s Potential Issues to Address**

Music education has been an important component of comprehensive public school curricula since the early 19th century. Individuals who choose to pursue a career path in music education are those whose lives were enriched by music through direct instruction. In addition to state and local efforts to attract and retain music teachers, it is essential that recruitment of a more diverse representation of teachers is focused on students in elementary and middle school. Early exploration is necessary to career development, and perhaps critical to advances in the field of music education.
References


