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AN EXPLORATION OF HOW SCHOOL LEADERS MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT MUSIC PROGRAMS IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

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AN EXPLORATION OF HOW SCHOOL LEADERS MAKE DECISIONS
ABOUT MUSIC PROGRAMS IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATION OF HOW SCHOOL LEADERS MAKE DECISIONS

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This study was designed to investigate the decision-making processes involved with deciding the funding and framing of music programs in three suburban school districts in the New York metropolitan area. School leaders were interviewed to understand the factors associated with the decision-making process. The findings helped to understand educational leaders' perceptions, how programs changed over time, and the different actions that were taken.

Key educators and school leaders from three school districts in the suburban New York Metropolitan area were interviewed. The participants from each school district included a district school leader, a building school leader, a school finance leader, a lead music educator, and a music teacher.

The study used a qualitative case study design to examine the decision-making processes of school leaders regarding general and instrumental music programs. The study was bounded by place and time as only public-school suburban districts in the New York Metropolitan area were part of the research during the 2020-2021 school year. The research was conducted using data collected through different data sources such as individual interviews, academic achievement data, school music curricula, and district budget.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this accomplishment to those closest to me who have provided continuous support, encouragement, and love throughout this arduous journey. I have not made this journey alone. This document serves as a culmination of my previous academic and professional achievements.

I would not be the person I am today without recognizing where I came from and the people who paved the way. My late grandmother, Abuelita, who was the leader of the family, set the foundation for our family growth and success. I hope this accomplishment makes you proud. To my mother who worked tirelessly, who raised me to be the man I am today, and who has sacrificed more than anyone will ever know. To my late father, who taught me the value of respect, family, and most importantly, education, your last wish was for me to finish my doctoral journey. I hope you are now looking down, feeling proud.

To my beautiful wife, whom I love more than words can ever express. You are the love of my life. You have stood by me through all my successes, struggles, complaints, and moments of distress. Thank you for your enduring patience with my efforts. I love you and appreciate your constant reassurance of my abilities throughout this process. I am truly blessed to have you in my life.

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Thank you, Dr. Anthony Annunziato and Dr. Richard Bernato, who has also been instrumental in shaping the strength of my dissertation. Thank you for all your valuable feedback and time provided to accommodate my process. Your efforts are genuinely appreciated. I am also grateful to all the teachers and administrators who participated in this study. They passionately shared their experiences, thoughts, and opinions to paint a comprehensive picture of decision-making in music education.

I would like to thank all the teachers and administrators in the district I work in for your support and encouragement throughout the process. You all exemplify being colleagues and make me proud in being a part of it.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, music education became more integrated into schools going beyond its initial goal of simply helping society to learn how to sing folk tunes and hymns (Backes, et al., 2018; Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2018). By the 1990s, varied standards were set regarding music education, which encouraged innovation in the field of education (Fung, 2017). Research shows that music education is important to academic development because students' participation in music education help improve students' academics; they score higher on standardized tests and exhibit better school performance (Holochwost, et al., 2017). In addition to academics, music education provides students with multicultural learning experiences, helping to define heritages and cultures across the globe (Walter, 2017). According to Eerola & Eerola (2014), music education creates social benefits in the educational environment, and efficient music programs contribute to enhancing the Quality of School Life (QSL). National Association for Music Education (2020) finds that music has several advantages in schools. Research shows that learning music helps students' reasoning and language proficiency, instills mastery in memorization, improves their work, and increases coordination (Miendlarzewska & Trost, 2014). Also, students develop a 'sense of achievement' that supports increased involvement in school activities and achieving social success. Furthermore, emotional development, learning pattern recognition, better scores, enhanced auditory skills, intellectual curiosity, discipline, and relaxation is achieved by students who participate in music education (Higdon, 2017). This is important for schools because music constructs students' imagination, prepares them for creative economies, develops creative thinking

and spatial intelligence, along with enabling children to be responsible for taking risks, learning teamwork, and self-confidence (NAfME, 2014).

With the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Race to the Top, and Common Core, however, there has been a greater focus on outcomes. Today's 21st-century primary education is characterized by an increase in accountability measures that focus on student performances on standardized tests (Craft, Cremin, Hay, & Clark, 2014). These changes, in some cases, pressure school leaders and educators to alter the content and develop a policy that directly relates to what subjects are being evaluated (Backes, et al., 2018). The impact left a lasting impression on the state of music education and raises questions about how school leaders make appropriate decisions on music education. Unfortunately, the focus on outcomes has resulted in districts cutting music education programs. In turn, the key learning experiences, skills development, and social-expressive skills part of a well-rounded education that includes music has to offer are being lost (Cook & Lineberry, 2016).

This study will analyze how school administrators make organizational decisions about music education in the school setting. The focus will be on general and instrumental music programs and their impact on students' academic or school performance. By deep-diving into the selection process—which programs are chosen, how, and why—this research will discover how school leaders and administrators make decisions about music programs.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to determine how school administrators make decisions regarding general and instrumental music programs, identify these determining factors, and analyze how they impact both the students and the schools. Schools are often found to cut teachers and reduce budgets as well. Research shows that schools reduced the total minutes and enrollment dedicated to music education classes (Major, 2013). At the same time, national and statewide initiatives focus on improving academic achievement with new programs (Jankowski, Timmer, Kinzie, & Kuh, 2018). There is a wide range of literature, which highlights the importance of music education for enhancing academic achievements, such as the report presented by the National Association for Music Education (2020). Participation in music ensembles such as band or chorus has been a key element in elevating student academic scores (Southgate & Roscigno, 2009). Despite music education having known benefits, school administrators run into challenges and difficult decision-making from policymakers seeking an assessment-based landscape. While deploying new programs, several schools must make difficult budgetary decisions, which can result in bigger curricular changes (Hedgecoth & Major, 2018). Beveridge (2010) argued that education policies like NCLB lead to cuts in music programs in schools that failed to meet adequate yearly progress requirements, and these outcomes might be avoided with grant funding. Although grant funding may be helpful in some cases, they do not address the ultimate cause of cuts, which is that music programs are not a priority in some schools (Kos, 2007). Despite music's dynamic impact on enhancing academic achievement and essential for a well-rounded education, not all students are given the opportunity to participate. The 2012 US Department of Education

report declares the importance of music and its impact on education. However, there were huge differences in the availability of music programs, resources for music education, and time allocated to teachers for music education (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). How do school administrators make decisions on school music programs? What are the determining factors for deciding about music programs?

The present quality and quantity of musical arts education, in correlation with district size and academic achievement within suburban schools in the Metropolitan New York area, is unknown. Without enough data about these practices, it will be difficult to make rational, effective decisions that positively impact student populations through music education. This study thus addresses a gap in knowledge related to the landscape of developmentally appropriate practice of music education in a suburban area in the northeast of the United States.

Theoretical / Conceptual Framework.

In this study, two frameworks are employed Argyris and Senge's (1994) Ladder of Inference and Bolman and Deal's (2017) Four Frames. The first section focuses on the theories of Argyris and Senge. Effective use of understanding the decision process, according to Argyris (1990) and Senge (1994), is the "Ladder of Inference" because of its system of gathering information, making assumptions, and deciding actions. Initially developed by Chris Argyris and used by Pete Senge, the Ladder of Inference attempts to explain how, when faced with a "situation," and how we tend to behave or "jump to conclusions" (Larcher, 2007). The Ladder of Inference Model serves as a guiding tool to help recognize the kinds of inferences school leaders are making, the assumptions

implicit in these inferences, the decisions they ultimately make, and the effects that are acting on these inferences have in the school setting. The issue of understanding the decision process regarding policy implementation of music education requires appropriate and timely action. School leaders often make inferences that steer their decisions based on how they observe, their tendencies, and their belief systems (Ayers, 2002). School leaders and administrators must adjust their tendencies and objectives to meet current school policy requirements.

The second section focuses on the theories of Bolman and Deal. Bolman and Deal's (2017) Four Frame Model views the decision-making process through lenses to determine the influences and changes caused by bureaucratic-structural, human resources, political, and cultural symbolic factors. Bolman and Deal's theories provide a lens to understand the decision-making process and how these decisions impact music programming in schools.

Researching the practice and policy of other music educators helps to bring unique connections and interpretations into the learning process. This will help improve the logic and interpretation of the research to develop a point of view from school leaders and administrators that allows for creative and breakthrough ways of improving music education.

Significance/Importance of the Study

With the various policy reforms, it is important to understand the role that music education plays in school and how it can not only benefit individuals but also schools. School leaders need to examine all interrelationships between music education and

Federal and State educational goals to provide the best form of education (Randles, 2014). Despite music education's positive role in schools, Eisner (2002) noted that many people do not see music as an area of importance. This also includes high school graduation requirements, where the Education Commission for the States (2019) reported that students only need less than one credit in music for graduation.

Research shows that changing policies that focus on standardized testing makes funding tighter and, as a result, has adversely affected music education in many school districts of the United States (Major, 2013). According to (Kos, 2018) this is a common problem for non-tested subjects, and its solutions need research to explore ways to improve the state of music education. Music educators adjusted their programs from a primary source of learning to one that is integrated into the core curriculum to assist with academic content (Kaschub & Smith, 2014). Americans for the Arts (2013), the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts and arts education, pushed to change this practice.

With the changes in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), music (instrumental and general) for the first time is recognized as a core class with the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and since that time, 48 states have adopted content area standards. The U.S. Department of Education has made amendments to its projects to incorporate the content area of fine arts for an emphasis on improving student achievement. Colegrove (2017) cited the U.S. Department of Education and National Science Foundation's funding of modifications to add fine arts to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), changing it to STEAM (Science, Technology,

Engineering, Arts, Math) to compete with other countries academically. The modifications to STEM's main objective were to change the overall skillset of students, "improving the competitiveness of American students on the global stage" (Colegrove, 2017, p. 6). School leaders must make important music education decisions to meet the demands of test subject areas while still being committed to offering a well-rounded education and that music education played a large part in that education. This research will discover how school leaders and administrators ultimately make these decisions about music programs by considering their values and philosophies of music education, the purposes of keeping music education in the curriculum, and how music education contributes to the overall image of the school.

Research Questions

The goal of this qualitative study is to develop an understanding of how school administrators make decisions on general and instrumental music programs in their district. The study aims to provide information on factors that influence such decisions and the potential implications of these actions on both students and the schools. To achieve this objective, the researcher interviewed school administrators such as district leaders, building leaders, finance leaders, district music directors, coordinators, and individuals in a leadership capacity, and music teachers. School leaders and administrators who are from the New York Metropolitan area defined as Nassau, Suffolk, and Westchester Counties will answer interview questions. This group of respondents from 3 different districts provided contrasting perspectives such as regional, socio-economic, and musical achievement that will provide insight into the decision process.

Each participant is, in some way, connected to music-centered decisions and suburban districts in the New York metropolitan area.

The following research questions are addressed:

1. How do school leaders perceive music education in a suburban region?

2. How do educational leaders describe their decision-making process regarding their approach to music education?

3. What is the impact of the decision-making process on music education programs?

Definition of Terms

Academic Programs. Academic programs are a set of courses that need to be completed by students for acquiring a certificate or degree in their academics (Temple University, 2020).

Instrumental Music. Instrumental music is a type of music genre, which is produced by using one or more musical instruments (STANDS4 LLC., 2020).

General Music Education. Music refers to an art-form or cultural activity through which melodious sounds are organized in a timely manner. Hence, general music is a form wherein elements such as rhythm, sonic qualities, pitch, dynamics, and texture are integrated to produce melody (STANDS4 LLC., 2020). Thus, general music education is a course that can be undertaken by all the students and does not require any background knowledge of music performance. This indicates that students, to attend these courses, do not need to go through an audition. Particularly in the US, general music is found to be the most autonomous part of music education (Abril & Gault, 2016).

Educational Leader. Educational leaders are those who are responsible for developing along with guiding the understanding of the families and educators about the education practice, continuum, and pedagogy along with their importance in the life of children (ACECQA, 2020).

School Administration. School administration is a term that is used for a team that operates an academic institution. The operations may range from managing to developing preschool or doctorate programs (Top Education Degrees, 2017). It comprises a team of professionals, which generally involves the management personnel related to the school's operations and is responsible not only for managing the budget but also for creating a safer learning environment (Learn.org, 2020).

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

Theorists such as Bolman, Deal, Argyris, and Senge explore how leaders make decisions to understand and evaluate leadership decisions. Argyris and Senge's (1994) theorized Ladder of Inference to better understand the thinking and reasoning process of leaders. Bolman and Deal (2017) theorized Four Frames for filtering and making sense of the decisions process leaders take.

To have an effective understanding of the decision process, according to Argyris (1990) and Senge (1994), is to follow the "Ladder of Inference" because of its system of gathering information, making assumptions, and deciding actions. Leaders can make different decisions based on their interpretation of the situation. Argyris (1990) considers assumptions can obscure or twist the truth. Effective decision-making needs to be based on sound judgments and facts. Initially developed by Chris Argyris and used by Pete Senge, the Ladder of Inference attempts to explain how, when faced with a "situation," and how we tend to behave or "jump to conclusions" (Larcher, 2007). The Ladder of Inference model can be used to help recognize the kinds of inferences school leaders are making, the assumptions implicit in these inferences, the decisions they ultimately make, and the effects that are acting on these inferences have in the school setting. Hence, this model is an important tool, which availed a specific framework for structuring proper communication along with connecting people (The Human Factor, 2016). This model has been better illustrated in figure 1 below:

Figure 1

The Ladder of Inference Model
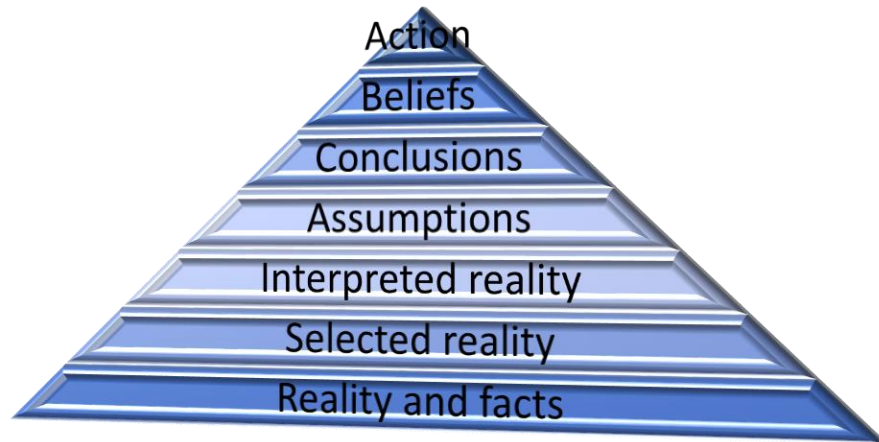
Adapted from Argyris, C. 'Overcoming Organizational Defenses: Facilitating Organizational Learning,' 1st Edition, 1990.

This model can act as a guiding tool assisting educations in making decisions regarding the allotment of finite resources. The issue of understanding the decision process regarding the policy implementation of music education requires appropriate and timely action. School leaders often make inferences that steer their decisions based on how they observe, their tendencies, and their belief systems (Ayers, 2002). The National School Climate Council challenges schools to narrow the gap between school climate with research into policy, practice, and professional development options (Goleman & Senge, 2014). School leaders and administrators must adjust their tendencies and objectives to meet current school policy requirements. Understanding this thought process from school leaders and administration helps this study because these decisions

impact music programs as it relates to the national challenge of addressing current school policies.

According to (Barker, 2006) the first rung (i.e., the reality and facts) involves the process of observation, wherein the decision-makers need to select the data available. Concerning the issue, educational leaders must further search for evidence and select the required data for implementing music education policy. One must first collect all the facts, as well as realities, and then select the most appropriate one to be focused on. This process involves engaging as many members of the school community, including teachers, students, parents, administrators, as active participants and agents for successful school climate improvement implementation. The knowledge acquired needs to be systematic and an exploration of all sorts to find the changes needed (Senge, 2020). Only then are conclusions drawn, and accordingly, one's beliefs are developed. This is the stage wherein the decision-makers can choose the fact that is important to consider the provided situation or issue of concern (Barker, 2006). Only after this stage, the right actions can be undertaken.

Subsequently, the second rung is the stage in which the decision-makers need to infer the meaning from the facts along with personal and cultural experiences. Following this stage is the 3rd rung, in which the inferred meanings are generalized into assumptions. In this stage, the decision-makers or the educational leaders must make certain assumptions regarding the concerned issue based on the derived meanings in the previous stage. Policies and practices are interwoven, and the exploration of changes, individually, collectively, and institutionally is needed to make the acquired knowledge

useful in practice (Senge, 2020). Henceforth, the fourth rung is that of the conclusions and beliefs. Herein, the educational leaders must draw an appropriate inference on how the policies can be implemented efficiently with the help of effective programs and whether any improvements are necessary for the existing policies/programs. In this rung, the beliefs or mental models are developed based on the assumptions. At this stage, the leaders must draw conclusions based on the recently formulated assumptions and only then revise their beliefs about the subject matter.

In the final phase of the conclusion, one needs to act according to the developed beliefs, i.e., the action phase. This is the stage, wherein the decision-makers, especially the educational leaders, need to take appropriate actions, thereby forming a new set of beliefs and assumptions relating to the policy implementation of music education. However, it is essential to travel up and down this ladder as and when required so that appropriate decisions related to both instrumental along with general programs can be undertaken specifically in alignment with the policies (The Human Factor, 2016). Hence, through this model, the leaders can slow down their thinking process and thereby become more aware. This provides a scope for the leaders to share their beliefs with others and gather a better understanding of making the most feasible decisions (Barker, 2006). School leaders can be guided so that their decisions can be rightfully made and thereby draw valid conclusions along with developing personal beliefs. Examining long-term impacts, school networks, capacity, and school agenda helps to identify supportive and quality practices (Goleman & Senge, 2014). The main reason for considering this model for the present study is that the decision-makers can have alternative conclusions. This

can help leaders act more effectively while implementing music education policies and programs.

According to Bolman and Deal, the ongoing challenge in any organization is to find a system of roles and relationships. All schools are unique complex organizations that, when viewed through Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames, each having unique needs and operational structures. The decision process of district-level music programming has to do with the understanding of administrators' decision-making process and the elements that influence the process that includes or excludes music (Major, 2013). Bolman and Deal's human resource and symbolic frames is appropriate because it is the essence of education. Schools are necessary "people-oriented," and a willingness to work with students at least is a prerequisite for making education a career choice. As schools deal with complex student learning problems, an explicit human resource orientation towards students and staff becomes even more necessary. Also, educational issues have always taken on a larger meaning for educators and the community. Quality of education often symbolizes the community. The politics of education has become even more evident, as the boundaries between the school building and its external environment blur even to the point of disappearing altogether. In terms of political and symbolic issues, education seems to get intertwined. Although the essence of education has never been defined by bureaucracy, regulations, policies, and community needs provide an ever-present backdrop for virtually every educational organization.

School leadership and management decisions often are made through the pragmatic lens of leaders and staff perceptions. Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames provide a framework to which to organize these perceptions within four frames: structural, symbolic, human resources, and political frame. The structural frame encompasses the "rules, roles, policies, technology [and] environment" (p. 16); the symbolic frame encompasses "culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, [and] heroes" (p. 14); the human resource frame covers "needs, skills, [and] environment" (p. 14); and the political frame includes concepts of "power, conflict, competition, [and] organizational politics" (p. 14).

The data acquired will be analyzed using the lens of Bolman and Deal's four frames--the structural, symbolic, political, and human resource frames--to create a paradigm by which to view the perceived impacts of the decision. The four frames provide an organizational tool through which to view the perceived decision process through its system of roles and relationships.

Figure 2

The Four Frames Model
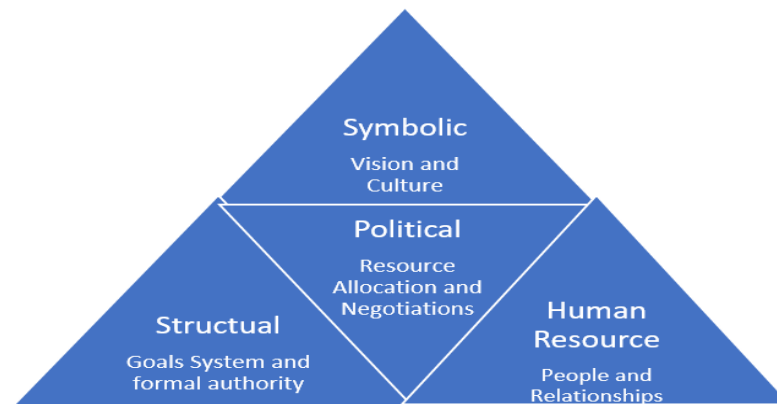
Adapted from Bolman, L.G. and Deal, T.E. "Leadership and Management effectiveness: A Multi-Frame, Multi-Sector Analysis," Human Resource Management 30, no. 4 (Winter 1991) pp. 509-534.

Structural frame: Metaphorically, the frame represents a factory. Structural changes at the top of the organization promoted structural changes throughout the organization. The research will determine how changes being experienced in districts are structured. This also includes the perception of what is impacted or created by new internal organizational structures for each district. This can be a result of new policies, rules, or the implementation of new technologies.

Symbolic frame: Metaphorically, the frame represents a theatre. New cultures emerge when expectations and authority are broadened beyond what had been traditional roles. As new cultures emerged, new areas of influence occurred for each district. This

also includes the perception of how districts value their contributions to the educational system. This can be a result of new visions, new traditions, and school culture.

Political frame: Metaphorically, the frame represents a jungle. When the establishment of new authoritative powers is based on the redefining of the roles of existing actors, there is a perception of an imbalance of power. The perceived accountability shift can create anxiety about who was making decisions and who was accountable to whom. This can be a result of changes to the power base, conflict, or competition within the district, or even outside influences with unique agendas.

Human resource frame: Metaphorically, the frame represents a family. Redefining relationships and allowing for trust to develop over time as an extension of participation in common unifying experiences among administrators, boards, teachers, parents, and support staff is essential to the success of a new paradigm. Closely related to the theme in the political frame, relationship building, founded in trust and shared goals as a new organizational structure. Having shared experiences among stakeholders provides an opportunity for newer and expanding relationships. This can be a result of reaching out to the needs, skills, and relationships within the district.

Isolating which frame or frames, according to Bolman and Deal, do superintendents employ as part of their decision-making process is important to understand the effectiveness of leadership. Frames can outline for the leader what is essential and what can be ignored. Bolman and Deal (2017) identify leaders who have the skill to engage in multi-frame thinking could provide more explicit decision-making that will match viable solutions to problems.

The four frames are guides that can be used during the decision-making process. Reframing with Argyris and Senge's Ladder of Inference allows researchers to gain insights regarding the root causes behind issues and, while moving up the ladder of inference, determine the root of the paths and decisions taken and to determine whether the desired goal was achieved. Mannix, Mondoux, and Story (2019) identified the need for analysis to include multiple viewpoints, such as from school leaders and stakeholders, to achieve a complete picture. School districts are complex entities requiring thoughtful analysis when evaluating, motivating, or initiating change.

Bolman and Deal establish frames on school leaders' influences on their decisions. Frames are mental maps that serve as a global positioning system that leaders carry in their heads to enable them to navigate through the treacherous and often unpredictable waters of change (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Each frame provides one version of organizational life, and each frame also provides a specific range of techniques and processes leaders use to be effective. However, frames tend to be skewed in terms of reality. It is important to also understand and gather information based on these decisions. Using Bolman and Deal's theory with Argyris and Senge's theory will help to gain clarity by creating a roadmap on decisions making process by mapping the decisions and strategies taken from multiple perspectives.

Apart from the school administration, it has also been observed that teachers, especially music teachers, are found to be implementing policies in their classroom practices regularly to identify appropriate ways of teaching their students (Brophy, 2019). Consecutively, there are some teachers who develop varied kinds of policies in their

classrooms to facilitate the classroom or curricula procedures. These advocacy efforts of

the teachers often influence the decision-making process of their school policies as well.

The arguments can be set that music education must not be neglected for better academic

outcomes (Major, 2013). School leaders can be responsible for formulating music

programs that are highly comprehensive and can contribute to the betterment of the entire

school. Hence, this can add value to the community, as well as the educational experience

of students (Kos, 2018). This further indicates that the policymakers in the first place

need to make appropriate decisions regarding music education so that effective practices

can be facilitated by the educational leaders along with the teachers in schools. Therefore,

it can be done by using the 'Ladder of Inference Model.' This theoretical understanding

has been better illustrated through a diagram (figure 2) below.

Figure 3

Developed Conceptual Framework
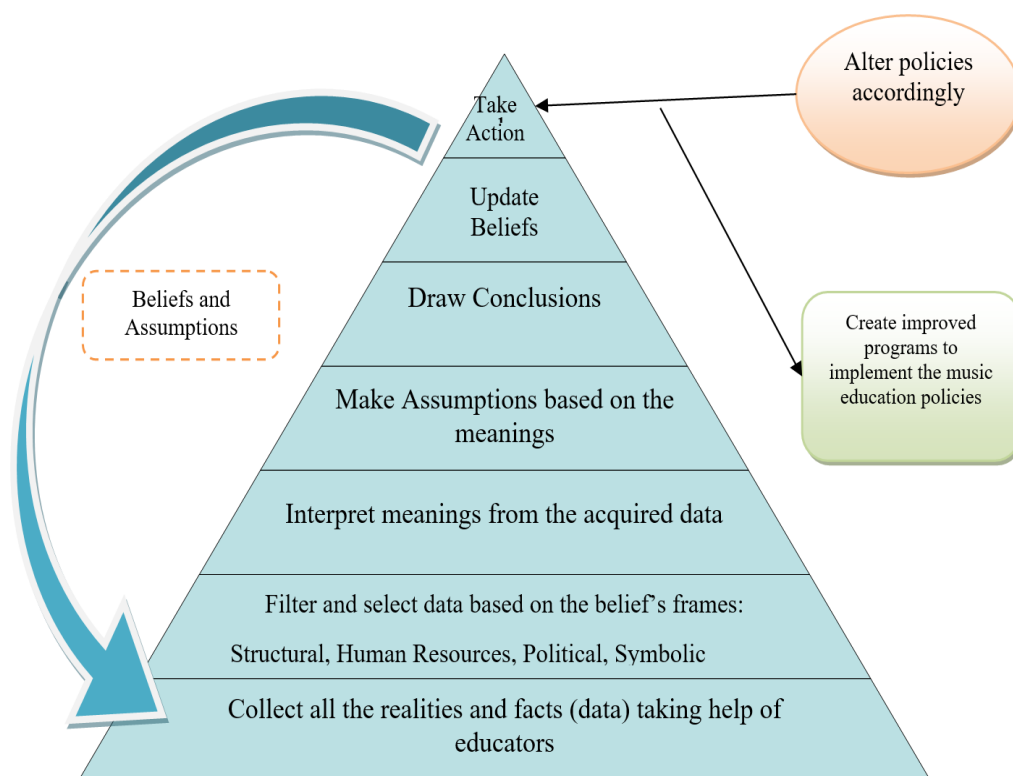
Adapted from Argyris, C. 'Overcoming Organizational Defenses: Facilitating Organizational Learning,' 1st Edition, 1990; and Bolman, L.G. and Deal, T.E. "Leadership and Management effectiveness: A Multi-Frame, Multi-Sector Analysis," Human Resource Management 30, no. 4 (Winter 1991) pp. 509-534

Observing the beliefs and assumptions of school leaders helps map out concepts as a knowledge map. Knowledge maps help researchers articulate concepts and collectively develop the ability to restructure their knowledge and enact these judgments (Guile, 2005). In Vygotsky's constructivism theory, the teacher's role is to tailor their

methods to each child's level of development (Lui & Bonner, 2016). They carefully track the growth on a child-by-child basis and develop functions, simultaneously fixing errors in the child's logic. Vygotsky's theory helps understand the collaborative nature of learning through research. In the case of this research, dialogue and interaction will be between the researcher and the school leaders making decisions on music education, understanding more than passing knowledge but rather understanding interactions and identifying what is meaningful and purposeful for learning (Neaum, 2016). This type of research is highly impactful, especially when collaboration involves multiple stakeholders are taken into account to solve problems (Cleaver & Ballantyne, 2014).

Using this process, educators can extend the same considerations to motivate children, engage them in more difficult tasks, and push participation in activities that improve learning (Vygotsky, 1978). The same way that Vygotsky's theory helps in identifying ways to have students be challenged to work beyond what they can accomplish independently can help to develop improved school leadership policies (Wherland, 2002). Researching the practice and policy of school leaders and music education stakeholders can help to bring unique connections and interpretations into the educational leadership process. This will help improve the logic and interpretation of the research to develop a point of view that allows for communicating creative and breakthrough ways of improving music education.

Review of Related Research

Introduction

The section will consist of an overview of the history of music education, content association with music education, the science of learning music, examples of music being beneficial to learning, and the decision-making processes. It will focus on why music education has been implemented in the public-school curriculum and the associated factors to such programs' implementation. Researching the content of the programs will help facilitate a better understanding of how music education addresses specific students' needs and music's influence on academic learning. Additional research will investigate the science of music and the developmental process of young students regarding how variations in music education programs influence learning and academic development.

History of Music Education

The importance of music in American life can be traced back to the period when singing was an integral part of the colonists' lives, where even the first book published in North America, the Bay Psalm Book, was filled with songs. Students who experience or participate in the arts have a learning advantage over those without such exposure (Epstein, 2018). Multiple reports and international studies record American students performing poorly or even last among other industrial nations (Ravitch, 2016). With school accountability focused on the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, music is not deemed a curricular priority or necessity in public schools, despite instrumental music's benefits to learning (McLelland, 2005).

Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi was an advocate of music in public education. He believed that nature was the ultimate and original source of knowledge. His educational theories placed a high value on sensory, kinesthetic, and active learning at an early age, where students began with simple concepts in all subjects and moved on to more complex ideas (Pinter, 2017). Pestalozzi's method was one of the earliest that could be considered as "student-centered learning," and his ideas of discipline and a student-teacher rapport based on love and trust were markedly different from the common practice of corporal punishment during his time (Good, 2017). This approach to music was brought to the United States, translated, and popularized by William Channing Woodbridge, Elam Ives, and Lowell Mason (Mark & Gary, 2007).

There exists some overlap when contemplating the beginnings of general music as a part of the American curriculum. Research shows that educators like Woodbridge and Mason introduced the concept of music since it made music a core part of the learning experience, as early as the 18th and 19th centuries. However, the first examples of music being taught in public schools were from Frances Elliott Clark during 1860–1958. Clark's career coincided with the founding of the first normal training school, the first summer school for music teachers, and the first modern school music series. Beginning as an elementary grade teacher, Clark became an advocate for rote singing with a beautiful tone and quality literature, influenced by the works of Eleanor Smith. At her high school position, Clark presented innovative ten-minute talks on Music History. As a music supervisor, she continued her original thinking, became nationally recognized for the students' singing ability, and was concerned with the development of everyone (Clark, 1923).

Public education in the United States first offered music as part of the curriculum in Boston in the 1830s; later, it spread with the help of singing teacher Lowell Mason. Mason "was the central figure in the process of having music adopted as a school subject" (Mark & Gary, 2007, p. 13). Following the path set in motion by pioneers like Mason, the next century saw further advances in music as a major discipline. In the 20th century, music education was bolstered, being adopted into higher education.

With the success of Mason's music academy, he successfully advocated it to the Boston School Committee in 1838. The committee ultimately decided to include music as a curricular subject in public schools since it was of a moral, physical, and intellectual nature. Music was considered moral, having played such a part in religion, besides having been documented to produce "happiness, contentment, cheerfulness, and tranquility" (Barrett, 2009, p. 13). It was of a physical nature since singing is considered an exercise for the lungs. The committee justified music's intellectual nature by stating it had been studied as a part of the quadrivium in the Middle Ages, stating it "contributes to memory, comparison, attention, and intellectual faculties" (Mark & Gary, 2007, p. 14).

Boston became the model to which several other cities across the United States included and shaped their public-school music education programs. Music methodology for teachers as a course was first introduced in the Normal School. The concept of classroom teachers teaching music in a school under the direction of a music supervisor was the standard model for public school music education during this century (Birge, 1973).

Progressive Movement**.** The Progressive Movement of the early 1900s was centered on American evolution and advancement, during which many "shared in common the view that government at every level must be actively involved in these reforms" (West & Schambra, 2007). The cities of the early 1900s, areas usually comprised of social settlements ("centers for neighborhood social services and social reform activities" (Abrams, 2008), were built around music as an aid to the poor and unskilled. Most hail from the upper-middle-class believed that musical appreciation within the working class could be a powerful means of reform to cause "social uplift and amelioration" (Lee, 1997, p. 307).

Incorporating musical instruction into the rural schools' curriculum, this movement of progression was able to reach a broader audience. Music became more prevalent and reflected the ideology of many Progressive Era reformers. During this transition, music became a symbol embodying democratic ideologies by encouraging that everyone could appreciate and participate in it (and that music was not restricted to only the more elite social classes); this created a further distinction between the conception of American versus European culture. American reformers of this time believed that "a democratic revolution in music signaled the beginning of the disintegration of the genteel ideal in music, an ideal that had seen European cultural models as best for Americans" (Lee, 1997, p. 308).

Music had been an integral part of the school curriculum during the progressive education era (Mark & Gary, 1992). When progressive education ceased to be an organized movement in the 1950s, music, like other curricular disciplines, lost a

philosophical basis of support. Progressive education was not replaced by a new comprehensive philosophy; all disciplines found themselves with curricula partially suited to progressive education, whose philosophy was under question. Without the guidance of a comprehensive philosophy for American education, there was no new direction indicated for curriculum planners. "Music education thus remained static" in terms of learning expectations and curricular options, as did the other disciplines (Mark & Gary, 1992, p. 352).

A new-found emphasis on musical education rose in the "common schooling" era, where offerings of music activity, like "listening lessons, instrumental performing groups, musical history, and theory began to appear in isolated places near the turn of the century. These offerings were extracurricular at first but later evolved into curricular subjects" (Mark & Gary, 1992, p. 256). Bands being a community themselves, promoted learning and shared members' different desires and experiences toward a common goal (Kim, 2018). The marches composed by U.S. Marine Band director John Philip Sousa helped influence the popularity of bands, as per the New World Encyclopedia. Schools began to field all-men, and sometimes all-women, bands, and grew with popularity (Bierley, 1973). This change reflected a shift in the discourse and the overall perception of education's purpose within American society. They helped unify the nation and bring in a new era of musicology (Bannister, 2002). Not only did this shift reflect a greater appreciation for artistic ability on a vocational level, but it also mirrored the notion that "democracy depended on universal [and one standard level of] education" for all children (Mark & Gary, 1992, p. 141).

Music Education Today

The United States Department of Education surveyed 1,201 secondary schools during the 2009–2010 academic year. They reported 94% of elementary schools and 91% of secondary schools to offer instruction designated specifically for the music of the different Arts classes were specialists in their field. In a secondary investigation, they concluded that 94% of elementary schools offered instruction in music, and 83% offered instruction in the visual arts in elementary schools during the same time (IES, 2012, p. 14). Most elementary schools in the United States typically offer music classes several times a week, with classes ranging from 30 to 45 minutes in length. Students often start performing in musical instruments at the fourth grade, and performance opportunities are often provided via choirs or orchestral (especially wind) bands (Colwell, Hewitt, & Fonder, 2017). Drama and dance classes were offered to only three and four percent of elementary schools involved; however, over half incorporated dance into other subjects. Art and music classes were offered to elementary students at least once a week (Parsad & Coppersmith, 2014). A report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Education (OECD, 2014) explains that the number of times students typically spend in school during primary and lower secondary levels is 7,751 hours. Of these 7,751 hours, the schools surveyed spent 11% of their time during a year on the arts in elementary schools, and only eight percent on the arts in lower secondary schools (OECD, 2014, p. 2). This report explains that the Arts classes combined receive almost the same amount of time as physical education classes, which is between eight and nine percent for both levels of schooling.

Programs. There exist several developed teaching methods intended for use in elementary schools. The Kodaly Method was developed in Hungary by Zoltan Kodaly. The Orff-Schulwerk Method was developed by Carl Orff, the German composer who wrote Carmina Burana. The Dalcroze-Eurythmics Method was developed in Switzerland by Emile Jaques-Dalcroze, teaching at the Geneva Conservatory at the time. All three methods emphasize activity and learning by doing. The Kodaly Method is best known for its use of solfege syllables and corresponding hand signals. The Orff-Schulwerk Method is most famous for its use of varying sizes of xylophones and glockenspiels, known as the "Orff instruments." The Dalcroze-Eurythmics Method encourages experiencing music through movement by attuning the body's sensitivity towards the quality of its movements, being awakened with music, ideally live music (Juntunen & Hyvonen, 2004).

Current Exemplars. Music provides positive social interaction that helps form cooperative learning groups in exchanging information, minimizing errors by helping each other, and having the freedom to ask questions and discuss tasks. Having these opportunities to process tasks, organize data, and assess the relevance of what is to be studied, helps in the development of skills and in completing tasks of a higher order. Dewey (1944) believed that "the primary mission of schools should not be preparing for the next grade level but to help students understand, to make sense of, and to be successful in their world today and tomorrow" (Garrison, 2008). The collaborative learning model facilitates the active sharing of ideas among students, encourages a dedication to learning, and promotes critical and higher-level thinking to grow individual learning, increase skills, and increase expectations. This is not just a model for educators

to follow, but for students, as young as those in kindergarten, to follow and assist peers in sharing ideas and reflecting on what is being instructed.

Students in exemplary music education programs scored higher on both English and mathematics standardized tests than their counterparts who did not have this high-quality instruction (Johnson & Memmott, 2006). Also, students who have been involved in instrumental exercises receive higher scores and have a positive relationship with mathematical scores on standardized tests (Fitzpatrick, 2006). The exact reasons why music instruction is not being taught as effectively need to be researched. Factors such as budget, staffing, curriculum, learning styles, and cultural factors may cause discrepancies (Lind & McKoy, 2007).

The National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) annually recognizes school districts across the nation for their efforts to make music education a part of a well-rounded education. NAMM congratulated 754 school districts across the nation in 2020, where 174 were from the state of New York, and 81 were in the suburban NY Metropolitan area (NAMM, 2020). A music program's quality is significant in whether the program positively affects the standardized test scores of students in other subjects. Excellent music programs consist of schools with students scoring high on both English and Mathematics tests, as compared to inadequate music programs. Furthermore, this performance depends on how people instruct music, in a mix-mathematics strategy, music/piano lab, reinforcement of mathematics, or just through performance (Blakeslee, 2017).

A positive coloration in schools exists between providing a music program and student performance. However, it is important to review the literature, instructional delivery, appropriateness, and other associated factors to determine the overall influence of music in public education (LaCour, 2010).

Factors Impacting Schools Today. The teacher belief system is based on what children should experience before entering kindergarten; it has important implications for school readiness and classroom decision-making. Children experience a range of early learning settings, which may influence their experience while entering kindergarten (MacQuarrie, Nugent, & Warden, 2015).

Research indicates that the development of children's musical self-efficacy, which is most critical in early childhood, will influence the extent to which they participate in music later on in life (Bartel & Cameron, 2007). Woodbridge, a pioneer in music education in the 19th century, suggested that singing should be taught in school and that taxpayers should fund it (Branscome, 2005). His argument paved the way for the inclusion of singing in the elementary school music curriculum. Funding for music education has always been difficult, ever since the introduction of music to public schools. In 1837, such funding was denied by the United States government (Birge, 1973). According to Branscome (2005), music education continued to focus on singing, reading, and notating music for the following 100 years. By the end of the 19th century, music education had become universal in the nation's schools (Keene, 2010). The nationwide goal for music education is to provide a well-rounded education to all students. Despite this common goal, the community value of music education, funding,

economic value, and demand of the community varies throughout the county and within a common district (Major, 2013).

The reduction of music programs within schools occurs due to budget cuts; fine art programs are deemed as not required for a school. Specific subjects like reading, writing, and mathematics, measured through state and local school testing, indicate whether students are excelling academically (LaCour, 2010). Music is not considered as a basic subject within the curriculum; in financially stricken communities, few students can participate in private music classes and depend upon schools to provide a balanced academic program. Despite the crisis emerging from the reduction of music programs across the country, schools with music programs achieve higher standardized test scores in reading, science, and mathematics than those hailing from schools without music programs (Wong, 2018).

Music education can help students develop personal skills and build their self-esteem. However, music education and other arts subjects are usually the first to go when schools' budgets decrease (Smith & Kaschub, 2009). Budget cuts can thus negatively impact music education programs; students in these affected programs may experience the loss of opportunity to learn and explore through the arts.

Two goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation were to increase the academic standards for all students and reduce the achievement gap between high-achieving and low-achieving student groups. Several schools should thus adopt an enriched curriculum as a core consideration to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Equal opportunity for success is important; students must believe they have

an equal chance of learning and earning rewards. Students who cooperate and work together provide more explanations, better responses, and respond to their peers' requests for help (LaCour, 2010).

McDaniel's (2011) mix-method methods study identifies social, educational injustice within the California school systems with the implementation of No Child Left Behind of 2001 and the California legislation of Education Code 60851-53 that permitted non-proficient students to be removed from elective courses to receive supplemental instruction in English, language arts and/or mathematics. Using data from standardized tests and surveys found a disproportionate number of minority students living in poverty losing access to music, visual arts, performing arts, computer literacy, and other elective courses (McDaniel, 2011). The consequences of this could be dire, with the potential to propel us back to a two-tiered education system: just reading, writing, and math for the disadvantaged in under-resourced schools, alongside a richer 21st-century curriculum for the country's productive employees and future decision-makers (Taylor, 2011).

Rabkin and Hedberg (2011), through the analysis of Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, found less than half of the population of adults reported having participated in Arts lessons in school. This represents a decline of 65% since the 1980s; it was a concern for the health of the U.S. arts economy. Several public schools in low-income areas do not offer any kind of arts education; the lack of arts instruction disproportionately affects such low-income neighborhoods (Yee-King, 2014). According to the United States Department of Education (2011), over 40% of low-income schools have not received a proportional share of state and local funds. Andreassen (2013) stated

that schools identified as needing improvement and that enroll a higher percentage of minority students often report a lower percentage of time spent in arts activities. Schools in impoverished areas lack the financial resources to foster high-quality teaching and learning or arts programs that may improve the educational experience for students hailing from a lower socioeconomic level (Andreassen, 2013).

Cutting down art and music education programs in schools has been a nationwide trend in the United States (Bridgman, 2013). Although researchers have found a correlation between music education and children's development, budget cuts in schools have reduced or eliminated the music education curriculum (Reilly, 2013).

Benefits of Music Education

Music is an auditory art form necessary for cognitive activity and is based on listening comprehension (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2018). The skills from music education go beyond just listening to music but also brain and learning development.

Brain and learning development. It is observed that when children engage in musical activities, such as learning to play the violin, the physical development of their brain changes. Left- and right-brained individuals were popular in the 1980s and 1990s; however, this oversimplifies how the brain processes music (Schlaug, Janke, Haung, Straiger, & Seinmetz, 1995). The University of Southern California (USC) studied 13 children in music programs; it was found that "fine-tuning of their auditory pathway could accelerate their development of language and reading" (Gersema, 2016). Moreover, neuroscientists who used magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) to monitor changes in the brain and an electroencephalogram (EEG) to track electrical activity in the brain found

students who study music exhibit increased neuron firing rates. Furthermore, there was an association between the ear and brain in the context of learning development.

The optimal period for brain development is between the ages of three and six. This has been proven by a study that observed 60 musicians and non-musicians being trained to play the violin before the age of seven. Participants exhibited increased corpus callosum size (Flohr, 2010). Music training or playing music equals better performance in some areas of learning. Studies conducted by the Health, Education, in the Arts, Refining Talented Students (HEARTS) demonstrate a reduced risk of violence and significant improvements in self-esteem, the overall grade point average, and other forms of school achievement coupled with better verbal-performance intelligent quotient (IQ) in the context of musical activities (Rauschner, Shaw, & Ky, 1993).

Music development, especially in the early years, can be best fostered by supporting and encouraging the spontaneous vitality and inventiveness of human movement and gesture, by recognizing children's rhythmic expression of motives and emotion as well as their communication of affections, thoughts, ideas, and cooperative activities (Flohr, 2010). Recent research about the brain challenges old assumptions about talent and innate ability. Neither nature nor nurture alone determines brain development by the complex interaction of abilities, environment, and individual differences influencing brain development. Much growth and activity occur during the early years. Experiencing music experience provides an optimal period for growth for young children. Free exploration and playing with instruments are important aspects of early childhood and primary grade music instruction.

Early childhood exposure to music and music education can have a significant impact on early childhood development. Dr. Frank Wilson has stated, "music has a profound influence on language and social and emotional maturation in children" (Wilson & Roeman, 1990). Music has the power to enhance the learning process across the curriculum.

Considerable research suggests that the childhood years are vitally important to developing values, outlook on life, and patterns of learning. Music participation plays a vital role in these areas of development, providing skills vital to the learning experience. Participation in instrumental music instruction is thus a creative process and a tool for the development of basic learning skills, such as perception, concentration, memory, sequential logic, analogic thinking, and psychomotor ability (Trent, 1996).

Psychology professors Jennifer Bailey and Virginia Penhune from Concordia University compares motor skill between two groups: musicians who began before the age of seven and non-musicians. Findings showed more accurate timing, even after two days of practice, from those who began music training before the age of seven. When comparing brain structure, musicians who started early showed enhanced white matter in the corpus callosum, a bundle of nerve fibers that connects the left and right motor regions of the brain (Bailey & Penhune, 2013). Brain scans between the two groups found no difference. This suggests that brain developments happen early on or not at all. This benefit extends to just music or playing an instrument, as the finding tests motor skills suggesting a larger benefit to developmental learning. Moreover, the study found that training is more effective at an early age due to brain anatomy and the human brain

being more sensitive to changes at earlier time points (Steele, Bailey, Zatorre, & Pernhune, 2013).

The team led by Dr. Laurel Trainor, professor of psychology, neuroscience, and behavior at McMaster University, Canada, and the Director of the McMaster Institute for Music and the Mind, has measured over one year the changes in brain responses to sounds in children aged between four and six. When the study began, six children (five boys, one girl) had just started to attend a Suzuki music school, while another six (four boys, two girls) received no music lessons outside school. Researchers chose the children trained by the Suzuki method because it ensured they were all trained in the same way. Researchers used non-invasive brain-scanning technology called magnetoencephalography (MEG), which measures the small magnetic fields outside the head. MEG is beneficial owed to its speed and the ability to measure brain activity in almost real-time. The study found that children who had studied music for a year had improved their musical listening skills than those who had received no such training; furthermore, their general memory skills correlated with non-musical abilities such as literacy, verbal memory, visuospatial processing, mathematics, and IQ has improved, as compared to the children not taking lessons (Fuijoka, Ross, Kaligi, Pantev, & Trainor, 2006).

Research led by S.J. Holochwost in 2017 studied and measured academic achievement and executive functions on two groups of students, one who had music education and the other with no music education. Evidence shows that the group of students who had musical training scored significantly higher on standardized tests,

English, mathematics, selected tasks, and short-term memory than the students who did not participate. Furthermore, the research found that students who study music benefitted from a positive effect on other academic areas with identifiable improvement in learning skills. (Holochwost, et al., 2017)

The student's discipline, dedication, tenacity, self-esteem, social development, and motor skill development are aspects enhanced by group participation in music activities. The relationship of music students' drive for excellence in music performance to their drive for excellence in academic performance or being a cause for the students' academic development is an avenue for further research.

The positive effects of music instruction in early childhood might be greater than in later childhood due to changes in brain structure. Regardless of income, gender, family structure, or parental employment, the results show significantly higher self-esteem, motivation, and higher cognitive competence (McLelland, 2005). Music training has proved to be far superior to computer instruction in enhancing children's reasoning skills necessary for learning mathematics and science (Shaw, et al., 1997). Students who received piano training performed 34% higher on tests measuring spatial-temporal ability. Results show an increase in reading and mathematics scores with no differences in race or gender. (McLelland, 2005).

Using grounded theory, the researchers coded and labeled schemes and discrepancies; they relabeled specific experiences based on context; for example, "being supportive" was categorized under teacher-child interaction (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daughterty, Howes, & Karoly, 2009). Results revealed three types of preschool

classroom experiences as important: the types of teacher-child interaction, children's learning environment, and types of learning opportunities. Teacher-child interactions included five factors of interactions, such as being supportive, establishing trust, encouraging individualization, being a role model, and demonstrating mutual respect. Such coding and definitions were determined by research and contextual interpretations from interview data and coded transcripts using the QSR N6. All public schools, as well as three of four family care programs, believe that being supportive is the most important in promoting growth and exploration.

Learning Benefits. The learning environment is another important dimension addressing safety, age-appropriateness, teacher resourcefulness, rules, and predictability. The family focus group found age-appropriateness a key preschool experience, as compared to two of three public and one of four private focus groups.

Learning opportunities are identified as the third dimension associated with what children learn and how they learn. The act of playing, hands-on activities, peer interaction, one-on-one activities, small group activities, guided exploration, and child-guided activities are contributing factors. Playing was an important learning opportunity in two of three public focus groups and one of four private groups. Contrarily, only one focus group program believed hands-on activities as an important aspect of teaching beliefs (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daughterty, Howes, & Karoly, 2009).

In the mid-1990s, Campbell (1997) captured the attention of both the media and society at large with his book titled the "Mozart Effect" because of its positive promotion of classical music listening to cognitive development. Ever since, music continues to be

valued to increase intelligence, especially in early childhood (Ilari, 2011). Additionally, it helps encourage music standards for younger students. The pre-kindergarten national standards for music education include the following four guidelines: singing and playing instruments, creating music, responding to music, and understanding music (National Association for Music Education, 1994).

Research indicates that preschool teachers commonly perceive their musical abilities to be inadequate (Lee Nardo, Custodero, Persellin, & Fox, 2006). They tend to use music for utilitarian purposes as a "background" activity as opposed to being the focus of instruction. In his 2013 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama called for a dramatic shift in early childhood education through increased access to a high-quality preschool for every child in the United States. The goal of expanding early childhood education is to close the achievement gap between economically diverse students by providing universal preschool for all four-year-olds in low- and moderate-income families, as well as to expand the availability of Early Head Start programs (Layton & Svrluga, 2013).

Findings suggest that participants are keenly aware of key early learning experiences important to children's school readiness, such as positive interactions, safety within the learning environment, and stimulating learning opportunities. Their use of research literature and theories may have compromised their selection of coded transcriptions. The authors' beliefs and their subcomponents being represented with the inclusion of research literature help relate to early childhood education and teachers (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daughterty, Howes, & Karoly, 2009).

Instrumental music instruction influences academic achievements in mathematics, language arts, and reading. Among all subjects, the arts are unique in that they deal with expression and higher-level thinking, thus encouraging the creative process of learning (Trent, 1996).

Some of the greatest accomplishments serve to communicate the dreams, beliefs, aspirations, and accomplishments of our ancestors or individuals. This is music's primary purpose through instruction and how it is viewed, whether as an endeavor or as a study of a foreign language, with its alphabet, words, poetry, and books. Music exemplifies the interdisciplinary potential of learning through science, history, mathematics, and the language arts (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, Music in childhood enhanced: From preschool through the elementary grades, 2018).

Music Education and Age

Research shows that music is an integral part of every culture. Even before birth, children may be affected by exposure to music: both general and instrumental. According to the Children's Institute, "music envelops and touches the lives of people of all ages. As early as the embryonic stage, the growing fetus hears and responds to various types of sounds, tones, and rhythms, and not just with an emotional response, but also with brain development" (Riordan & Montes, 2000, p. 2).

Additionally, music is incredibly helpful in assisting high-risk children of all ages with learning new tasks (Britto, Fuligini, & Brooks-Gunn, 2013). In today's world, music is even designated as a learning style. Thus, we see in many educational settings, both domestic and international, that the use of music programs in kindergarten settings has

benefits for children as young as five or six. Music education has thus proven to positively impact early childhood education.

Trainor & Trehub (1994) found that both five- and seven-year-olds demonstrated the knowledge of detecting changes in a melody that went outside the key. However, harmonic knowledge appeared to develop later. In another study by Schellenburg, Bigand, Poulin-Charronnat, Carnier & Stevens (2005), children aged six and older demonstrated facilitated processing for stable chords in a harmonic priming study, showing faster reaction times to stimuli paired with expected chords than unexpected chords suggesting that six-year-olds have some harmonic knowledge.

There are some thinkers such as Suzuki and Gordon who believe that starting instrumental music at an early age is highly beneficial to learning. Suzuki's approach to music education is often misunderstood as a by-rote method as opposed to an educational approach with considerable parent involvement. It develops a learning system to imitate the learning of our native language from childbirth. Eastern philosophies believe in letting cognition go and in clearing the mind of thought to "allow true understanding to emerge naturally" (Henricks, 2011).

Suzuki asserted that music does for feeling what writing does for reasoning. Music education is thus the means to an end that embraces far more than only music. Suzuki's philosophy places the priority on the child where music is the conduit to learning (Richards, 2017).

Edwin Gordon's Music Learning Theory states that every child has a musical aptitude and that the early childhood years are the most critical for musical development

(Gordon, 2012). The innate musical potential is a primary theme in the mission statements of two international early childhood music companies; both websites proclaim that "all children are musical" in promoting their offerings. The early childhood "window of opportunity" encourages educators and parents to cultivate children's potential in music from the beginning (Jordan-DeCarbo & Nelson, 2002, p. 215).

Contrarily, thinkers such as Krinnison, Cramer, and Kinyon believed that starting instrumental music at a later age may be more beneficial. Kinnison (1951) surveyed 153 instrumental music directors to obtain their opinions regarding reasons for withdrawal at the beginning level. While most respondents started with instrumental music programs in the fourth grade, a large percentage concurred that the fourth grade was too early to begin training in. It was believed that the average fourth grader was not physically or emotionally developed to be subjected to the skill required to play an instrument. Therefore, a higher drop-out rate occurred if starting with music education at a young age

Cramer (1958) examined the grade level at which the students' maturity was the most feasible to begin the study of instrumental music. Subjects were 68 students in grades four through six at the Demonstration School of Florida State University. Based upon his experiment and prior research, Cramer suggested that seventh grade should be the optimum grade level to begin instrumental music. However, he encouraged instrumental music participation before the seventh grade so that students may gain interest before other activities can compete with musical interests.

Kinyon (1982) stated that the most popular grade levels to start in a band are fifth and sixth. He cautioned that a serious factor between successful and unsuccessful

programs, which begin instrumental music before the fifth grade, is the number of lessons per week. Almost daily lessons with supervision are advised.

Decision-Making Processes

The core of Bolman and Deal's multiple perspective framework centers on the understanding of the cognitive orientations of leaders, like the frames of reference that leaders operate from will determine the interpretation of the situations and guide their actions (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Kouzes and Posner (2017) used a case study approach with structured interviews of leaders and their followers from a diverse selection of companies throughout the world. They began their research into the field of leadership by asking the basic question of leaders in organizations all around the world, "What did you do when you were at your personal best as a leader?" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. xii). This basic question was asked to exemplary leaders known to motivate others to accomplish positive transformative changes in their organizations that led to notable achievements and successes (Kouzes & Posner, 2017).

The five practices Kouzes and Posner (2017) identified as practices of exemplary leaders from across a broad spectrum of organizations and companies throughout the world are: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. Each practice has two actions associated with it, with the concentration on the leaders' behaviors, not their qualities or agenda. Caza and Posner (2019), using Kouzes and Posner's research, align leadership with the multiple perspective frames of Bolman and Deal.

Caza and Posner (2019) concluded that leaders should model effectiveness to establish credibility and align themselves with their actions and messages with the goals and vision of their organization. As leaders, they should serve as role models and examples for others to follow. Effective leaders also consider the social-emotional needs of others in their organization and by being transparent while supporting professional development, celebrating success together, and creating a positive environment where people feel valued and part of a community (Caza & Posner, 2019).

District-Level Leadership. As in other organizations, the success or failure of the school system rests on the superintendent (Stenmark & Mumford, 2011). As such, the superintendent must be aware of "the social, political, and economic forces in the environment surrounding the school district" (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 18). District leaders' decisions are not only shifted due to emotion but also due to politics. Superintendents often face unique challenges to survive in their position. Not only do they need to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, but they also need to utilize specific strategies to gain acceptance or reduce resistance from stakeholders in their decision process (Quinn, 2010). In addressing the challenging nature of the superintendency, Quinn (2010) commented, "The fact that schools are most often the biggest spenders of local taxpayer dollars and are charged with the care and development of the community's most precious resources – its children - places everything superintendents do under the community's magnifying glass" (p.16). Superintendents are caught between serving the needs of students and responding to the needs of adult stakeholders. To find balance, superintendents must identify key stakeholders, decide what they believe is the best course of action, and form coalitions and networks (Melton, Reeves, McBrayer, & Smith, 2019).

Melton, Reeves, McBrayer, & Smith's (2019) research using a semi-structured interview protocol involving seven superintendents found several sources of political influence on superintendents' decision-making in matters regarding leading student success. It was the influences from school boards, parents, community members, and teachers that were most significant.

These individuals and groups influence superintendents in matters pertaining to accountability and fiduciary responsibilities, as well as with schools and facilities. The strategies most often used by superintendents to respond to the political influences were identifying key stakeholders, deciding the best course of action, and networking, and forming coalitions (Melton, Reeves, McBrayer, & Smith, 2019). Superintendents' reliance on interpersonal skills of communication helps them navigate the political challenges in their district.

Also, education policies such as NCLB have changed both the fiduciary and academic accountability of schools (Roellke, 2003). The economic challenges that schools face in the United States have escalated over the last decade (Eggers, Snell, Wavra, & Moore, 2005). Increased accountability for academic performance combined with decreased funding have led school districts to look for alternative funding sources and alternative strategies and organizational structures for running schools (Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward, & Basom, 2011). Each district has their strengths and weakness when handling challenges and involve different strategies in resolving them. Small schools are better able to meet and adjust to an individual's needs based on their intimate knowledge of the communities they serve and the students in their classrooms (Kretovics,

Farber, & Armaline, 2014). Alternatively, larger schools have an economy of scale that allows for better utilization of limited resources (Eggers, Snell, Wavra, & Moore, 2005).

The increasing impact that NCLB's unfunded and under-funded mandates exert, particularly on small school districts, for school leaders to make structural changes to meet these demands. Often school leaders are forced to make decisions that must balance their visions and the constraints of having to meet expectations. These constraints, both governmentally and socially imposed, become gatekeepers to the road of creative collaboration between and among community organizations and districts (Roellke, 2003). According to Bolman and Deal (2017), the ongoing challenge in any district is to find a system of roles and relationships. Creative, collaborative efforts are essential for resource allocation to be implemented effectively (Eggers, Snell, Wavra, & Moore, 2005).

Northouse (2016) described, "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 6). Since leadership is a process, current leadership research believes that leadership is not an inherent trait but preferably one that can be learned and applied by anyone (Northouse, 2016). The sharing of resources and personnel to maximize not only the financial benefits but also educational opportunities can positively shape future decisions for districts (Miller, Roza, & Swartz, 2004). As students continue to expand learning and enrichment opportunities in and out of school, the school becomes much larger than the immediate area or locale in which the school resides (Bereiter, Burtis, & Chan, 1997). Learning is more than what happens at one grade level, in one school, in one district. It is the broadest collaboration

of knowledge building that prepares students, teachers, and parents for a future that is vastly different from years past.

School superintendents have a great responsibility in leading public schools' systems that will produce thriving students as they are preparing for college, career, and life. This role is riddled with obstacles and barriers both at the micro and macro political levels. School superintendents often have a mix of voices pulling them in many directions, whether they be external or internal forces. Corral (2019), using a mixed-method study, utilized both quantitative and qualitative data collection with an 11-question survey including Bolman and Deal's Leadership Self-Rating Scale to 20 Superintendents. Data analysis revealed a discrepancy in perceived leadership frames and practical frames. The data also affirmed the importance of using multi-frame thinking in their decision-making process so that superintendents can appropriately identify problems and navigate solutions that will render positive outcomes for students.

The theme of innovation emerged during the superintendent interviews regarding organizational structure and innovative teams. Innovation can disrupt the status quo. Outside-the-box thinking involves acting differently (Dyer, Gregersen, & Christensen, 2011). As such, innovation mimics multi-frame thinking that includes all four frames thinking: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. The effectiveness of innovation teams seeks more input and feedback from constituents, has the potential to improve outcomes for students (Corral, 2019).

Research shows that Superintendents need to work with their school board members. Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, and Ellerson (2011) found that positive

relationships between superintendents with their board are attributed to the consideration and respect for each position so superintendents can leverage support and resources for improving practices for students. In Coral (2019) findings, superintendents described issues or items that involved governance, policy, budget, and their connectedness to the district's strategic plan were forwarded for board recommendation. This kept the focus on keeping recommendations centered on addressing the needs of the students the district serves.

School-Level Leadership. Many school districts, as democratic institutions, tend to try to please as many people as possible. However, becoming a district that delivers world-class education at an affordable cost demands focus. According to Kavanagh and Vallas (2017), long-term financial planning is critical to realizing this stability. The financial plan should be constructed to support the local government's strategic goals and be able to shift resources from one area to another to avoid sudden shocks. To accomplish this accurately, decisions need to be made based on accurate information, which is a fundamental step to building a fact base. However, when school leaders must make difficult choices, emotion is often involved due to individual principles guiding choices. Kavanagh and Vallas (2017) research through a mixed-method approach focused on school finance reform surveyed school leaders, "What kind of district do you want to run?" Bringing up the concepts of emotions and values. In many districts, the budget process has a way of freezing in place decisions about curriculum and instruction. Two mindsets come into play, "to get the most bang for the buck" and "treating every child like our own." Districts aspire to make practical connections between academic and financial decision-making. With the decision-making process using the criteria "to get the most bang for the buck," districts

discontinue courses that either had a high cost per student or where students did not earn a professional certification after the course. With the decision-making process using the criteria of "treating every child like our own," districts eliminate goals for "work-life balance for teachers and administrators" and "teacher job satisfaction" because these goals didn't directly address the needs of students.

Mayes's (2014) qualitative and multi-case study indicated 18 themes on school leadership decision-making on music programming. Themes included (a) having space for music program was very important, (b) dedicated funding source for music and instrumental music programs, (c) personal values influenced their decisions, (d) community support is needed to have great music programs, (e) music is included or excluded based on the best interests of the children, (f) NCLB is a factor in determining whether to keep or cut music programs (g) band supports instruction, (h) students are interested in instrumental music, (i) scholarship opportunities, (j) impact on student learning, and (k) student participation was the determining factor for administrators decisions to include or exclude music programs.

With Mayes (2014) research, school leadership not only have to be concerned with the curriculum and making sure students have opportunities to learn music with quality teaching but also make important decisions on available space, finding support by integrating community stakeholders and maintaining a system of values that promotes enriching learning opportunities to students that sometimes disregard the ability to fund the program. Schools with supportive administrators, great community support, high-

quality teachers, and those who value music can sustain and maintain quality music programs.

Day, Gu, and Sammons (2016), using a three-year mixed-methods national impact study, concluded effective school leaders use a combination of instructional and transformative leadership practices to achieve higher academic achievement. They arrived at this understanding by examining Kouzes and Posner's (2017) five practices of exemplary leadership and found these practices have a positive influence on student achievement at low-performing and high-poverty schools. The complex job of being a principal or school leader includes the following: (a) wearing different hats, (b) using different leadership methods, and (c) responding to various contexts depending on the situation and school (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Exemplary leaders consider the nature and needs of their school community and students when making leadership decisions (Schrum & Levin, 2013). School leaders have been identified as being a critical contributing factor in turning around schools designated as at risk (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016).

While some principals feel pressured to focus solely on the outcomes of standardized tests, others are beginning to realize that music programs do not take awareness of core subjects but rather enhance the academic achievement of most students (Longley, 1999). Cash (2020) finds that principals need to cultivate student expression in the schools by ensuring community support exists. School leaders working with music teachers and community stakeholders can provide a solid foundation that will continue

supporting music programs regardless of legislative or financial challenges as part of a well-rounded education.

School Boards. Difficult decisions are not made solely by district and school administrators but also by elected or appointed school board members. School boards are confronted with a plethora of issues that often hinder school reform from occurring. These barriers often include new legislation, policy changes, budgeting issues, practices, and politics (Senge, 1994). The demands and expectations are too great to lead through a narrow lens or be solely transactional. Effective leadership must approach challenges and decisions through multi-faceted perspectives (Sparks, 2007). Unless school board members can think flexibly and see the district from multiple angles, they will be unable to deal with the full range of issues they inevitably encounter (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 437).

Angela Herron (2020) explored school board presidents' perceptions of their role and its relationship to effective board practices. Using a mixed-methods approach, Herron used online surveys and semi-structured interviews to gather data where eleven subthemes emerged: clear goals, community partnerships, data-driven informed, governance, human capital, policy adoption, professional development, strong communication, student outcomes, training, and trust.

Herron's findings did find the relationship between school boards and superintendents is often characterized as contentious. According to Webner, Jong, Campoli, and Baron (2017), a gap in recognizing each other's respective roles and responsibilities may decrease the school board and superintendent's ability to meet the

educational needs of the community they have both been charged to serve. Herron (2020) research found three subthemes in strong school board and superintendent relations being strong communication, training, and trust. Established protocols for communicating with each other ensure information is shared in a consistent and timely manner which also builds trust. School board members must also have adequate and sufficient training on understanding their roles.

Washington (2015), using the four-frame model (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic), examined the self-perceived leadership orientations of school board members by surveying 41 distinct school board members. Academic data from districts in which participants represented in the study was also collected to determine if any relationships existed between leadership frame preferences and academic achievement. Research on school board leadership suggests that effective school boards lead student achievement and conduct all Board meetings, and center their work on student achievement (Gemberling, Smith, & Villani, 2009). Washington (2015) study found that both board members preferred the human resource frame and the structural frame. The symbolic frame use was reported to be the third preferred, and political was the least preferred.

The primary use of the Structural Resource frame by participants in this study may be related to the emphasis on the board acting as a governing body with a heavy emphasis on policy, structures, and procedural processes. Secondly, the preference for the Human Resource frame may also be the result of reform efforts by legislation in its training modules to encourage the board to work intentionally on engaging the

community at large and having a positive working relationship with the superintendent (Washington, 2015).

The inclusion of music in a school's curriculum is not only impacted the decision process on a district level, but it also depends on the values of those in charge of making the decisions on the individual school level, such as principals (Abril & Gault, 2008). Challenges such as student success on standardized tests, poor funding, and legislative changes such as NCLB often are being balanced with the demands of the community and needs from students. Principals often need to make their decisions based on measurable outcomes due to their requirements of adhering to legislation and education policies.

Overview of Findings

While the National Standards for Music Education presents the essential content that should be included in elementary school music education, elementary music educators move well beyond the concepts listed in the standards by providing community performances throughout the school year (NAfME, 2014). They provide several music programs such as choral concerts, ensemble performances, band and orchestra concerts, and other cultural activities to the community. Such programs provide students opportunities to take pride in their development of musical expertise (NAfME, 2014).

However, there remains a gap in the understanding of what music programs are and at what age, and how these programs are offered. While there is significant research on the educational and scientific benefits of starting music at an earlier age, there remains a gap in the understanding of the ideal age of starting with instrumental music. Research shows that instrumental music tends to start later than general music instruction;

however, there remains a gap in understanding the factors for such delay. Research

explores factors such as development, methodologies, and past and current trends in

music education, addressing the continuing difficult decisions school leaders are required

to make regarding programs and budgets. But these findings do not explain how school

leaders ultimately make decisions regarding music programs and how these programs are

implemented in suburban school districts.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides information about the methods and procedures for data collection and analysis for this study. Following the theoretical framework of the ladder of inference described in the previous chapter, the collection, and analysis of data recognize the kinds of inferences school leaders are making, the assumptions implicit in these inferences, and the decisions they ultimately make, and the effects that were acting on these inferences have on general and instrumental music programs. This study's qualitative research approach is detailed in this chapter, along with the methods and procedures for data collection, coding, and analysis.

Methods and Procedures

Research Questions

1. How do school leaders perceive music education in a suburban region?
2. How do educational leaders describe their decision-making process regarding their approach to music education?
3. What is the impact of the decision-making process on music education programs?

Research Design

Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) suggest that qualitative research can discover, explain, and generate theories about what is being investigated and help understand and explain patterns. A case study design will be employed for this study. A case study approach is particularly useful when there is a need to attain an in-depth appreciation of a problem, experience, or phenomenon of interest in its natural, real-life environment (Yin,

2005). Using a qualitative case study design allowed research to be conducted in the context of real-life while studying the decision-making of school leaders regarding general and instrumental music programs. The study was bounded by place and time as only public-school suburban districts in the New York Metropolitan area during the 2020-2021 school year were part of the research.

For this study, data was collected from the following sources: individual interviews and a review of relevant documents such as publicly available student achievement data from New York State ELA and math assessments, school music curriculum, school mission statements, and the school improvement plan. The factors that resulted from each administrator's perceived reasons for financial data, staffing, developmental costs, community interest, community culture, and others were assessed to determine how they influence each districts' music program. The interviews allowed for a great deal of rich descriptive data to dissect the decisions made by school administrators across various suburban districts in the New York Metropolitan area. This study provided a way to develop a greater understanding of the factors and influences of decision-makers regarding music education. This study sought to gain an understanding of school leaders' perceptions of music education in their district and how they perceive is the best way to achieve its success.

Setting

The setting for this qualitative study was a selection of three suburban districts located in the New York Metropolitan area. The selected sampling had various criteria analyzed. Among the selected districts, their achievement scores obtained from the New

York State Education Department (NYSED) will be averaged to determine a rank divided into thirds among other districts in the region. Districts were labeled as either high, medium, or low performing based on their placement. Another criterion is the district's student population size, where districts were labeled as either large, medium, or small compared to other districts in the region. The last criterion is the district's budget. Analyzing the per-pupil expenditure of both the total and music-specific budgets provided a range of districts' financial interests that will serve as a criterion in analyzing additional data from interviews and documents. The three selected districts provided a deliberate cross-section of each criterium as samples as it allows for the highest amount of variation and that best captures the diversity of the samples (Creswell, 2015).

The researcher has no current or past employment connection with the participating schools to address any potential biases in obtaining information. The school districts approved to perform this study had written permission from the district's Superintendent's Offices as confirmation.

Table 1

Description of Districts

District	Academic Achievement Level	Student Population Size	District Budget Size	Music Budget Size
• F	• High	• Small	• Small	• Small
• O	• Low	• Medium	• Medium	• Big
• M	• Medium	• Large	• Large	• Medium

The sample of volunteer districts represented different academic achievement, student population size, total budget, and music budget expenditures. (Table 1). The list

of selected districts was obtained from a publicly available website list of public schools and information obtained from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) online resources. These districts were informed of the purpose of the study with the understanding that participation in the study is voluntary and that the district and its participants had the right to terminate their participation in the study at any point.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants. The goal of purposeful sampling is to obtain specific insight from a mixed group of people as they are best qualified to provide the most relevant information while still having different perspectives regarding the topic being researched (Creswell, 2015). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) propose that qualitative research involves a small and purposive sample because the goal is to look at the process. The participants for this study consisted of 15 school leaders, administrators, and music educators from three public-school districts of varying student achievement on New York State ELA and Math Standardized tests in the New York Metropolitan area.

Finding participants for the study was a challenge, as the research was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Education increasingly ties itself to the global culture and markets, is deeply threatened by changes to the natural environment (Johnson, Maitland, & Tarday, 2021). As the richness and variety of the in-person conversations are removed, viable educational relationships will necessitate deeper intellectual connections and personal inquiries through more technological and almost transactional processes of education. These changes had caused some individuals to be hesitant in the new way of

communication, or the stresses caused to the working and learning environment made any additional tasks, such as volunteering in research, appear overwhelming.

With district restrictions and individual stresses and personal dramas caused a few shifts in selecting individuals, the three participating districts were very mindful, and district leadership was supportive in providing information and reaching out to participants who could freely assist in the research.

The study's participants fell into one of the following categories: district superintendents, music or fine arts directors, finance directors, building-level administrators, and music teachers. These categories were selected to gather a comprehensive overview of school leaders' perspectives. These categories were beneficial since these distinct groups of school leaders and administrative practitioners have different experiences relating to the decision process of general and instrumental music programs. Participants were differentiated based on their roles, the school district they work in, the county where their school district encompasses, and the district's academic achievement, district size, expenditure per pupil, and on New York State ELA and Math assessments in comparison to other school districts in the New York Metropolitan area.

Table 2

Description of Participants

Participant	Role	County	District
1	Superintendent	Northwest Nassau	F
2	Music Leader	Northwest Nassau	F
3	Assistant Principal	Northwest Nassau	F
4	Purchasing Director	Northwest Nassau	F
5	Music Teacher	Northwest Nassau	F
6	Superintendent	South Nassau	O
7	Director of Music	South Nassau	O
8	Principal	South Nassau	O
9	Finance Director	South Nassau	O
10	Music Teacher	South Nassau	O
11	Superintendent	Southeast Nassau	M
12	Arts Director	Southeast Nassau	M
13	Assistant Principal	Southeast Nassau	M
14	Finance Director	Southeast Nassau	M
15	Music Teacher	Southeast Nassau	M

The sample of volunteer participants represents different experiences and perspectives: district role, as well as a varied level of academic success (Table 2). The list of participants was obtained from a publicly available website list of public schools. These decision makers' contact information such as email addresses or telephone numbers were obtained from individual district websites or school district leaders. Following IRB guidelines and procedures, separate letters of informed consent were sent to all participants. The informed consent explained that participation in the study is voluntary and that participants have the right to terminate their participation in the study at any point.

Data Collection Procedures

The fifteen participants in this study volunteered and were provided with a consent letter before the start indicating the purpose of the study, confidentiality, and

record maintenance procedures. This case study will include the following multiple

sources of evidence to increase its validity: (a) fifteen interviews from different districts

consisting of three District Superintendents, three Music Fine Arts Directors /

Coordinators / Chairpersons, three Finance Directors, three Building Level

Administrators, and three Music Teachers; (b) review of the school music curriculum;

and (c) a review of relevant documents such as student achievement data from New York

State ELA and Math Assessments, and the school improvement plan.

Table 3

Data Collection Methods

Interviews	School Music Documents	Academic Achievement Documents
• Independent 40-minute virtual or technology-based interviews with each participant • Online responses via email or Microsoft Forms	• District Music Curriculum • Music-related School Board Policies • School Board agendas and minutes • School Improvement Plans	• NYS Standardized Assessment Scores • Local Assessment Results

Interviews. Interviewing allowed the interviewer to capture the thought process

of the interviewee by developing questions that relate to the research study (Creswell &

Poth, 2018). The study began with an online questionnaire of general questions (See

Appendix B) regarding the interviewee's background and involvement with decision

processes regarding general and instrumental music that were answered online via e-mail

or Microsoft Forms. The researcher conducted the interviews via Zoom with each

participant separately for approximately forty minutes. The interviewees were among

three distinct and contrasting suburban districts within the New York metropolitan area. Five individuals per district were chosen based on their roles as being important decision-makers or major stakeholders to the decision process regarding music programs and how these programs are implemented. Important roles such as a school district leader, school building leader, financial leader, music leader, and music teacher were interviewed to understand how the decision process regarding music programs takes place. Each interviewee, based on their unique role and contrasting district, provided varying perspectives to the decision process. Each interview contained a semi-structured interview protocol (See Appendixes C-G) that is specific to the interviewees' role in their district that was digitally recorded if the interview takes place remotely and transcribed. By conducting these interviews, the researcher used guiding questions to determine how school administrators make decisions regarding general and instrumental music programs. Through the data collected from the interviews, the researcher was able to code for similar themes to identify determining factors that influence the decision process. and analyze how they impact both the students and the schools.

Documents. In qualitative research, documents were used to support the data found in interviews and observations. Creswell & Poth (2018) acknowledge the importance of triangulating data by getting two other data sources to enhance the collected data. The two additional data sources were from the review of each district's school music curriculum documents and academic achievement.

School Music Curriculum. Documents relevant to the study, such as the school music curriculum, School Board policies, School Board agendas, and minutes and School

Improvement Plan, provided groundwork in identifying what the district's factual and realistic objectives with general and instrumental music are. These documents provided data on music programs as part of the school-wide goals. The instrument for reviewing the documents is included in Appendix H.

Each district has an available varying amount of information. In District F, as a smaller district, each music teacher has their own dedicated webpage on the district's website. Each was highlighting their goals and presenting exemplar events and performances. Contrasting to Districts M and O, they did not provide information at this level. District M provided a Music Director's page that highlights the district's music objectives and provides contact information at a district level. District O did not have any attainable links or resources available on their website related to Music or the Arts. On District's O website, a search engine is available, and previous music events and board meeting notes on capital improvements were found dating prior to 2019.

Review of Academic Achievement. Student achievement data on local and state summative assessments were reviewed. The review of these documents categorized the districts into appropriate academic achievement brackets. Analyzing Fourth Grade New York State assessment data, District F was found to be above average results, District O as below the median mean, and District M around the regional mean.

Trustworthiness of the Design

The researcher used a qualitative case study research approach to conduct a qualitative study to explore how school administrators make decisions regarding general and instrumental music programs. The case study followed the triangulation method as it

increases the credibility and validity of research findings (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). To answer the research questions, the researcher collected data through individual interviews and a review of relevant documents, including student achievement data, school music curriculum, and the school improvement plan.

The researcher followed specific case study protocols to ensure the reliability of the data collected for this case study: an overview of the case study to include issues, objectives, and topics being examined, field procedures as a source of information, credentials, and access to sites, and specific case study questions that the researcher must be mindful of throughout the data collection (Yin, 2005). To increase reliability, the researcher used the process of member checking. Participants were asked to review transcribed interview data for accuracy and errors. The name of the district, school, or administrators are not named to allow for confidentiality and to protect the identity of all the above.

To further enhance validity, this study used the following strategies: corroborating evidence through triangulation, member checking, peer review, pilot testing interview questions and clarifying research bias, and engaging in reflexivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Triangulation. Triangulation in qualitative research involves collecting evidence from different sources to determine common themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Triangulation helps explore and explain human behavior by using a variety of sources to offer a more balanced explanation (Joppe, 2006). To establish the accuracy and credibility of the findings, this study triangulated different data sources of information

such as interviews, academic achievement data, school music curriculum implementation, and policies.

Member checking. Member checking involves including the participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations, so they can judge the credibility of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). After the interviews, participants of this study were asked to review the findings to determine how well the data analysis is reflective of their actual experiences. Also, near the end of the study, willing participants were asked to review the researcher's conclusions to determine if they were relevant and credible to their experiences.

Peer Review. Peer review is a validation method in which the research seeks feedback from those who are experienced in the field of the research area (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition to utilizing validation strategies such as triangulation, clarifying research bias, and reengaging in member checking and peer review to examine the interview questions, sample categories, descriptive richness, and depth of information relevant to the study. Throughout the process, the researcher was in contact with their mentor to ensure procedures remained aligned to the study's objectives.

Pilot Testing. Pilot testing is a validation method that helps to check content validity and contributes to improving items, format, and scale (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Validity concerns may happen when the sample selected does not accurately represent the purpose of the study. To mitigate this, interview questions were piloted with educators purposely selected to meet criteria like this study before the inclusion in this study. Participants were reminded that their responses were confidential, and interviews would

be conducted in ways that were most comfortable for everyone. The feedback from critical colleagues and the research's mentor helped ensure the questions stayed on task and aligned with the study's objectives.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is a validation method in which the researcher goes through a critical self-reflection to their biases, predispositions, and preferences (Schwandt, 2007). With the researcher having a better understanding of their ethics and role in the study, the researcher was able to acquire more illuminating, deeper, and richer meaning to the study (Kleinsasser, 2000).

Research Ethics

Qualitative researchers rely heavily on collecting data through interviews, observations, written materials, and audiovisual material. The personal interaction between researcher and participants is crucial in data gathering, making it important that the research follows the guidelines set by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John's University and participating school districts.

According to the IRB, participants must receive a statement that the study involves research, an explanation of the purposes of the research and the expected duration of the subject's participation, a description of the procedures to be followed, and identification of any experimental procedures is required (St. John's University, 2020). Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, which is the understanding of the school leader's decision process of general and instrumental music programs. All participants were provided a written voluntary consent form, Appendix A, in which they consent to participate in the research. Once consent was received from the participants,

an email was sent requesting that they participate in a research study, as well as

informing them that their participation is voluntary and that they may terminate their

participation at any point. Their participation came with the understanding that the

information shared will be confidential in a private setting with their anonymity

providing the security that participation will bear no consequence. The research took

place during the 2020-2021 school year, where participants answered interview questions

to gain a better understanding of the decision process of general and instrumental music

programs in various school districts across Long Island. Participants were provided with

reciprocity of information at the conclusion of the research that will help in future

decision processes by having a greater understanding of the decision process of general

and instrumental music programs from multiple districts and perspectives across the

suburban New York Metropolitan area.

Data Analysis Approach

The process of data analysis was based on the systematic design of grounded

theory, including the use of data analysis procedures of open, axial, and selective coding

and to develop a logical theory (Creswell, 2015). The collection of data and its analysis

occurred simultaneously. Using this process allowed the researcher to uncover important

information through data collection and identify areas that may need further data

collection or opportunities to address emerging questions. Open coding, a method of data

analysis that creates labels and categories within data, was utilized initially to create

categories and themes. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined open coding as studying the

data to compare, conceptualize, and place the data into categories. Through open coding,

the research was able to identify categories through conversations with the music leaders,

finance leaders, administrators, and essential documents. The use of axial coding allowed

the researcher to focus on core categories from the open coding data and make

connections further between the categories identified. Returning to data collection or

reanalyzing data to address additional and/or important findings will be necessary. Using

selective coding, the final process of developing a theory or substantiated explanation

was written using the correlations between the categories found in the axial coding

model. Data analysis in qualitative research comprises examining data and reducing them

to themes by coding and recoding (Creswell, 2015). Using the multi-coding process, the

research was coded based on phrases and themes. The narrative helped to better

understand the human experiences acquired from the data (Mertler, 2016).

The software, Dedoose was first used to bring order to coding by bringing the

multiple perspectives of interviewees into a represented, effective, and efficient source of

data (Salmona, Lieber, & Kaczynski, 2019). This is because Dedoose allows researchers

to upload transcripts from interviews and supports differentiating user-defined code

levels. Dedoose does not do the actual analysis as it is the researcher who drives the data

and identifies the tagged categories (Salmona, Lieber, & Kaczynski, 2019). However,

with the number of participants and many contrasting roles and positions, a research

matrix was used to better define the themes and categories. The categories were based on

the different levels of the conceptual framework "ladder of inference" and matching key

phrases and terms from the data available from the interviews, music curriculum, and

school improvement plans. The data acquired through interviews and documents were

coded identifying as facts, assumptions, meanings, and conclusions. With the information

sorted on Excel spreadsheets, the researcher created different spreadsheets per each

participant's role'. Therefore, each spreadsheet provided a clear comparison and contrast as each participant had their own row lining up to the column's information containing interview questions. These levels of acquired information are classified by common trends, common beliefs, and policies. The data acquired was used to conclude music education policies.

Researcher Role

The researcher's role in this study was to serve as an analyst determining how school administrators make decisions regarding general and instrumental music programs and identify determining factors. This researcher is a district music coordinator and music teacher in an elementary school district. As a music coordinator for eight years, the researcher regularly focuses on State mandates to ensure music maintains its integral part in the curriculum.

Although the researcher's experiences in music education have driven the desire to focus on this area, it was imperative to separate these experiences from the observations and information being obtained. The researcher, although having a familiar background in music education and music curriculum, was cognizant of the deficits and gaps in understanding of the participants. The researcher assumed understandings, even if not discussed, cannot be accepted, instead of probing, and clarifying questions and answers was necessary to deepen the level of conversation and build theories. The researcher understood that participants inhabit a world they have constructed based on their beliefs, values, and cultural influences. The researcher sought to understand the participants' perspectives by observing and connecting with them.

Bias was mitigated by having a cross-section of schools across the New York Metropolitan area. The sample population of the study met this geographic requirement, and the sample size allowed the transferability of information about programs and perceived motivations regarding the decision process of school leaders regarding general and instrumental music programs. Results were not manipulated by personal biases as the data from the interview steered the results. Results indicated that the research response rate was highly influenced by the interests of participants, interview structure, communication methods, and assurance of privacy and confidentiality (Saleh & Bista, 2017). Since a basic causal-comparative design does not control for subject characteristics threat, this researcher matched participants through various districts representing different academic student achievements to strengthen internal validity. Using scripted interview questions helped to reduce data collector bias will assist in comparing characteristics of each district such as socioeconomic, demographic, and academic achievement differences concerning their music program.

Summary

The next chapter focuses on the data, beliefs, and assumptions from selected participants for this research. Data was acquired from school documents through online resources and provided by the participants. The data acquired through this research was classified and sorted to provide a better understanding of the decision-making process on how music programs such as general music and instrumental music are implemented in suburban schools. The chapter identifies educational leaders' perceptions, how programs changed over time, and the different actions that were taken.

CHAPTER 4

Introduction

Chapter 4 provided a qualitative analysis of the data collected through the research

procedures outlined in Chapter 3. Following the theoretical framework of the ladder of

inference, the collection and analysis of data recognize the kinds of inferences school

leaders are making, the assumptions implicit in these inferences, and the decisions they

ultimately make, and the effects that are acting on these inferences have on general and

instrumental music programs. The researcher designed the investigation to examine the

following research questions:

1. How do school leaders perceive music education in a suburban region?

2. How do educational leaders describe their decision-making process regarding

   their approach to music education?

3. What is the impact of the decision-making process on music education

   programs?

Chapter 4 is organized into three themes, following the order of the study's three

research questions. In theme one, the researcher addressed the perceptions of 15

individuals with different roles in their district, such as district superintendents, music or

fine arts directors, finance directors, building-level administrators, and music teachers

across three New York Metropolitan suburban public-school districts with contrasting

student population size, New York State ELA/Math performances and student

expenditure. The interview data collected showed how music is perceived based on individuals' roles in their school district.

In theme two, interview data was utilized again to understand the decision-making process of music education within the contrasting school districts. The interview data determined who makes the decision and who creates curriculum and implements music instructional practices and learning.

In theme three, the researcher used data from the districts' district music curriculum, music-related school board policies, school board agendas and minutes, school improvement plan, and the interview data to determine the short-term and long-term impact of music education programs within the three contrasting districts.

The qualitative data revealed individuals' mindsets on music education within their various roles within the school district bureaucracies have on the perceptions and roles of music education within the districts. In chapter 5, the researcher considers how the findings in chapter 4 inform the study's original research questions. Additionally, the findings in chapter 4 will be examined to see how they fit within the context of the recent literature and their implications for future research and practice.

Findings

This study involved three distinct school districts in the suburban metropolitan New York area. In the initial process of identifying unique districts, throughout the research process, additional variations were found.

Table 4

Additional Descriptions of Districts

District	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Starting Age of Instrumental Music	Music Staff Size	During School Programs Offered
F	2	1472	3rd Grade	7	Orchestra Band Chorus General Music
O	10	5537	3rd Grade	19	Orchestra Band Chorus General Music Dance Theater
M	8	6854	4th Grade	22	Orchestra Band Chorus General Music Music Business Music Technology AP Music

This study involved fifteen participants, five selected from each of the three district schools with varying roles.

The first key person chosen from each school is the superintendent, the top executive officer who oversees the school's operations. The role of the superintendent is to participate in making critical decisions for the daily operations of the school. These decisions include staffing, development of educational programs, spending, among others. They have a noteworthy influence in making and implementing educational programs. Hence, their inclusion in this study helped determine if they can and support music programs in the district schools.

The second person was the Music Administrator. Official titles vary by district. Smaller districts tend to have a Lead Music Teacher or Music Coordinator with teaching duties. While medium and larger districts may have an Arts Director, Director of Music and Visual Arts, or a specific Music Director. The role of a music administrator is to provide technical support. The administrator ensures that all activities associated with teaching music are implemented to achieve the desired objectives. They must create the music curriculum for their school, leading to identifying challenges or new opportunities.

The third person was the building administrator, who controls the quality of the music programs at a building level. Depending on the district, these responsibilities solely rest on a building principal, but other districts share leadership responsibilities with the building's assistant principals. Often, these building administrators help evaluate and determine which and how many music programs to implement. They also help to identify resources required in the full implementation of the music programs. The building administrators were included in this project to establish how they influence resource allocation to the music programs.

Then, the finance director was included. The role of a finance director is to manage all the financial plans that include budgeting, accounting, purchasing internal audit, payroll, and accounts payable since they have information on the amount needed to implement the music education programs.

Finally, the project included a music teacher. The role of the teacher is to interact and instruct the students on various aspects of music. Music teachers have distinct roles in students' education. Such positions may include instrumental or general music

teachers. Instrumental music teachers may teach band or orchestra solely, while others may teach both programs. In this research, all three districts had teachers teaching in their specialized areas. At the elementary levels, these teachers would teach at multiple buildings. The exception was District F due to its smaller size. General music teachers, on the other hand, instruct students from Pre-Kindergarten through Eighth grade. In addition, they have the responsibility of teaching the chorus. Teachers understand students' education needs. Hence, their inclusion in this project helped establish how schools can address the needs of learners.

This study involved fifteen participants: unique individuals from three different school districts in the suburban metropolitan New York area. Please see table 5 for more details.

Table 5

Additional Descriptions of Participants

Participant	District	Position	Years in Current Position	Years in Education	Music Education Background
1	F	Superintendent	2	30+	Yes
2	F	Music Leader	8	10	Yes
3	F	Assistant Principal	6	20	No
4	F	Purchasing Director	15+	-	No
5	F	Orchestra Teacher	3	3	Yes
6	O	Superintendent	5	30+	No
7	O	Director of Arts	15	30	Yes
8	O	Principal	10	17	No
9	O	Finance Director	7	-	No
10	O	General Music Teacher	20	22	Yes
11	M	Superintendent	8	30+	No
12	M	Music Director	4	15	Yes
13	M	Assistant Principal	2	8	No
14	M	Director of Finance	1	15	No
15	M	Band Teacher	16	16	Yes

Theme 1: Leadership's Perceptions on Music Programming

The participants had different perceptions of music education in suburban regions based on their roles. Superintendents in all three districts had positive perceptions of the music programs in the suburban areas. However, there are differences between the districts according to leadership's prior experience, need for superintendent support, financial cost, the role of the music teacher, and role of the community.

Leadership's prior experience on the value of music. The three superintendents strongly supported the inclusion of music education in the school curriculum because it equips learners with knowledge of facing the external world after school. However, their prior experiences and individualized value of music education shape how music is

portrayed in their district. All three districts have veteran educational leaders, but their prior experiences varied. The superintendent from District F had previous experience as a music teacher before administrative roles as principal and curriculum director. On the other hand, *District O* was a classroom teacher, principal, and director of special education. *District M* likewise was a classroom teacher but was a reading specialist before moving on to administrative roles as principal and assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. The participants gave different responses that showed how their leadership attributes contribute significantly to music education with their unique backgrounds.

The interview with the Superintendent from *District F* explored the vital need for music education in schools. According to the superintendent from district F, music increases the learner's creativity. Music is an art, and it should be applied using a strategy like other programs. Music education should ensure students get skills they can use either in their personal lives or career development. *District F* noted that:

> I would say that it's a program that sparks passion, sparks interest, sparks creativity in all. I do believe music education is a pathway to so many other things. So, the more inclusive a program can be, the better. At the same time, I also believe that it is a program that should have the same level of rigor that you expect in an academic program. So, while you might have a concert where you have all or any interested party participating in that same concert, you might also have those that choose to take it further and to have more developed skills and be able to show that as well. While I believe in inclusivity in programs like this, I also am not supportive of that concept of watering down elite programs either.

According to *District F*, music is essential to children's growth and development. Therefore, kids in schools in suburban regions should be introduced to music in the initial stages to develop communication, critical thinking, and interpersonal relations. Through music, students can learn the art of communication or how they can express themselves. *District F* further noted that that:

> I think obviously kids must know the basics and the arts should be supported and promoted. But I also think a well-rounded education has to tap into what kids are interested in as well. And I also think we need to teach those life skills that you need to just survive out, you know, out in the world.

The interview with the superintendent from *District M* explored the leadership traits needed in music education. *District M* administrator noted that leadership qualities such as empathy and trustworthiness are effective in implementing music education. Besides, the administrator noted that motivation is another leadership trait needed to implement the music program. Motivation is needed to mold and encourage learners to follow the classroom concepts taught in music programs. *District M* noted passion for music education and, given a chance, would work with students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The administrator's leadership traits can influence this passion. The administrator said that:

> As someone who played musical instruments growing up, it greatly impacted me as a student during that time. As someone who has a great love of music, I believe it is an essential component of any curriculum, and students should be exposed to various genres and instruments. I would like to be able to give music teachers

more space to work with students. Due to the pandemic, there is also limited mobility and opportunity for teachers/students who have drastically affected the program.

District M noted that the district held the summer recreation program where music, art, and theater classes and sports skills camps were available past summers. This allowed students to not only socialize with their peers but express their creativity.

The interview with the superintendent from District O explored how music sparks passion, interest, and creativity. With the superintendent background in special education, including all students is essential, and wholeheartedly wishes to include all students in the music programs. However, the challenges of balancing the inclusivity of programs with achieving the level of rigor you expect in an academic program are understood.

Music is no exception to being part of the whole educational experience, but academic and performance expectations remain high. The district is not interested in "watering down" experiences and programs. *District O* supports two levels of music, where you have the inclusive group supporting all learners and another group focusing on excelling. Learning music is suggested as being like learning how to read. District O said that:

> You're teaching them to read so that they will be lifelong readers and appreciate that as a pleasurable experience. Well, beyond their school years, the same thing with music. Teaching and learning and experiencing music, not so that you can say, check, I took my obligatory courses, and I'm done. And, not so I can just

listen to one type of music as a young adult, but to know that post high school, even post-college, music can be a joyful life experience.

Music is integral in living a well-rounded, balanced life and was expressed by the superintendent in all three districts. *District F*, the smaller sized district, focuses on individual students' growth while the larger *District M* focuses on providing opportunities to their students. In contrast, *District O* focused on the balance of inclusivity and excellence. The leadership's prior background was apparent, as their previous roles in education impacted their focal point in ensuring a solid music program.

Need for Support from Leadership. Music administrators and music teachers alike look up to their district leadership for support. This was evident in the research that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reasons included program requests, staffing, and budgetary. The music administrators acknowledged the unique role of music education programs, but each district has its own sets of challenges.

District M music administrator stated that they had introduced musical instruments to K-9 General Music and instrument music from grades 4 to 12. Other concepts taught in the school include Music Theory, AP Music Theory, and Music in Our Lives. However, it is difficult to achieve success without support from the community and the leadership. As proof of how the school values music, the administrator noted that at the onset of COVID-19, they implemented restrictions, hired additional staff, and increased the rooms to accommodate more students. The music administrators from *District O* were also optimistic about the role of music to students. In their school, the leadership has embraced music education as part of the curriculum and plays a vital role

in adequately implementing it. *District O* said that: "The administrative leadership team, including the superintendent, director of fine and performance arts and school principals play the largest role in determining the number of music programs."

A shared vision seeks to establish acceptance of a common curriculum and educational expectations. It forms a sense of consistency that supports student success because educators are reinforcing the same expectations and effective practices. The vision provides a reference point for those making decisions.

According to the *District F* music administrator, they have introduced orchestra in the 3rd grade and a music band in the 4th grade. However, the success of music education has been achieved through collaboration with the community. Since the district leadership liked music, it gave substantial support during COVID-19, which ensured the continuation of learning without interruptions.

District O music administrator noted that the vital leadership trait needed in music education is empowering others. According to the music administrator, a top-down leadership approach was ineffective in implementing a music education program. Instead, schools should adopt a shared vision achieved through collaboration.

Financial Cost. Finance administrators also had their perceptions of the music programs in suburban regional schools. While most of the cost associated with music education rests on staff salaries, total spending varied based on the driving force of music participation and handling the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the finance administrator from *District O*, the demand for music courses had increased, with a rise in the number of performances. The price of

instruments had also increased following the high demand for music courses. Nevertheless, students benefit significantly from the music courses. With the introduction of providing 1:1 technology devices such as iPads and Chromebooks to students, added funds allowed the music department to explore ways to expand its technology integration. The district expanded the purchasing of digital software, specialized computer equipment for recording, and 3-D printers.

The finance director from *District M* also noted the increase in costs from music supplies, especially those related to COVID-19. District M also had to handle the COVID-19 pandemic with an impact financially on the music program. While there was an intention to grow programs, the main budgetary focus was elsewhere. With the support of the district leaders, District M was able to hire additional music teachers to ensure that the district meets local guidance on spacing.

In *District F*, the arts are supported and promoted because it is necessary for a well-rounded education. The district's leadership's previous experience and dedicated support of the Arts vowed never to cut its funding. As a district with a small student population, it also has a small budget. Despite this, the music programs have enough resources to ensure the continuation of their programs. While districts in the regions face cuts or restrictions, *District F* acquired necessary safeguard materials and already has ample space to ensure that all music programs continue without any pauses.

All three districts had strong financial leaders along with district leadership that was supportive of the arts. However, each district handled the financial cost from the pandemic slightly differently. *District F*, the smaller district, focused on ensuring the

continuation of the programs without interruptions. *District M*, the larger district, had to focus on ensuring enough staff to ensure that students continue to get a fair and appropriate music education. On the other hand*, District O* focused on enhancing its programs by integrating the innovative technology implemented during the pandemic.

Role of Music Teachers as Leaders. The quality of the music program is determined by the administrative leadership team, including the superintendent, director of fine and performing arts, and school principals. Music teachers also play a significant role in determining the quality of music programs. Music is an outlet for creativity, individuality, and comradery, and music teachers serve as the gatekeepers to ensure quality learning and performance are achieved by their students.

The *District O* music administrator acknowledged that stakeholders' feedback is a critical success factor in music curriculum implementation. Other essential factors to consider are the quality of music performances throughout the school year and students' participation in extracurricular activities that include chorus, orchestra, or band. Besides these performances, considering the students' academic performance data can help establish if music education positively influences their learning. The leadership skill of empowering other people has led *District O* to support music education in schools.

> I believe that music and the arts are integral in living a well-rounded, balanced life. Music is an outlet for creativity, individuality, and comradery. I am quite satisfied with music instruction in our school. We hope to enhance an already successful program with some newer initiatives focused on higher achievement.

According to the *District F* music administrator, the leadership qualities of teachers significantly influence music education. Music teachers need to establish strong connections with students. The administrator also noted that his leadership role in music education implementation had led to the introduction of the latest programs. The participant's responses to some of the interview questions were:

> Music teachers play a major role in how the music programs look like. As a smaller size district, they have a more direct connection to the students and the community. Re-establish the performance program post-pandemic in a safe, logical way. We need to re-establish a strong program with dedicated space to safely practice and perform. Eliminated third-grade recorder and replaced with ukulele and other alternative instruments. In time, to Expand programs again to include jazz band, marching band, various choral groups (*District F*).

> Music teachers also had their perceptions on the music education in suburban schools. For instance, the *District F* music teacher noted that band and general music should be combined. Besides, the participant said that music programs' success requires adopting recent technology and sharing ideas with colleagues. The participant also identified other critical success factors that included efficient classroom management, support from the admin, and allowing music teachers to have enough classroom spaces for teaching. Furthermore, the *District M* music teacher said that an interest in music programs should be established through maintaining connections to students' interests and hand on or physical learning. Above all, the classroom teacher should be supportive.

Music teachers are in many ways the leader of making sure that music is properly integrated into their schools and properly implemented to meet expectations. Their ability to shape, influence, and design their own unique music curriculum ensures that the creative processes of students rest on their decisions. Music teachers are the individuals responsible for making sure the music curriculum is not just in their classroom but a school-wide learning experience.

Role of Community. A community that is supportive of the music program is the foundation of a strong program. There was consensus from the districts that community support was necessary to provide our students' robust music program. How much support and how the support was utilized varied among the three districts.

District M's perceptions of music education rest on the support of the community in growing the use of technology and expanding the offerings of music programs. The *District M* music administrator reported that technology plays a significant role in music education. Besides, a strong administration must collaborate with parents and the community to successfully implement the music program. The participant noted that:

> Technology is very big and supportive in the district. Strong district-level administration help guide what is expected, along with parent associations and boosters helping strengthen the successes of the music program. Music tends to be a very community and involved component as it ties into sports, academics, and extracurricular for a large portion of the student body.

District M and community involvement include the various celebrities who came from or lived in the community. Board of Education members, influential parents, and parent groups shape the district's decision on what programs should be added.

District O music teachers had positive perceptions of the role of music education and its introduction in suburban schools. According to *District O*, music education enables learners to become well-rounded. Besides, the principal in *District O* supports music education due to its perceived benefits. The participant also noted that technology was a critical factor in the implementation of the music education curriculum.

> The music program servers to help students become well-rounded. The principal encourages music participation, and most of the students are in the chorus, orchestra, or band. This leads to having multiple groups, as there are also more advanced groups for students who are excelling. The program, in essence, has a JV and Varsity ensemble. The community supports the Arts, and participation is strong. I would prefer to expand on the technology.

District O developed their program, such as the theater program at the high school. The theater program started with hiring a part-time music teacher who built up the program and individually improved by the program by also earning a physical education certification. The program grew to also include dance classes as an alternative to physical education and the expansion of the small box theater to help showcase performances. The community was incredibly supportive of these changes and insisted on having absolute state-of-the-art facilities.

Leadership positive experience with music and the district's goal of inclusivity and excellence has allowed the district to explore opportunities to enhance its current programs. The community is supportive that more students are involved and provides an avenue for students to reach higher.

As a smaller district, *District F* has tremendous support from the community, where hundreds of parents regularly attend Board Meetings. The same goes with the music education in the school, where parents are involved in the process and help in fundraisers and community awareness of performances.

Community involvement is necessary for music education programs, large and small. A strong community helps support music programs, whether concerts, marching bands, or music trips. As important stakeholders, it also helps grow music programs by enhancing programs through technology, awareness, and funding approval.

Summary. The most significant difference appears between administrators and music educators in how they perceive the music program and the role of each other in leadership toward the program. District sizes cause variations in the way issues are handled and the resources available. There is also a marked difference within each group to understand and expectations that leadership impacts music education. In summary, the perceptions and actions of leadership are decidedly different in each district. This can result from variations in the perceptions of music, support from leadership, financial costs, the role of music teachers, and the level of support from the community.

Theme 2: Decision-Making of Music Programs

Designing and implementing a music education program as part of a school curriculum is a decision-making process that involves multiple stakeholders. By interviewing the 15 participants, the researcher obtained adequate data on the decision-making process for implementing music programs in three different district schools.

From the interview responses, school superintendents noted that they have a crucial role in implementing music programs in their schools. Music administrators in all three districts admitted that making music programs decisions is a process that involves multiple stakeholders. While it is understood that decision-making is a process that involves all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, the approach for deciding on the implementation of music education programs within districts does vary. Some districts take a top-down approach, have a leadership committee, or take a more collaborative approach

Autocratic Approach. One approach to the decision-making of music programs includes individuals in leadership positions to make the decisions solely. These school leaders can be considered to follow an autocratic leadership style, where they have total authority and control over the decision-making process. By virtue of their position and job responsibilities, such as superintendent or even Music administrator, they not only control the efforts of the music department but monitor them for completion.

The autocratic decision-making approach is best used when control is necessary, often with little margin for error. In contrast, it was noted that school administrators and leaders work to ensure that everyone is satisfied with the decision made regarding the

music education program. The pressure and expectations remain to ensure the music program is successfully implemented. According to *District O*, leaders must play the greatest role in making decisions on implementing music programs. *District O* said that:

> They must be passionate. They must be dedicated. They must be organized so that they can take a task from vision to reality, which takes a tremendous amount of organization with lots of balls in the air at the same time. So, there's a lot that I think we can say, but I think, passionate about the work, committed to the work, and then being organized enough to get the work done.

Organization and effort are needed from leaders in music education to ensure decisions have a lasting impact. The superintendent from *District O* had different perceptions about the decision-making process for music education programs. Noting that many of the music education decisions rested solely on the Director of Music. *District O* superintendent said that:

> Many decisions are done by the music leader, who is very by the book. Never have to worry that things will be done. But in terms of being a little bit more open-minded to some different ways of approaching will be a way to improve the program and be an important part of the decision process in the future.

This statement implies that leaders should be decisive when making and implementing music education programs. This follows an autocratic decision approach, despite the music administrator noting they are willing to listen to the latest ideas. The autocratic approach by the *District O* music administrator is not just solely the individual making decisions, and everyone follows. The music administrator does listen and review

situations. With the individual with the most educational experience and background in the district, the person can decide what they want to be implemented and how. While most of the music curricular decisions rests on the music administrator, it does not mean sole decision-making on music education in the district.

The superintendent from *District O* noted that important curricular decisions, especially those related to government mandates and district policies, rested on them and their staff. It is essential this limitation takes place to ensure that the standards that were set up in place in prior years continue to exist. In addition to curricular restraints, there are often budgetary. The superintendent noted:

> This is common. This is the same thing that I encountered in my previous district. We begin conversations with the assistant superintendent for Business to review our budgetary needs. And essentially, we look at last year's budget, and we identify areas where perhaps you might need an increase, some areas that were maybe underutilized that we could decrease, and areas that we're looking to keep consistent. So once this conversation takes place, then the assistant superintendent of Business uses that information to begin to build the overall school budget for the district.

The *District O* finance director responded how the decision-making process includes the budget required for implementing the music education programs. The finance director said that:

> I meet with the Director of Fine and Performing Arts during budget development to assess the effectiveness of prior year expended funds and plan for the upcoming school

year of new initiatives that may increase our General Fund budget. We discuss

department needs and limitations within the available budget. The music administrator

then must make music program decisions based on these budgetary changes.

From the perspective of a building administrator in *District O*, leadership traits

influence the implementation of music programs. The decision-making organ consists of

the superintendent, the fine and performing arts director, and school principals. However,

feedback from other stakeholders is a critical factor. The music director said that:

> Direct feedback from all stakeholders is a critical success factor. The quality of
>
> music performances throughout the school year and participation rates in
>
> extracurricular music opportunities (chorus, band, orchestra, NYSSMA, LISFA,
>
> etc.) are also critical success factors. In addition, academic student performance
>
> data continues to be a critical success factor.

It is apparent that even though an autocratic approach is in decision-making, the

music director is conscious of the community's wants and desires, understanding that

their support is critical to success. With the decisive leadership approach, the music

director's long-term experience in the field and openness to listen to stakeholders resulted

in much success and growth from the music program even during the COVID-19

pandemic.

This autocratic approach to decision-making still requires being open-minded

based on the restrictions financially and through local government and district regulations

and policies. The action by this autocratic approach requires much confidence in their

actions to establish effective music programs for their district. It also requires respect

from the stakeholders in the district to support the decisions. With the support from the superintendent and music teachers and understanding limitations, it can lead to the desired outcomes.

Participative Approach. Sometimes it seems that decisions must be made solely from the top. It is quick and often effective. While the process can be effective, it may not be the best decision-making approach for music education in all districts.

Sometimes following a participative approach to decision-making is a result of an autocratic decision. Some decisions were solely made from the top for a long time, such as in District F. The Superintendent from *District F* whose been in the district for only a few years and notably during the COVID-19 pandemic notes that:

> There's a ton of things that we've changed. A lot of decisions fell solely to the superintendent. I made it a mission to change this. I changed the interview process. I brought in decision-making a corporate company to teach people how to make wise decisions, added more parents to committees.

These changes were meant to include every person in the decision-making process. The decisions made should also be correct and lead to the desired changes. For example, *District F'*s decisions ensure that teachers and students are satisfied with the music education program. District F further argued that:

> I'm never going to take music away, so that's not an option for me, but I am going to look at ways to maximize more kids and try to help people develop rapport with parents and with students so that they attract more kids in music. I

mean, when you go into music, it's a situation where you're possibly an elective, and you could be cut. You need to work harder.

The superintendent in *District F* took extraordinary steps to ensure that the district's participative approach to decision-making is taking place. It also involved training the staff to understand better how the process works. As the district leader in the superintendent position, their role is to collect ideas and opinions from staff. Nevertheless, sometimes the final decision still solely rests on the superintendent. As a smaller district, this tends to be true.

From the perspective of the *District F* building administrator, stakeholders closer to the students have a primary role in the decision-making process in music programs. The vital trait of district administrators is flexibility and the ability to delineate tasks to qualified professionals while on a building level. The building administrator identifies traits such as multitasking as critical to the decision-making process. Following true to the participative approach, the superintendent decided to ensure the necessity of the music programs. The subordinates, such as building administrators, work on resolving these objectives to better understand the intricacies of what's going on.

Music teachers provided reviews on the decision-making process. According to the *District F* music teacher, their role in the decision-making process was very minimal. However, their contribution includes incorporating new concepts and ideas via collaboration with classroom teachers and building administrators.

Since District F is a smaller district, it is no surprise that the music teacher wants even more involvement in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, the district made

significant strides in shifting from a previous autocratic approach to a more participative

approach. Perhaps not all participants felt they were giving significant contributions to

the decision-making process of music programs even though everyone were participants.

Transformational Approach. Often the top-down approach appears to be how

decisions are being made across districts, with superintendents being the sole decision-

makers. According to the superintendents from *District F* and *M*, decision-making is a

top approach that begins with them. Both note it only begins with them and does not

solely rest on them. While the superintendent from *District F* took a participative

approach, and perhaps due to the smaller district's size and the district's relative short-

term experience with shared decision making, *District M* took a more transformational

approach to decision making of music programs. Shared decision-making is more

feasible with the district's larger size, having additional administrators, and with the

superintendent's significantly longer-term in the district.

The superintendent from *District M* went further with who and how decisions are

being made. In terms of when making decisions, the Director, Assistant Superintendent

for Curriculum, and Board of Education consult with the music department staff. They

then engage with the Asst. Superintendent for curriculum and propose the Asst. Supt for

Business for integration into fiscal plan and budget. This establishes sections within the

district to reflective think and plan.

In *District M*, the music teacher and even students have a significant role in this

process since they are the critical determinants of success. A personal decision-making

self-assessment. In a way is like *District O* music administrator's perceptions on decision making in music education programs, noting:

> Our music teachers often seek to incorporate new strategies and resources into their music instruction. These new ideas come from participation in professional development opportunities and ongoing collaboration with colleagues.

Despite both districts listening to their music teachers, *District M* went further and supported a dialogue of vision and mission sharing and made a conscious approach to shared decision making.

Then, *the District M* building administrator said that even with employment, the principal and district administration shared input in making these critical decisions. Music teachers were no exceptions. The participant further noted that decision-making in school districts is an inclusive process that requires the participation of teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders.

> To make music more of a cross-curricular entity to encourage classroom teachers to incorporate music more frequently. As part of an inclusivity curriculum, music is a great way to spearhead a platform of diversity. It is not only happening on a building level but also through the district.

By comparison, this is a significant difference from, *District O* where much of the music program decisions rests on the music administrator. The music teacher from *District O* noted that:

Music program decisions are usually decided by the Fine Arts director, who is very supportive of new ideas. The director is willing to offer opportunities for new programs and reward teachers who excel in their endeavors. The director is also in charge of building placements and assignments for the teach teachers. While scheduling, especially for music classes, are decided at the building level. The district has a blueprint plan on what is necessary to teach and is easy to follow.

From this statement, the music administrator from *District O* plays a primary role in implementing music programs. Music directors offer opportunities and rewards to a teacher whose students record excellent performance through the decisions made. The decision-making also involves scheduling music classes at the building level. This scheduling ensures all key steps are followed to implement music education.

This is different from *District M,* where decision-making also involves developing respect and rapport within the music department. The music administrator from *District M* noted that they make much of the decisions regarding the music department. However, the role of the teachers is to oversee the implementation of the curriculum at the building level and provide back feedback. The music teacher from *District M* noted:

Most decisions regarding the music department are through the district Arts director. We provide input and suggestions to the program. Music teachers tend to oversee their own curriculum at the building level.

Important and critical district decisions remain being made from the top. The decisions regarding music programs in *District M* are almost laissez-faire. District leadership has created a vision, established by committees such as financial and curricular, but relies on the individual music teachers to make critical program decisions ultimately. This approach recognizes the strength of each individual, and with guidance from the building level and district music administrator, continues to provide feedback and collaboratively realign goals.

Summary. The interview responses correspond to literature findings that decision-making for music education should be an inclusive process. For instance, Mark & Madura (2013) note that the school leadership should be actively involved in making decisions while involving other stakeholders such as parents. Similarly, Ferrell (2021) states that music administrators should participate actively in implementing decisions that lead to the success of music education programs. Thus, collective decision-making is fundamental for the success of music education programs in suburban regions, as per the interview responses. It is noted that the differences in district sizes and amount of time in the leadership position, the style of decision making varies. What may be effective may work in one district and not another. Likewise, what may work for one individual may not work for another, even in the same district.

Theme 3: Impact of Music Programs

The researcher collected data on the impact of music programs in the three districts. The responses from all participants in *Districts M, O,* and *F* did outline the impact of music programs as expected. However, each district had variations. Variations

included how parents respond, professional development, and how much music instruction.

Response from Parents. It was established that community involvement is necessary for music education programs, large and small. Parents, being a component of the community, are important stakeholders, helping music programs grow, changing priorities to match their children's needs and helping to promote awareness through music boosters, and aiding financially through fundraising.

District M website contains several links for parents to follow to informative websites about the value, importance, and need for their children's music education. The information on the website was more than a summary with dedicated sections on their district website. This was different from the other districts that tend to be limited or solely from music teachers' perspectives such as in *District F* or have limited online information such as *District O*. The music administrator from this *District M* noted that:

> I can't say that it's always been sunshine and roses, but at the end of the day, this
> is a community that understands the importance of the arts for kids, and we're
> always moving in that direction, even though it's sometimes a circuitous path.

This statement implies that the community, especially parents, has identified music's significance to their kids. They understand that music is like other arts that improve their creativity, critical thinking, and personal development. With *District M* being a larger district, they have much larger ensembles helping them compete and participate in several prestigious music events, notably their marching band. In addition,

the program has contacts with several alumni, some highly successful in the entertainment field, to help provide continual support.

In *District M*, the parents are also involved in the decision-making process. Aside from the parents sitting on the school board, an active music booster provides financial support and the pressures to participate and succeed musically in providing quality performances and expecting high marks in competitions.

While *District M* receives its support from the notoriety and size of its parental support, this differs from *District F*, a smaller district. In contrast to the large-scale ensembles and events, *District F's* parents supported the music programs more intimately and personally. The parents took the initiative to support their children with the formation of music boosters. When approached with the challenge of finding a performance in New York City, the parents got together and fundraised the money for the event. The superintendent from *District F* even mentioned the significant participation from parents at school board meetings supporting the program. Parental involvement pressures administrators, teachers, and the school board to continue the music programs. The parent's response to the programs helps provide additional and enriching opportunities for the students to enhance their craft and provide additional contributions to the importance of the music programs in the district.

In *District O*, parents are essential stakeholders helping to shape music programs. While not directly involved in the decision process, they provide feedback on what parents wish the district to have. When the district had the small theater underutilized, there was an increased interest in having more opportunities for dance for students. The

administration supported the idea as a trial. The superintendent from *District O* noted that:

> We were developing our theater program at the high school, and we had hired a part-timer, and the director, basically said to her, "I can only offer you a 0.4, a couple of periods, but if you build it, it will get support." The opportunity was given to her, and the parents of those children made it successful.

The statement shows that the improved facilities meet parent responses. With the increased support of parents with their attendance at performances, encouraging other students to participate, and attending board meetings in support for the district's investment in music facilities. The district made the capital, staffing, and curricular changes to meet their interests. It was evident that the response from parents help shape successful music programs, especially those that are deemed desired,

Each participant gave some information on how different stakeholders supported the music education programs. *District M* uses its larger size and access to famous alumni to reach out and grow, with the challenges of higher expectations. *District F*, on the other hand, with its smaller size, support comes from parents to enhance and provide additional opportunities for the music programs. Lastly, *District O* uses the parents as curriculum feedback to adjust music programs' expectations and availabilities.

Parental response to the needs of music programs can vary. Parent response can concentrate on promoting and ensuring it is successful. It can also focus on enhancing the music programs that currently exist. In addition, their input and participation can guide school leaders in deciding which music programs to promote.

Professional Development. Implementing, adjusting, and even maintaining a successful music program includes updating policies, technology, and expectations. Professional development is found to be important to support music programs through the training of not only music teachers but all educators.

For instance, the superintendent from *District F* noted that:

Professional development is needed to support music. Music should be more than once a week. Each student can take an instrument home to learn to practice and to handle responsibilities and challenges. This also has parents more involved in their child's education.

This response implies that music teachers and parents work to ensure children learn music both at school and home. Thus, music has become part of their lifestyles. Following the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, the *District F* music leader noted that every step was taken to ensure that music education was continued even during the lockdown. Students continue to be allowed to access music lessons, and staffing was not impacted. The building administrator from *District F* even notated a successful moment that "with the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic," district and building-level administrators, in addition to music educators, maintained a way to preserve the music program without any interruptions or compromises.

District M worked on developing access through online platforms and required the assistance of parents. While professional development was provided to the music department, communicating and understanding the program required students and parents to learn it as well. With many students learning from home, during the height of the

COVID-19 pandemic, the building administrator from *District M* mentioned that parents had to participate actively in their kids' education, with music education not an exception.

Data collected from the institutions' websites shows the importance of music to children's development. For instance, *District M* has explained the role of music in children's development. According to the institution's website, the development of children who study music is different from that of non-musicians found at *District M*'s website labeled as Document M1 in Appendix H. Throughout the music department's section of the district's website featured the promotion of music's ability to improving neural networks leading to a higher cognitive capacity in solving numerical problems and language acquisition. This information is supported by Miendlarzewska & Trost (2014). They state that musical training has gained a great interest in the education sector due to its role in children's reasoning capabilities and verbal skills. Children's cognitive abilities such as language, memory, reasoning, arithmetic, and logic improve at each age, depending on how long they engage in music classes (Holland, 2011). Therefore, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders should support music education programs to facilitate the children's cognitive development. The district website also contained additional resources to help parents understand the music programs by including research articles, video-based instructional guides, recorded performances, and identifying expectations of each music program.

District M is focused on training the music department to meet the technological demands of today and instructing the community and stakeholders on the value of music

education and the changes that are taking place to ensure it continues to be successful. *District M* focuses on ensuring a learned community.

Most interviewees from *District O* shared a positive view of the music program. However, the district's updated website contains no direct links to the music department nor shares any information, especially about music. District O's website search results are represented as Document O1 in Appendix H. A search within the district website for music did find substantial links, resources, and teacher connections mainly prior to 2019.

This contrasted with *District F*, where each music teacher has a dedicated page on the district's website identified as Document F1 in Appendix H that featured individual music teachers providing program information, events, and information to the community and parents.

While the music teacher and music administrator did not mention professional development, with both the music teacher and music administrator being a part of the district for an exceptionally long time, it is evident that their interest in technology was not as prevalent as others. It was the building administrator and superintendent who shared the evolution of learning in the district. With the COVID-19 pandemic increasing the need and use of technology, the district has shifted to become a 1:1 district. The superintendent from *District O* mentioned it as a district success, largely due to the increased local and federal funds attained during the pandemic. The building administrator from *District O* also mentioned the training and the interest from teachers to adapt to the needs of the students. This was also evident in *District O*'s Board of Education minutes, identified as Document O2 in Appendix H. Training for the various

software programs became available to teachers, and the willingness of teachers to improve their craft was noted. *District O* has focused on newer technology because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Each district valued professional development as a way of improving its music programs. As evident in *District F*'s Board of Education minutes, identified as Document F2 in Appendix H, *District F* focused on providing educators with better access and understanding of music education. Parents in attendance voiced their support, and the district's actions in providing financial, space, and instruction time for music programs were evident.

Community awareness was also evident in *District M*'s Board of Education minutes, identified as Document M2. *District M* focused on providing development to the community by making them better aware of the district's music programs, how to access them and what is expected.

The district websites and board of education minutes from the participating school districts provided additional information on the decision process and support towards music programs in their districts. It was evident that professional development, teacher training, and community awareness were focus points for promoting music programs.

Amount of Music Instruction. While each district makes a significant effort to ensure music programs are available to all students, often scheduling, when, and how much instruction varies. Differences occurred in all three districts, likely due to the variation of their student population and staffing size.

Scheduling is one example where music programs are impacted. In *District F*, it was regularly to have music lessons and music classes once a week. While the superintendent from District F supports having music every day, it is not feasible due to staffing and scheduling the other core instructional curriculum, stressing the importance of opportunity. The district values how students can handle the responsibilities and challenges of music learning. However, a district with a smaller student population and thus fewer music teachers made multiple-day instruction during the week.

Scheduling is also an issue with larger school districts such as *District M*. Despite having significantly larger music teaching staff, and the student population far exceeds the scheduling opportunities for instruction. However, the high school does have ensemble music instruction (chorus, orchestra, and band) every day. In contrast to *District F*, *District M*'s focus is expanding music offerings such as AP Music, music technology, and music programming classes. District M provides the widest variety of music program choices among the three researched districts.

In *District O*, their scheduling is unique. Similarly, to District M, they can provide ensemble music every to students. Their middle school and elementary schools follow a 4-day cycle. The middle school meets twice every four days, and the elementary meets once every four days. The district, through this scheduling, was able to provide the most amount of music instructional time to their students.

All three districts provide general music instruction to all students from kindergarten through sixth grade and an option for seventh and eighth graders as an

alternative to ensemble music. However, each district varied on when they started the instrumental music program.

In *District O*, all instrumental music instruction starts in third grade, the earliest of the three research districts. Strong community support, staffing, and the implementation of the four-day cycle allowed sufficient teaching time to support starting the program in third grade. It is important to note that instrumental music teachers solely teach their specialized area and do not compromise their time elsewhere.

In *District F*, instrumental music starts for students in the third grade. However, it is only the string program, and the band program starts in fourth grade. While there is interest in starting the band program in third grade, staffing and scheduling limitations prevent this from happening.

In District M, instrumental programs start later in the fourth grade. Some instrumental teachers also teach some general music classes. However, the instrumental music program they teach consists of their specialty.

This response implies that music teachers and parents work to ensure children learn music both at school and home. Thus, music has become part of their lifestyles. Following the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in 2020, Daubney & Fautley (2020) noted that music education should be continued even during the lockdown. Students should be allowed to access music lessons through online platforms and with the assistance of parents. Therefore, parents must participate actively in their kids' music education. Larger districts have some flexibility in adjusting to changes. However, with *District M,* the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in hiring

additional staff to maintain the amount of teaching. District O was able to maintain the program without much change aside from acquiring protective equipment. Within *District F*, even with the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic as a smaller district, district and building-level administrators, in addition to music educators, maintained a way to preserve the music program without any interruptions or compromises.

Differences occurred in all three districts regarding the amount of instructional time and when students started music instruction. These variations result from the differences in districts' student population, staffing size, and administrative decision-making. The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the districts and brought decision-making as a more significant factor for the continuation and success of music programs.

Summary. All three districts had a robust parental response but with different goals and intentions. Parental responses contrasted from supporting expanding a thriving music program, enhancing music programs, and helping guide what music programs are available.

Professional development is an area that all three districts can focus on improving. All three districts did not have a district-wide music curriculum available. In the era of big data, it is essential for educators involved with music education to share information and provide resources to their constituents and educational team. Li's (2020) research findings suggest that efficient music sharing is essential for daily teaching and allows for a more effective platform to outline the importance of music. The information found on the websites could then be attainable across big data and searchable through search and social platforms, showcasing music education's value.

District M made the most remarkable attempt of providing resources to the community by providing links, videos, and documents to help them learn about the importance of music education and the newer initiatives being implemented. *District F* provided individual web pages for the music teachers to share their goals and examples. District O concentrated on parental word of mouth to help establish and maintain music programs.

The amount of music instruction and when music instruction starts are essential to the success of music programs. Scheduling, staffing, and student population are key contributing factors to these decisions. However, the decision of music programming and expanding options can also impact the amount of music instruction.

While all three districts' goals are to have the best music program available, decisions have impacted how parents' responses and involvement are utilized, how professional development is shared, and how much instructional time and availability is offered.

Conclusion

The main findings are categorized into three themes. The first was the perception of music programs. All the participants had positive perceptions of music education. They supported music education programs in suburban regions due to their significant role in students' growth and development. The participants from the three districts elaborated their distinct roles in supporting the continuity of music education. With their unique backgrounds, position, and educational experiences, their perspectives of music

education varied. An example is superintendents' previous experience as music educators contrasting with those with special education or solely classroom instruction.

The second theme was the decision-making process for music programs. The study established that school superintendents played the most significant role in making music programs to implement. Besides, the decision-making process should involve all stakeholders besides the school leadership. Administrators took different decision-making approaches based on the size of their district and the amount of time in their position ranging from autocratic, participative, and transformative. The smaller district concentrated on collaborating decision-making, while the larger district collaborated as committees. However, administrators who have been in their specific position for a significant number of years, while open to suggestions from others, however, made decisions unilaterally when it comes to music education. Teachers, parents, and students were found to contribute mainly to the success of music programs if they were involved at every stage of decision-making.

The final theme was the impact of music programs. Unfortunately, the expected data from specific curricular items was not achieved. Districts did not have a district-based music program curriculum as that control rested on the building administrator or the individual music teacher. Distinguishable differences with parental responses, professional development, and amount of music instruction were also identified. These differences were noted due to the different student population sizes and the financial support of each district. In the two of the districts, parents were used to helping boost or expand the music program. While at the other district, parents were more of the voice of

feedback in helping guide which programs should continue or change into. Professional

development also varied within the districts, as each focused on varying priorities. The

focus of this professional development was either for technology integration or

expanding the selection of music programs in the specific district. The next chapter will

provide a detailed discussion of these results and their implications for making critical

decisions on introducing music education programs in suburban regions.

CHAPTER 5

Introduction

This comparative case study of three suburban public-school districts in suburban New York examined how school leaders made decisions on music programs. The study aimed to address three research questions. The first research question sought to understand and identify how school leaders perceive music education in a suburban region. The second research question explored how educational leaders described their decision-making process regarding their approach to music education. Lastly, the third research question aimed to understand the impact of the decision-making process on music education programs.

As Chapter 3 discussed, the data collected in this study consisted of individual interviews and document analysis. Three themes emerged from the data that was analyzed and deconstructed: a) leadership's perceptions on music programming; b) decision-making of music programs; and c) impact of music programs. The leadership's perception's theme incorporates leadership's prior experience, need for superintendent support, financial cost, the role of the music teacher, and the role of the community. The second theme discusses the decision-making process, which closely aligns with the theoretical frameworks discussed within Chapter 2. Lastly, the third theme regarded the impact of music programs on how parents respond, professional development, and the amount of music instruction.

Ultimately, this chapter will discuss the major findings from the data. The chapter has various parts. First, the chapter presents a summary of the study. The second part is

the discussion of results, whereby the researcher will address each of the research questions and connect findings to the existing literature and theoretical frameworks presented in Chapter 2. The third part relates to the theoretical framework. The limitations of the study are then discussed in the subsequent section. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research, which includes suggestions to practitioners or policymakers.

Summary of Study

Despite music education's positive role in schools, Eisner (2002) noted that many people do not see music as an area of importance. This also includes high school graduation requirements, where the Education Commission for the States (2019) reported that students throughout the United States only need less than one credit in music for graduation. Therefore, this three-case study discovered how school leaders and administrators ultimately made decisions about music programs by considering their values and philosophies of music education, the purposes of keeping music education in the curriculum, and how music education contributes to the overall image of the school.

The research questions explored in this research were:

1. How do school leaders perceive music education in a suburban region?
2. How do educational leaders describe their decision-making process regarding their approach to music education?
3. What is the impact of the decision-making process on music education programs?

A qualitative research design was used to answer these research questions. Notably, a case study design was adopted to research in the context of real-life while

studying the decision-making of school leaders regarding general and instrumental music programs. The study was restricted to only three public-school suburban districts in the New York Metropolitan area during the 2020-2021 school year will be part of the research. The three case studies involved purposeful sampling in selecting to interview these district's superintendent, music or fine arts director, finance director, building-level administrators, and music teacher. The primary method of data collection was interviewing. However, other methods such as a review of documents, music curriculum, and academic achievement complemented information gathered through interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data by categorizing it into three themes based on the research questions.

Interpretations of Findings

Research Question 1: How do school leaders perceive music education in a suburban region?

The first research question in this study inquired how school leaders perceived music education within their school district. The analysis of the interview data found that across the three districts in this case study, differences in the perception of music education exist. Differences existed due to prior experiences as music educators, differences in the student population size of each school district, amount of support provided, financial resources, how music teachers promoted their programs, and the level of community involvement in support of music programs.

Previous Experience. In the case study, all three school leaders shared positive feedback on the significance of music programs within their districts. However,

differences exist across the three districts on how their prior teaching experiences impacted their leadership perceptions. For example, *District F*'s superintendent had previous experience in music education, displayed the strongest support of music programs by stating it would be the last program ever cut in their district. Music programs were deemed essential in developing skills students can use in their personal and career growth. This finding supports the research literature, which notes that students who study music benefitted from a positive effect on other academic areas with identifiable improvement in learning skills. (Holochwost, et al., 2017) In *District O*, their focus was on ensuring that each student could participate. Their background in special education was clearly shown, as the focus was on inclusion. Music programs were deemed important because they offer an outlet for students to be creative. Lastly, in *District M*, music was a means of promoting the school district and highlighting the talents of the students and community. Music programs were deemed important for the district in their participation in community events, music festivals, and competitions.

Many decisions were guided by school leaders' perception of the role of music education in their district. However, these perceptions were also shifted by the student population and size of their school districts. District size causes variations in handling issues are determining how to use available resources. The perception of music education's role and value to each district was different among the three case-studied districts. In the smaller district, *District F*, support came from the community to help boost the program financially and provide learning opportunities such as trips and performances at major venues. This contrasted with the larger district, *District M*, that

had more resources available in addition to recognizable and famous individuals supporting the success of the programs.

In many suburban regions across the nation, school boards and superintendents devised strategies for removing music programs from the curriculum during economic challenges because of budget cuts. Music education and other arts subjects are usually the first to go when schools' budgets decrease (Smith & Kaschub, 2009). Budget cuts can thus negatively impact music education programs; students in these affected programs may experience the loss of opportunity to learn and explore through the arts. Specific subjects like reading, writing, and mathematics, measured through state and local school testing, indicate whether students are excelling academically (LaCour, 2010). School leaders in these situations justified the removal of music programs due to their perceived importance on test results. In the three districts case study, administrators developed compromises in handling testing and protecting music programs.

Testing. In *District F*, the superintendent made it clear that testing does not interfere with music instruction. The district's pedagogy focuses on having students receive proper instruction, uninterrupted with any additional test preparations, practice tests. Additionally, the district stayed away from focusing additional time solely on tested subjects. The traditional and consistent, well-rounded education is beneficial for students as it supports greater student engagement in learning (Noel & Liub, 2017).

In contrast, the *District O* superintendent believed that testing is important but did not believe it should be a priority in the district. The superintendent acknowledged that some time is allocated for test preparation focused on the tested subjects. The building

administrator from *District O* also acknowledges that at times one or two weeks are focused on testing and may compromise the instruction for non-testing subjects. *District O*'s music teacher did not agree with this strategy, however, was acknowledged the importance of making sure the students do well on standardized assessments. While the district did not fully remove music programs, it does agree with LaCour's (2010) notion that districts prioritize subject areas measured through state and local school testing.

Certain districts prioritize excellence. *District M* is one of those districts that place a higher value on awards and recognitions, largely to conform to their community expectations. The music administrator from *District M* that the music program has pressure from the community to continue receiving awards and recognitions from music festivals and competitions. The building administrator from *District M* did mention that some limited time is provided for test preparation and usually cancel non-testing subjects on the day of the standardized examinations. The reasoning was for students to focus solely on the examinations on the day of the standardized tests and not be distracted with other learning elements. The district and community set high expectations, and it also expects students to perform well on standardized tests in addition to success in the district's music programs.

Unexpected Influences. Sometimes outside and unexpected influences impact school districts and force them to make changes. The COVID-19 pandemic provided additional challenges to all districts. The increase in educational aid provided opportunities for districts to expand their technologies and provide newer instructional tools. Most school districts were not built nor prepared to cope with a situation where

they must sustain effective teaching and learning during a shutdown (Garcia & Weiss, 2020). However, the pandemic also created challenges in providing instruction that meets local guidelines such as social distancing and providing adequate protection. Finance administrators interviewed also brought attention to the increase in the price of music equipment and the extra cost of providing additional protection such as masks, bell covers, and shields during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two of the three districts in the study observed financial challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The assistance of additional funding, specifically federal, helped the districts make important decisions. For *District M*, it resulted in the hiring of additional staffing to meet social distancing requirements and acquiring necessary protective equipment. For *District F*, it meant keeping the programs uninterrupted with the protective equipment and ensuring the facilities were properly kept. While *District O* did not face these financial concerns, they took the additional funding as an opportunity to enhance their technology offering by providing 1:1 technology devices to all their students.

Despite these added costs, financial leaders were optimistic that the demand for music education within their district schools would find these added costs acceptable for the communities. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic assisted *District O* to expand its technology, *District F* to further secure music programs by providing uninterrupted music instruction, and *District M* increased staffing. School districts had to adapt and develop strategies to assist their music programs even through unexpected events.

Technology. All three districts mentioned the increase in technology integration such as 1:1 devices to their students. The larger district, *District M*, had additional costs associated with the need to increase staffing size to meet the needs of the instructional needs of having fewer students in the classroom due to distancing regulations. However, it was the middle-sized district, *District O*, that maximized the opportunity in expanding its programs, software, and facilities to not only benefit the music program during the pandemic but also for its future success.

Thus, music administrators must facilitate the development of music programs within district schools. Music administrators guide any changes to the music curriculum, train and evaluate teachers. Their perceptions expressed in the study by music administrators show that they are ready to implement music education programs in district schools in suburban regions. However, when it involved implementing or replacing elements of the music program with technology, veteran administrators were more hesitant. Music administrators in *District F* and *District M*, who held their position for fewer years, were more receptive to adding technology in their programs. This contrasted greatly with *District O*'s music administrator that despite being open to changes, was very hesitant in having technology change the curriculum for music programs. The way they guided music educators on implementing these changes highlights their varying perceptions of music programs by their decisions in adjusting the different aspects of the curriculum, especially the music content involving technology.

For many years, the national educational focus has been on "STEM"-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (Schroth, 2018). Educational advocates now realize

the importance of adding Arts to the discussion. STEAM education provides a more holistic approach that reflects the need for students to develop both creative and analytical skills (Zhou, 2016). The modifications to STEM's main objective changed the overall skillset of students, "improving the competitiveness of American students on the global stage" (Colegrove, 2017, p. 6). The research discovered how school leaders and administrators ultimately made these decisions about music programs by considering their values and philosophies of music education and how music education contributes to the overall image of the school.

Not to be overlooked is the importance of music teachers for music programs' overall image and its success. Music teachers are found to be implementing policies in their classroom practices regularly to identify appropriate ways of teaching their students (Brophy, 2019). The music teacher's role as the leader of the program vastly differs from other subject area teachers. Educators must incorporate pedagogical approaches that challenge students and use technology and media efficiently (Vasil, Weiss, & Powell, 2019). Districts with experienced leadership that supports music can help guide these music teachers. In *District O*, where there is a veteran music administrator, teachers feel free to share ideas on new programs. In addition, his feedback to music teachers, noted by the music teacher in *District O,* and his ability to promote the district's music program noted by *District O*'s superintendent was an essential component to the music program's success for the district. However, in the smaller district, *District F,* some music teachers seem lost and not a significant component of the decision-making process. Even with the Superintendent from *District F* being a supporter of music programs, the district was lacking an experienced music administrator where teachers felt confident in sharing ideas

and getting support when they were struggling in the classroom. A need for hierarchy and level of understanding was deemed necessary to best perceive and understand the expectations of school leaders on music programs. While music teachers do look for their school leaders in guidance for this, teachers in *District F* and even the music administrator from *District O* tend to rely on parental and community feedback to make sure their program survives.

Perceptions. The study also established that all decisions should involve parents, teachers, and students, key stakeholders. Although the leadership comprising music administrators, superintendents, and finance administrators have the most significant influence on the development and supervision of the music curriculum, music educators or teachers play a crucial role in the implementation process. According to Sungurtekin (2021), music teachers help build students' imagination and creativity. The essence of music is to help develop learners' critical thinking skills. Thus, without the teachers' efforts, the music education program will not be fruitful. The educators understand students' needs, hence can devise strategies for meeting them. Including them in the decision-making process will make it easy to identify these needs and recommend measures or strategies needed to meet them.

District M's perceptions of music education rest on the support of the community in growing the use of technology and expanding the offerings of music programs. Music tends to be a very community and involved component as it ties into sports, academics, and extracurricular for a large portion of the student body. *District M* and community involvement include the various celebrities who came from or lived in the community.

Board of Education members, influential parents, and parent groups shape the district's decision on what programs should be added.

The music program servers to help students become well-rounded, and for *District O*, this led to having multiple groups to promote advanced students to excel. Administrators in District O refer to their program as having an all-inclusive junior varsity music program and a more advanced and exclusive varsity ensemble. While providing for the needs of all the students, District O's superintendent shared the preference to expand on the music program's use of technology. With the high costs associated with music technology projects, the district was only able to pilot studio recording. The music administrator from *District O* acknowledged that its future success would rest upon the community's support and continual student enrollment.

As a smaller district, *District F* has tremendous support from the community, where hundreds of parents regularly attend Board Meetings and fill concert seats when students perform. For parents in District F, it is more than just showing up but being participants in the process and helping in fundraisers, and expanding community awareness of performances.

Furthermore, parental involvement in students' music education is fundamental to the acquisition of the skills needed. Parents need to understand their children's music needs, including equipment and training activities. Therefore, an inclusive decision-making process will ensure that each stakeholder supports all aspects of curriculum implementation (Schildkamp, 2019).

Summary. In conclusion, the research shows that school leaders perceive that music teachers are the ones who lead their programs with the community as their backbone for support. In summary, the perceptions and actions of leadership are decidedly different in each district. These variations can result from differences in the perceptions of music, support from leadership, financial costs, the role of music teachers, and the level of support from the community.

Research Question 2: How do educational leaders describe their decision-making process regarding their approach to music education?

The study established that district school leadership has an active role in making decisions on implementing music programs. In *District F*, the school superintendent, despite the intentions of shifting towards collaborative decision making, had the most significant role in implementing the music programs largely due to the district's smaller student population size and fewer administrators. However, in *District M* and *O*, other leaders such as finance directors, music directors, and music teachers have roles in the implementation process of music programs. The study established that decision-making was an inclusive process involving multiple stakeholders.

Approach to Decision-Making. Decision-making is a critical step in curriculum development since it determines success or failure. When making decisions on music programs, leaders must agree on the requirements, including the teaching facilities, equipment, and technologies. The role of a music administrator is to manage, organize and implement the curriculum while promoting other musical activities and performances (White, 2021). While it is understood that decision-making is a process that involves all

stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, the approach for deciding on the implementation of music education programs within districts does vary.

The superintendent from *District M* took a transformational approach to decision-making when it came to its music programs. With the district's larger size providing additional administrative staff and the music program's success being an important component for the community, shared decision-making was important. Decisions involving the music programs included assistant superintendent for curriculum and proposed the assistant superintendent for business for integration into fiscal plan and budget. School leaders in *District M* actively sought information from individuals with different roles and expertise to explore solutions and determine the course of action. As established by Kavanagh and Vallas (2017), the case study found that finance administrators help determine the financial requirements for implementing music education and have an important role in the decision-making process. Ensuring that as many stakeholders are involved in the process, music teachers, parents, and even students have roles in this process. *District M*'s building administrator was proud of how the decision-making in the school district is an inclusive process that requires the participation of teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. Mark & Madura (2013) note that the school leadership should actively involve stakeholders such as parents in making decisions.

By comparison, this is a significant difference from, *District O* where much of the music program decisions rests on the music administrator. The music administrator oversees building placements and assignments for the teach teachers and even determines

the availability of music programs and courses. The district has a blueprint plan on what is necessary to teach and is easy to follow. The music administrator from District O plays a primary role in implementing music programs. While the music administrator is not restrictive in decision making, changes involve providing opportunities and then rewarding successful ideas to a teacher by providing additional funds, space, or hours to promote the initiative. Ferrell (2021) states that music administrators should participate actively in implementing decisions that lead to the success of music education programs. Unlike *District M*, were collecting information and making decisions were collaborative, *District O*'s music administrator was the sole individual making the decision-making for music-related programs. However, the case study did find that District O's music administrator was actively observing, getting information on the programs, and being receptive to feedback from the community and teachers before implementing changes to the music program.

The superintendent in *District F* took extraordinary steps to ensure that the district's participative approach to decision-making takes place by providing professional development and training to its staff. Nevertheless, sometimes the final decision still solely rests on the superintendent. The case study supports prior research by Stenmark & Mumford (2011), Quinn (2010), and Melton et al. (2019), that school district leadership plays a critical role in deciding on music education programs, with the superintendent having the most significant influence on overall decisions made. As a smaller district, this tends to be true as *District F's* music teachers perceived that their role in the decision-making process was minimal. However, their contribution includes incorporating new concepts and ideas via collaboration with classroom teachers and building administrators.

Nevertheless, the district made significant strides in shifting from a previous autocratic approach to a more participative approach. District leadership in *District F* was actively trying to get feedback from stakeholders, a practice that was not done in the previous district's administration. With the district leadership being in the position for a limited time, and most of the time during the COVID-19 pandemic, implementing cultural change, including the decision-process in a district, requires time.

Assumptions of Goals. All three districts in the case study generalized their assumptions with the goal of providing the best music programs. Their practices, previous experiences, district's student size, and resources developed different practices. For *District M*, the objective was always to be successful and involved with the community. This includes the district's marching band performing in numerous community events and high school ensembles performing and winning at festivals and competitions. With the district's larger student population, community pressures, resources, and staffing, its generalized meaning of providing the best music program means providing an award-winning program.

District O generalized its assumptions with the goal of providing the best music program for all its students. Their practices, previous experiences, community pressures, and resources pushed for a two-tier music program for its students. One tier, providing music programs to all its students, and another higher tier support the growth and recognition of the district's music ensembles. Unlike *District M*'s assumption of having to be award-winning to be an effective program, *District O* focused on providing the

educational experiences of music to all its students while still encouraging and supporting the talents and creativity of students.

District F generalized its assumptions with the goal of providing the best opportunities for music learning to its students. Unlike District M, District F does not have the same number of resources or staffing but still sought to be one of the best music programs by providing opportunities for students to participate in festivals and competitions. For District F, it was not necessarily about the results but the process of how students' experiences in music programs helped develop their overall education.

While all three case study districts explored ways of providing the best music programs, ultimately, their assumptions, beliefs, and prior experiences steered leadership in developing goals that they believed were best for their students.

Handling Shared-Decision Making. Shared decision-making found in District M is more feasible with the district's larger size, additional administrators, and the superintendents significantly longer-term. District leadership has created a vision established by committees that also included financial, curricular, and music administrators also included individual music teachers to make critical program decisions. This approach recognizes the strength of everyone, and with guidance from the building level and district music administrator, they provide feedback and collaboratively as a district realign goals.

The autocratic decision-making approach found in District O is best when control is necessary, often with little margin for error. The pressure and expectations remain to ensure that music programs remain successful. This autocratic approach to decision-

making still requires being open-minded based on the restrictions financially and through local government and district regulations and policies. The action by this autocratic approach requires much confidence in their actions to establish effective music programs for their district. It also requires respect from the stakeholders in the district to support the decisions. The support from the superintendent and music teachers and understanding limitations can lead to the desired outcomes.

Another approach found in *District F* can be participative. The district case study did find that this was a different approach from what the district was used to, as *District F* was used to autocratic decisions made solely from the district leader as opposed to shared decision making. With the decisions made from the top for a long time, adjustments to the leadership decision-making approach can be difficult for staff within districts. Having more stakeholders involved and providing input allows newer administrators to implement changes and promote the desired modifications to music programs.

Summary. Each of the three case study districts has varying personal decision-making approaches for implementing what they believe is the best music program. Best does not necessarily mean receiving the top prize, but what is expected from the community in ensuring students receive a quality music education and learning experience. While music administrators and music teachers focused on music program advocacy, school and district leaders also have to focus on external pressures from local and state regulations, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on staffing, facilities space, and financing, and maintain a diplomatic relationship with community and staff that their decisions are the best intended for the success of the music programs.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of the decision-making process on music education programs?

The Decision-making process significantly impacted the music education programs. Expressly, school leaders at both the district and building levels agreed that an effective decision-making process has resulted in the support of music programs. Several steps had been taken in the three districts to implement the music programs after the decision-making process. *District O,* for example, had established theaters and added musical equipment or instruments that promote learning. The perceived perception from *District O*'s district superintendent that music should be an all-inclusive program and trying to reach and meet the needs of all students is shown. Music programs are more than simply singing or performing an instrument.

Parental Response. This impact on inclusive decision-making also defined teachers' and parents' roles in the student's, especially in learning outcomes (Ang, Panebianco, & Odendaal, 2020). Parents should be treated as partners in education because they communicate with teachers on their children's learning and wellbeing (Ang, Panebianco, & Odendaal, 2021). In *District F*, even with the strong support of music programs from the school leadership, its success rested on the parents and community support. Besides, parents provide the learning needs of students, which ensures a successful learning process. The size of the district and the socio-economic wealth of the community also steer the decision-making process of music programs. In *District M*, music's role in promoting education and being a successful and award-winning

component of the district was reinforced by the more affluent and famous members of the community.

All three districts had a robust parental response but with different goals and intentions. Parental responses contrasted from supporting expanding a thriving music program, enhancing music programs, and helping guide what music programs are available. The three cases studied districts displayed that parental and community support is needed. Each district adjusted its decision-making to either support, listening or promote their music programs based on the community's wants.

Music Teachers. Music teachers, especially in the smaller district, displayed a larger role in leading their programs. While the larger district showed a hierarchy including sub-committees of decision making, music teachers remain the greatest influencer for the music programs in their district. Ang et al. (2021) defined that teachers' roles in music education are models and partners. Thus, decisions involving teachers' and parents' participation ensure identification and implementation of the learning needs for the music curriculum. For instance, parents who understand the music curriculum easily guide students (Margiotta, 2011). Identification of capabilities and weaknesses of students in music education becomes possible if the leadership involves parents and music teachers in the decisions made.

Music teachers are often the promoter and backbone of most school music programs. *District F* was no exception where the district website provided individualized music teacher pages to promote their program and inform parents of events. Music teachers are actively involved with students to enhance their programs, such as in *District*

M, where the band teacher helps students to not just learn their instrument but also to gain confidence and mastery to prepare them for a high level of music playing and competition participation. Not only are music teachers promoters of their programs, but they are also the stalwarts who create and develop them. Such as in *District O*, music teachers volunteer their time, are willing to have their programs be in trial or temporary status, and were the self-promotors to have the program be permanent. Such examples happened at *District O* with the theater program, the dance program, and being in the trial phase of the recording studio program.

Even with a district focused on music education in place, music teachers can support, or end music programs based on their skills and effort (Millican, 2008). *District F*'s music program's success is related to the music teachers' willingness to communicate and share music events and performances with the community. *District O* took this step further by having teachers be leaders of their program ideas and responsible for its success. In the world of music competition, the teachers from *District M* had the pressure to succeed or otherwise lose their participation in the higher-level ensembles. The decision processes of school districts in this study displayed the importance of music teachers to succeed.

Professional Development. Implementing, adjusting, and even maintaining a successful music program includes updating policies, technology, and expectations. Music teachers provide unique skills and experiences that promote greater insight in terms of self-awareness, understanding classroom scenarios, and instructional practices that provide invaluable knowledge and advancing of professional development (Johnson

& Matthews, 2017). Professional development is essential to support music programs through the training of music teachers and other educators.

The importance of being shared decision-making was something that *District F* felt was lacking. The music teacher from *District F* also mentioned how they didn't feel being part of major decisions relating to music. While the professional development was intended for the district, it had significant contributions to the music programs, as allowing the staff, building, and district leadership to have an avenue of understanding of music programs was a major step forward.

While *District F* used professional development for a change in the district's culture, other districts focused on implementing improvements to their music programs. For *District O*, professional development concentrates on improving current music program initiatives, providing better access and understanding, and increasing the use of technology. *District O*'s 1:1 technology improvement, additional music software, theater improvements, and music recording facilities all contributed to this need. Professional development was needed to address teacher training and school awareness of the additions.

Professional development also is not about what is being focused on but also who is involved. *District M* took extra consideration in making sure the community is fully aware of developments and is part of the professional development process. This included online resources, providing access to newer programs and technologies for parents to better understand the value being provided to the students. These programs were all deemed necessary to the district's community program, especially with all the

changes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. As *District M's* music administrator

noted that while the focus on professional development in districts tends to be solely for

educators and staff, often time parents and the community need it as well.

External factors make professional development necessary for educators

experiencing pedagogical, intellectual, affective, life, and career stages that should be

addressed (Day & Pennington, 1993). These preparation programs are usually initial

steps required for continuous development, teacher education or often created to quickly

respond to the needs of teachers (Bowles, 2002). The recognition that parents seek

information on their own to better understand their child's learning is part of professional

development (Whalley, 2017). Parents and the community are part of the learning process

for music education and are part of the decision-making process.

When implementing new programs, or trying to expand a current music program,

parents and the community need to understand its merits and contributions to the district.

Ensuring that all stakeholders are fully informed of the functions and benefits of new

programs greatly increases their interest, participation, and support. These powerful

learning and promotional opportunities provide powerful interactions that connect the

programs to their children learning (Dombro, Jablon, & Stetson, 2020). Similar to the

theater program in *District O*, adding music-recording courses and music software

instruction deemed worthy for music educators are often seen as non-necessary additions

to the curriculum for non-music educators and parents (Murillo, 2017). Professional

development, as demonstrated by *District M,* is a strategy that can effectively educate the

community by ensuring they understand the benefits of 3D printers, additional equipment

to protect students from the COVID-19 pandemic, and travel expenses for their music program's travels to competitions and events. Educating stakeholders helps to correct any misunderstandings about the necessity and value of music education.

Woods (2021) conducted a qualitative study that obtained related perspectives on music programs' inclusion in elementary, middle, and high schools. Like the present study, building principals interviewed from different schools maintained a positive view of music education. The principals noted that they promote access to development opportunities associated with music for both teachers and stakeholders, including students. In doing so, they support the music education programs, leading to their successful implementation. Further, Woods (2021) note that leaders can support music programs by facilitating access to musical equipment and technologies needed for teaching.

The study established that successful music curriculum implementation enables learners in suburban school districts to attain benefits associated with music education. Specifically, participants shared how music was associated with the cognitive development of children. Through music, kids' memory, reasoning, arithmetic, and logic improved. This improvement depends on the time taken to engage with music. Several studies support the role of music in children's development. According to Wong (2018), music education has cognitive, social, and educational benefits. The cognitive benefits include improving the student's IQ, working memory, verbal skills creating thinking, and problem-solving. The present study's findings show that suburban school leaders make better decisions related to music education to enhance students' creative thinking and

problem-solving skills. Improved cognitive functions are required for the student's academic performance. Wong (2018) stated that learning music is a co-curricular activity that transfers skills to other areas. For instance, students who learn music have improved numeral and literacy skills leading to their excel in mathematics and languages (Wong, 2018). Notably, children who attend music classes develop perceptual skills that promote reading, phonetic, and motor skills required to coordinate different body parts (Wong, 2018). Apart from brain development, music enables learners to acquire practical skills needed for their social life (Wong, 2018). Music education improves the kid's emotional intelligence, making it easy to interact with other people. Students can also learn about different cultures through music, hence improving their cultural awareness. These benefits can be achieved in suburban schools only if the school leadership, parents, and teachers collaborate to make meaningful decisions on implementing music programs.

Instructional Time for Music. The benefits of music education were understood, and the three case-studied districts displayed an understanding of this. However, there are differences from all three districts regarding the amount of instructional time and when students started music instruction. These variations result from the differences in districts' student population, staffing size, and administrative decision-making. The latter, being a significant factor, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The global pandemic crisis has significantly affected music educators with opportunities to refresh, reset, and renew our ways of practice which may resonate with other educators across subject areas (Joseph & Lennox, 2021).

The amount of music instruction and when music instruction starts are essential to the success of music programs. Scheduling, staffing, and student population are critical contributing factors to these decisions. However, the decision of music programming and expanding options can also impact the amount of music instruction.

Instrumental music instruction starts in the third grade for *District O,* while *District M* starts in the fourth grade. *District F* compromises this by having instrumental strings starting in the third grade and band in the fourth grade. Both Districts M and F want to have instrumental music start at an earlier grade added financial costs, limited spacing, which got even more complicated due to COVID-19, and needs to hire additional staff has limited this.

During the pandemic, *District F* was able to continually provide music instruction to their students in person. Performances were limited in student size and lacked audiences for District F due to the restrictions during the pandemic. *District M* focused on using its available technology and resources and followed a hybrid, online and in-person music instruction to ensure the program continued being successful. While the district did not provide live in-person performances, it did, however, provide virtual or online performances. *District M's* music administrator acknowledged that the district had to continue showcasing its students' talents and abilities. A factor was explaining why the district also had to hire additional staffing during the pandemic to ensure that the music program remained effective.

The goal for *District O* was to incorporate increased use of technology. However, it was not as well received by the music administrators and many senior music teachers.

While music instruction continued, performances were limited based on local regulations during the pandemic. It was District O's superintendent that hoped that technology would be incorporated in the future in order to better provide newer forms of instruction and the district's ability to showcase the musical talents of its students.

While all three districts' goals are to have the best music program available, decisions have impacted how they utilize parents' responses, shared professional development, and instructional time and availability. Parental response to the needs of music programs can vary. Parent response can concentrate on promoting and ensuring it is successful, as demonstrated by *District M*. District M has established a culture where the music program is a successful and award-winning component of the community. Parents are on board in supporting its continual success, as demonstrated in the case study, if it means the community continues being recognized.

Community. Parents' involvement can be more than seeking award recognition. It can also focus on enhancing the music programs that currently exist, as demonstrated by *District F*. As a smaller district, it does not have the resources as the larger district, but the community has the dedication and commitment to make sure the program excels. *District F*'s community promotes through local businesses, encourages booster drives to provide an added learning experience to its students, and continually attends performances to encourage and support its students. Research findings by Schlaug (1995), Gersema (2016), Flohr (2010), Rauschner et al. (1993) support the importance of music in cognitive development. Even with the district's smaller size, the parents understood the importance of the music program and sought ways to help. Parents in

District F remain active participants even during the pandemic, requesting that their children continue receiving a music education. Where concert attendance was limited, parents were still involved in making sure the district could continue to provide uninterrupted music instruction with their presence at board meetings and attending virtual events.

In addition, the community can provide their input and participation to guide school leaders, such as in *District O,* in deciding which music programs to promote. With district, building, and music administrators in *District O* willing to go outside the box and develop music programs beyond the traditional band, orchestra, and chorus, the community serves as a litmus test to see where staffing, funding, and spacing should be be be concentrated. This was best illustrated by the success of the district's theaters program and being observed with the district's recording studio options. The pandemic served as a good opportunity for *District O* to reexamine its programs and provide opportunities for learning that involved newer technologies.

The respondents highlighted the effect of decision-making on music programs, especially on students. From the responses, inclusive decision-making would lead to a successful implementation of music programs by having a positive impact on learners. *District M* wanted to make sure the community is aware of music's learning benefits, especially with children's cognitive development. *District M's* website includes posts about the significance of music education to children that music improves neural networks leading to a higher cognitive capacity in solving numerical problems and

language acquisition. However, the participants noted that parents, teachers, and leaders need to implement music education programs to realize this benefit.

Summary. In summary, the research shows that variables within the district cause an impact on music programs. The variations include the varying decision process of handling parental response, scheduling, and types of professional development. Successful programs listen to stakeholders and have the community and parents involved in the decision process. Likewise, teachers being active participants in the decision process helps to develop newer initiatives and promote the music programs to a larger audience. Smaller districts tend to be in a survival mode in terms of retaining staffing and scheduling, meeting the demands and restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Often time, district leaders make challenging decisions on how to maintain programs. With the researched examples, districts either hired additional staff, maintained their programs with additional funding, or provided the support with additional space to not interrupt the music programs.

Relationship to the Theoretical Framework

To have an effective understanding of the decision process, according to Argyris (1990) and Senge (1994), is to follow the "Ladder of Inference" because of its system of gathering information, making assumptions, and deciding actions.

First Rung

According to (Barker, 2006) the first rung based on reality and facts involves the process of observation, wherein the decision-makers need to select the data available.

Concerning the issue, educational leaders must further search for evidence and select the required data for implementing music education policy. One must first collect all the facts, as well as realities, and then select the most appropriate one to be focused on. This process involves engaging as many members of the school community, including teachers, students, parents, administrators, as active participants and agents for successful school climate improvement implementation. The knowledge acquired needs to be systematic and an exploration of all sorts to find the changes needed (Senge, 2020). The districts in the case study achieved this by forming committees such as in *District M*, improving shared decision-making as in *District F,* or seeking feedback from parents and community on programs' success as in *District O*.

Second Rung

Subsequently, the second rung is the stage in which the decision-makers need to infer the meaning from the facts along with personal and cultural experiences. The decision process of district-level music programming has to do with the understanding of administrators' decision-making process and the elements that influence the process that includes or excludes music (Major, 2013). According to Bolman and Deal, the ongoing challenge in any organization is to find a system of roles and relationships. All schools are unique complex organizations that, when viewed through Bolman and Deal's (2017) four frames, each having unique needs and operational structures.

The data acquired were analyzed using the lens of Bolman and Deal's four frames--the structural, symbolic, political, and human resource frames--to create a paradigm by which to view the perceived impacts of the decision. Isolating which frame

or frames, according to Bolman and Deal, do superintendents employ as part of their decision-making process is important to understand the effectiveness of leadership. Frames can outline for the leader what is essential and what can be ignored. Bolman and Deal (2017) identify leaders who have the skill to engage in multi-frame thinking could provide more explicit decision-making that will match viable solutions to problems.

The structural goal for *District M* was one of high achievement and having the music program be recognized and earn awards. The measurable goal from District M were high scores on standardized tests and continually award-winning and finalist music ensembles. The district has provided the necessary staffing and even added additional music teachers to the district during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that the district's expectations were continually being met. The pressures of high expectations were being driven by the community due to the larger budget size, previous success, and high-profile community members' involvement.

The structural goal for *District O* was where music programs are available to all its students. The measurable goal from *District O* were its standardized tests that were highest among the three case study districts and community participation at performances and music-related events. In contrast, the focus of the music programs was not about top awards, despite the district's music ensembles earning recognition and placement awards. The district has provided additional use of technology and facility space to help expand the music program. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, the district continues to explore meaningful ways to attract students to music learning by expanding its theater program, expanding technology programs and devices, and implementing a recording

studio. Student enrollment, parental involvement, and community attendance, whether in person or virtually, continued being meaningful ways to measure the district's music programs.

The structural goal for *District F* was to provide the best opportunities for learning that included opportunities for music education. Unlike *District M*'s award-winning programs, or *District O*'s exploration in music program offering, *District F* concentrated on providing sufficient resources and opportunities for students to continue receiving a strong music program without interruptions. Other researched districts struggled to maintain their program and often reassigned music teachers to teach non-music areas, or music programs had significant cuts in resources or allocated time and space for music instruction (Shaw & Mayo, 2021). *District F* focused on ensuring that did these reductions or eliminations of music programs happened largely due to community pressures and *District F*'s superintendent's previous experience in music education and perceived high value of music to teaching the whole student.

All three case study districts had the same political frame where special interests and outside pressures were from the parents and the community. It was demonstrated in *District M*, where active parents are also school board members, or famous or high-profile community members pressure the success or expansion of music programs. It was also demonstrated in *District F,* where parent involvement and participation at school board meetings are high pressuring continual support for music programs. In addition to *District O,* where parents' feedback is welcomed and a factor for steering curricular choices and music program selections. At times, community pressures may seem non-

trivial and only increase tension in an already highly stressful environment because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Fotheringham, Harriott, Healy, Arenge, & Wilson, 2021). Communication and collaboration between school leaders and school communities had supported leaders during changes, difficult times, expansion of music programs, and the preservation of music programs.

Third Rung

Following this stage is the third rung in which the inferred meanings are generalized into assumptions. In this stage, the decision-makers or the educational leaders must make certain assumptions regarding the concerned issue based on the derived meanings in the previous stage. Policies and practices are interwoven, and the exploration of changes, individually, collectively, and institutionally is needed to make the acquired knowledge useful in practice (Senge, 2020).

Each district in the case study developed its own policies and practices for music education. *District O's* decision to form general ensembles ensures that all students can participate in all music types of music programs regardless of talents, challenges, or abilities. Students who wished to get the music experience and were willing to learn were welcome. *District F* focused its decisions on ensuring that music programs continue regardless of outside influences such as state testing, the COVID-19 pandemic, or financial expenses. *District M,* in their decisions, expanded staffing, ensured students and staff have appropriate gear and protection during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure students can still perform and compete.

Fourth Rung

Henceforth, the fourth rung is that of the conclusions and beliefs. Herein, the educational leaders must draw an appropriate inference on how the policies can be implemented efficiently with the help of effective programs and whether any improvements are necessary for the existing policies/programs. In this rung, the beliefs or mental models are developed based on the assumptions. At this stage, the leaders must draw conclusions based on the recently formulated assumptions and only then revise their beliefs about the subject matter.

Through the perspective of the superintendents from the three-district case study, they all believe that they were providing the best decisions and support for their district's music programs. As evidence of their support financially, maintain music programs through the COVID 19 pandemic and encourage the program's success through the community. However, music administrators and music teachers alike, the perspective is different as their focus is more centered on music education. *District F* music teacher wished to be more involved in the decision process, *District O* music administrator and teacher were hesitant about the technology changes, and *District M* music teacher felt that the pressure to succeed could be overwhelming.

It is important for school leaders in their decision-process to connect their assumptions to the facts for music programs. Fully exploring the conclusion with stakeholders would provide additional perspectives for improvements.

Summary

In the final phase, the conclusion school leaders need to act according to the developed beliefs and act them out. This is the stage, decision-makers, especially the

educational leaders, took appropriate actions, reaffirming their beliefs and assumptions relating to the policy implementation of music education. Traveling up and down Argyris (1990) and Senge (1994) "Ladder of Inference" is required for appropriate decisions related to both instrumental, general music, and other music-related programs can be aligned with district policies and school leaders expectations (The Human Factor, 2016).

Limitations to the Study

The study had a few limitations. First, due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not easy to access a large study sample. Hence, only 15 participants were involved. This sample size is small; thus, the study can be prone to participant bias. Second, the semi-structured interviews were conducted through online platforms. It was challenging to engage the participants directly. Thus, connectivity issues made it difficult to hear all the words said by each participant. Slow connectivity and delayed transmission could have led to missing some vital information. Therefore, the threat to the trustworthiness of the results increased. Nevertheless, all the participants completed the study without withdrawing at any stage.

Lastly, another notable limitation of the study was the lack of longevity of the study. The data collection for this study was conducted during the 2020-2021 academic year from March 2021 through July 2021 (approximately 4- 5 months). A longer study can capture the progress of decision-making and the impact on music programs with results over a longer span of time.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The findings from this study contribute to the existing literature within the decision-making process of music programs. School districts, educational leaders, and leader preparation programs can utilize the findings from this study to provide a basis to inform and guide their decisions on music programs with both the influential leader practices and foundational factors needed for successful music programs.

The findings in this research show that school leadership plays a vital role in music education. The willingness of the school leadership to support the learning process makes it easy to implement music education programs. School leaders, especially superintendents and music administrators, should ensure that all curriculum implementation resources are available. They were providing online resources and detailed explanations at school board meetings and even professional development or learning opportunities for community members to better understand the merits and contributions of specific music programs to the overall curriculum. Music is of equal importance as other curricular subjects, and previous experience or biases should not shift music's relevance in providing a well-rounded education to students.

STEM to STEAM

Music is a well-rounded subject supporting ESSA that lists specific subjects to be important components of a well-rounded education that includes music (US Department of Education, 2021). This language makes it clear that music should be a part of every child's education, no matter their personal circumstance.

ESSA doesn't just mention well-rounded education as a good idea; the language makes it clear that Congress expects schools to act on those words. The "Well-Rounded Education" provision (previously known as "Core Academic Subjects") is a section (Sec. 8002) within ESSA that lists courses, activities, and programming in subjects deemed critical when providing students a broad and enriched educational experience. The provision includes "music," which articulates the importance of music as a part of every child's education (US Congress, 2015).

Schools are expected to assess their ability to provide a well-rounded education by providing instruction to the list of subjects that includes music. On top of that, schools can use federal dollars, such as Title I Funds, to address any deficiencies they find in their ability to give students experiences with those subject areas. Federal funding to help support music programs was evident by the three case study districts on how they handled the COVID 19 pandemic.

For many years, the national educational focus has been on "STEM"-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. Educational advocates now realize the importance of adding Arts to the discussion shifting STEM to STEAM. STEAM education provides a more holistic approach that reflects the need for students to develop both creative and analytical skills.

Not only is music being better integrated into the curriculum, but districts are finding ways to include sciences and technology into music. This was evident by the three case study districts with the expansion of technology devices, implementation of newer music software, and music programs such as studio and music recording.

Exploring and adopting newer technologies to district music programs helps enhance the awareness of music education's benefits, increases participation, and provides alternative opportunities for students to use their creative and analytical skills.

Music for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

New York State its revised Arts standards, with the Statewide Strategic Plan for the Arts, because of ESSA bringing music education to the forefront. New York State Education Department (NYSED) identified that through creating, performing, responding, and connecting in the arts, students generate experiences, construct knowledge, and build a more integrated understanding of self and community. Through music, students can express ideas, feelings, and beliefs about the past and present; discover new ideas and begin to envision possible futures. Through careful study of their own and others' art, students explore and make sense of the broad human condition across time and cultures.

The mission of the Statewide Strategic Plan for the Arts can be realized if all educators and other stakeholders are involved in supporting its implementation. Strengthening and enhancing the statewide arts education learning community involves all community partners, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, cultural institutions and/or societies; business and industry professionals; and government officials whose purview is arts education (NYSED, 2017). Each community member is invited and expected to participate in supporting the mission. The collaboration and participation of all community members, as their expertise shall warrant, will provide the most effective avenue to achieving the mission and having all stakeholders, including

parents and community members, understand the process and how music education works in the school's benefits music programs and the quality of education.

Numerous research studies such as the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) (2012) entitled The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth: The study measured academic success and future civic engagement of students, particularly those who are at-risk when they actively participate in arts programming. Along with these types of successes, this study documented those at-risk students with an "in-depth arts involvement" had higher career aspirations and were more likely to pursue higher education. Along with student engagement, music and arts programming offered in schools improves participation and aids in the development of critical thinking and creative problem-solving.

As music education, per ESSA, became a more significant part of the curriculum has also served schools to enhance their social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum. Goals for SEL for New York State students include developing self-awareness and self-management skills essential to success in school and in life; using social awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships; and demonstrating ethical decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts (NYSED, 2019). Music education helps students learn how to be dedicated, persevere, and to work together. Music programs help enrich students with skills such as leadership, self-expression, and creativity. Districts need to ensure students see that these skills are not isolated to the music classroom and to confront their challenges with strength and skill.

Districts in the case study sought to ensure students were part of music ensembles, whether competitively or not, to ensure they embraced the benefits of music programs. Music can be the preventative mental health our students need so they have the skills to confront the life challenges ahead of them. Through challenging times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, school music programs provided the support, learning, and skills necessary to succeed. Exploring additional ways music programs can benefit the SEL curriculum will further enhance its role in the well-rounded education curriculum.

Reimaging School-Community Relations

School leaders are reimagining schools and the context of how communities are involved in student learning. Changes within schools, ranging from demographic, cultural, technological, and economic, have districts rethinking their assumptions and beliefs about the meaning of community. Schools and the community should not be divided as the learning community and the supporting community. Schools seeking legitimacy and support for their music programs need to develop trust and combine each element from inside and outside of the schools. School as a learning community is to recognize that participation, success, inclusivity, and collaboration are important ideals for the whole school community.

Music programs featured concerts and performances that highlighted the abilities and talents of each student. However, music programs are more than concerts, and having the community understand this only enhances the programs. Featuring open house or monthly meetings highlighting changes, new initiatives, and providing opportunities to share ideas improves communication, finds alternative solutions, and gain growing

support for music programs. It allows members of the community to assist the school system and to get involved with the school, including those that may not have been involved in the school system before.

Community and music booster provide important and tremendous support. They are promoting and supporting the best interest of music programs through organized fundraisers, financial support, organizing music-related activities, and attending performances. The teamwork, comradery, and communication between community and music programs are the key characteristics of success.

Connecting today's curriculum with the real world involves finding relevance outside of the classroom. Having local businesses and community members engaged with learning experiences in and out of the classroom help students adapt and acquire additional experiences through the world around them (Reimagine Education Advisory Council Panel, 2020). Finding experts, businesses, and community organizations not only supports the strategies from New York State Strategic Plan for the Arts, but it also provides untapped experiences and knowledge bringing greater relevance to what is being learned.

School districts must incorporate ways for parents and the community to contact school administration, teachers, and overall support systems. There is a need for communications to parents and families that must be provided in their native language and include information about additional resources. A greater informed community means stronger support for programs. Meetings and information can be provided virtually or online.

Reinventing the school community as an open and shared learning space changes how stakeholders participate in decision making provides additional support, knowledge, and community participation in schools' music programs.

Summary

The qualitative case study of the three school districts using Argyris (1990) and Senge (1994) systems can provide more in-depth data regarding its effectiveness and its implications during a time of transformation and decision shifts. During these transitions and changes within districts, the research showed how school leaders use their previous education experiences, perceptions, and value of music in making decisions related to music program choices, both maintaining and expanding. Successful music programs have school leaders listen to stakeholders and have the community, including parents, a part of the decision-making process.

The research also shows that professional development should take place not only for the music teachers but also for parents and community members to fully understand the value and contribution of these newer technologies to music programs and the district's curriculum. Therefore, reinforcing the need for school leaders to ensure parents, teachers, and students are properly informed and educated so they can be more significant contributors to the decision-making process.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although the study focused more on school leadership, parents and music teachers play a central role in implementing the music education program. Since they spent most of their time with students, they understand the required resources, equipment,

and learning techniques to promote music education's success and positively impact learners. Therefore, future research should establish the role of music teachers and parents in developing and implementing music education programs in suburban schools. The study should also use a large sample size to reduce bias and make results more trustworthy.

In addition, the research identified district music curriculums, a key component of music education, and an important awareness document lacking. It is important to examine more in-depth music teachers and how they handle challenges. In addition, how music teachers as independent practitioners shape their views of music education in their schools. Further study will be needed to understand this practice and whether it is unique or commonplace across other school districts.

Future studies should also examine the influence or impact that technology has on music programs, such as software implemented for hybrid instruction during the COVID-19 and districts enhancing music program offerings by including software and technology related to studio recording. There are few studies that investigate ways that school leaders assess music teachers' progress with these changes. Considering today's educational environment that includes asynchronous and synchronous learning, teachers being able to adjust, learn and progress with technology is more than ever more important.

Future studies should also examine and consider the added outside pressures from future and past outside factors. Examining the decision-making of school leaders based on varying issues that would highlight each individual perceptions and visions towards

music programs would further expand upon the decision process of school leaders on music education programs.

Conclusion

The essence of this research was to determine perceptions of school leaders on music programs in suburban regions. The research established that all the leaders had positive perceptions of music education. Thus, they are ready to support the implementation of music programs. Besides, this research confirms that school leadership plays a critical role in the success of music education. In suburban regions, the superintendents can facilitate effective development and implementation of music education collaboration with other leaders such as music and finance administrators. A critical element of introducing music education is decision-making on curriculum implementation. Most participates noted that decision-making should include all essential stakeholders of music education. Therefore, teachers, parents, and students should be at the core of the decision-making process. Finally, good decision-making leads to a successful implementation of the music program, which supports the students' cognitive functions, academic excellence, and social skills.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Informed Consent Letter

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to participate in a research study to investigate how decisions regarding general and instrumental music programs take place and identify factors that impact both the students and the schools. This study will help better inform educational leadership on HOW SCHOOL LEADERS MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT MUSIC PROGRAMS IN SUBURBAN SCHOOLS. I will be conducting this study as part of my doctoral dissertation for St. John's University, Department of Administration, and Instructional Leadership.

This portion of the study will consist of an initial questionnaire to be completed via Microsoft Forms or e-mail. This will be followed by an in-person or remote Zoom interview lasting about forty minutes. Digital recordings of the interviews will be made so that data can be transcribed and analyzed. You may review the recordings and request that all or any portion of the recording be destroyed. All recordings, data, and electronic files will be stored in a private 2-factored password-protected OneDrive folder. Pseudonyms will be used during transcription for all proper names to maintain confidentiality.

All consent forms will be kept separate from the transcription data to ensure the names and identities of all participants will not be known or linked to any information provided. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty of any kind.

Your participation is much appreciated. If you have any questions concerning the research study, please call me at ███████ or my faculty advisor, Dr. Catherine DiMartino, at ███████. For questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Dr. Raymond DiGiuseppe, director of the University's Human Subjects Review Board, St. John's University, at 718-990-1440.

Respectfully,

Xavier I. Rodriguez

Agreement to Participate.

Yes, I agree to participate in the study described above.

_____	_____
Participant Signature	Date
_____	_____
Researcher's Signature	Date

APPENDIX B

ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

1) Are you involved in the decision process regarding Music in your district?

2) What is your current position?

3) Which school district?

4) How many students attend your school/district?

5) Describe the demographics of your school/district students.

6) Describe the socioeconomic status of your school/district students.

7) What group of persons play the largest role in determining the number of music programs? Quality?

8) Who makes decisions on the music curriculum in your school district?

9) Who makes decisions on the employment of music teachers in your school district?

10) Do you consent to participate in a digitally recorded interview for research purposes?

APPENDIX C

SUPERINTENDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) About how many years have you been in your current position?

2) About how long have you been in education?

3) What do you consider to be your most important leadership trait?

4) How do you incorporate innovation into your district?

5) What do you see as critical success factors in your job currently?

6) What do you think it means to "value" a music program?

7) How would you define a well-rounded education, and what subjects would you include to encompass that description?

8) What personal values influenced your decision to include or exclude music programs?

9) Is your school district facing any problems in music education today?

10) Describe the process that you go through to decide to include or exclude music programs?

11) What role do you play in maintaining the quality of the music program?

12) What specific changes have you had to make to continue providing quality music education?

13) What are your opinion of State testing and its impact on the quality of music education?

14) What other factors outside of legislation have influenced your decision to include or exclude music programs or change the funding?

15) Describe how community support affects your decision to include or exclude music programs?

16) What would you most want to know about your district three months from now?

17) Are there any documents you would like to share?

18) Is there anything you want to add that I may have missed asking?

APPENDIX D

BUILDING ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) About how many years have you been in your current position?

2) About how long have you been in education?

3) What do you consider to be your most important leadership trait?

4) How do you incorporate innovation into your school?

5) What do you see as critical success factors in your job currently?

6) What are some of your plans to make music an important part of the curriculum?

7) Describe the process for determining the content, organization, and funding of music programs.

8) What personal values influenced your decision to include or exclude music programs?

9) What would you like to change about the state of music education in your school/district?

10) What changes did you have to make to its musical offerings to satisfy state / federal requirements?

11) Please describe any changes you have made to programming over the years to make music education more appealing.

12) What is the priority of music classes when making teacher and student schedules relevant to the core classes?

13) Describe how community support affects your decision to include or exclude music programs?

14) What do you believe is the greatest factor impacting decisions in your school regarding music instruction?

15) Are there any documents you would like to share?

16) Is there anything you want to add that I may have missed asking?

APPENDIX E

MUSIC LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) About how many years have you been in your current position?

2) About how long have you been in education?

3) What do you consider to be your most important leadership trait?

4) How do you incorporate innovation into your program?

5) What do you see as critical success factors in your job currently?

6) Does your district have a systematic music program?

7) How many students in your school/district participate in music?

8) How many music teachers are employed by your school district?

9) Does the district where you make decisions offer general/instrumental music?

10) What grades are general/instrumental music offered?

11) What other specific music programs does your school/district offer?

12) Describe the process for determining the content, organization, and funding of music programs?

13) What specific factors of your music program ensure its quality the most?

14) Which goals are being met the most in your district/school?

15) Has your school/district won any regional or national championships in music? If yes, details.

16) Describe a time you felt the least supported? Most supported? Who are the key actors in the community that support music programs?

17) In the past, has your school/district eliminated any programs to save music? Tell me about that process.

18) Are there any documents you would like to share?

19) Is there anything you want to add that I may have missed asking?

APPENDIX F

MUSIC TEACHER SPECIFIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1)   About how many years have you been in your current position?

2)   About how long have you been in education?

3)   How many students participate in your music program?

4)   Is your music program general music, instrumental, or a combination of both?

5)   What grades do you teach?

6)   How do you incorporate innovation into your classes?

7)   What do you see as critical success factors in your job currently?

8)   What do you do to create interest in students about music?

9)   Describe some of the pivotal events that shaped the current music program.

10)   What specific factors of your music program ensure its quality the most?

11)   Which goals are being met the most in your school?

12)   Are there any documents you would like to share?

13)   Is there anything you want to add that I may have missed asking?

APPENDIX G

FINANCE LEADER SPECIFIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1) Excluding salaries, what is the current annual budget for music?

2) Which financial decisions have most influenced changes made to the music program?

3) What are the factors that you consider when funding music programs? What role do state and local funding play? Policy?

4) Who are the supporters/detractors of music programs? Have you had recent cuts? What was the response, and why?

5) How does the board of education view programming?

6) How do you incorporate innovation into your district?

7) What do you see as critical success factors in your job currently?

8) In a time of economic challenge that mandates cuts, what areas do you believe should undergo budget cuts?

9) Do you think that your district uses an adequate amount of its budget to support the music program? Why or why not?

10) What percentage of funding from your district's budget is allocated to music programs within the district?

11) What type of funding model do you use to determine how funds are allocated to each department?

12) What percentage of Title I or Title IV (federal) funding goes to the Arts in your district?

13) How do you think that your district could or should rectify your music program?

APPENDIX H

DOCUMENT EVALUATION

NAME OF DOCUMENT	REFERENCE TO DOCUMENT	RETRIEVED FROM	GOALS INDICATED OR NOTED ACHIEVEMENTS	WRITTEN/ PROVIDED BY
District M: Why Music is Healthy for Your Child	M1	▮	Music is an extremely healthy activity for your child, and musicians have brains that develop differently than non-musicians.	▮
District M Board of Education Minutes	M2		Board minutes highlight programs, community workshops and promote the district's success.	
District O: Music Search	O1		No current music-related documents or shared resources were found.	
District O Board of Education Minutes	O2		Board minutes highlight district attempts to expand technology. Highlights music programs.	
District F: Welcome to Music	F1		Highlights the school's music programs in addition to sharing resource music links.	
District F Board of Education Minutes	F2		Board minutes showcasing parental involvement and participation in music.	

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