Teacher Perceptions of the Effects of the Ohio Core’s Fine Arts Graduation Requirement on Seventh and Eighth Grade Music Curricular Offerings

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of Ohio's new fine arts graduation requirement on middle school music curricular offerings, specifically relating to those that have historically been elective in nature. Domains of inquiry included course options available to students, the effects of this requirement on enrollments, and the requirement’s impact on teaching.

Ten practicing middle school music educators were interviewed in one-on-one settings. Five of the eight districts represented in the sample required students to study music at the seventh or eighth grade levels. All offered band and choir. Orchestra and general music were offered less frequently.

Opinions were mixed as to whether or not Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement had affected music enrollments. Several believed that there were students enrolled solely to fulfill a requirement. These students were perceived to be less engaged and achieve at a lower level than their more interested counterparts.

Overall, participants did not believe that Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement had significantly impacted their programs—local factors played more notable roles. However, the requirement had affected the ways that participants interacted with their students (e.g., focusing more on retention) and participants’ perspectives of music education in the schools.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my wife, Dana.
Acknowledgments

First of all, I would like to thank my wife, Dana, for all of her guidance, patience, and support throughout the creation of this document.

I would also like to recognize my advisor, Dr. Daryl Kinney, and the rest of the music education and applied music faculty and staff at The Ohio State University. They have challenged me in every way, and as a result, I have matured significantly as a professional and as an individual. This document exists as a testament to their continued support.
Vita

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2011 to present ........................................... Graduate Teaching Associate, School of Music, The Ohio State University

Fields of Study

Major Field: Music
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

In 2006, Ohio’s 126th General Assembly passed Amended Substitute Senate Bill 311, establishing the Ohio Core curriculum. This bill was signed into law on January 3, 2007 (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, January 3). In June of 2010, the Ohio State Board of Education officially adopted the Common Core standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics. The board also introduced more rigorous state standards in science and social studies.

The purpose of the Common Core state standards is to ensure that students are “college and career ready” by the time that they complete high school. The authors of the Common Core claim that the skills and dispositions advanced in these standards are integral to the private and public lives of democratic citizens. According to these standards, students in the twenty-first century must be able to gather, evaluate, synthesize, and analyze information. Those who meet the Common Core standards demonstrate characteristics of independent scholars, display strong content knowledge, communicate effectively, value and assess evidence, demonstrate skills in technology, and understand diverse perspectives (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).
While the Common Core standards do not directly address the arts, The College Board (2013) asserts that the principles advanced by the Common Core still apply to arts education. For example, students can use the arts to develop and refine observational and interpretational skills—skills that are central to the Common Core. Also, arts educators can teach students how to respond to and analyze works of art, which again, are skills connected to the Common Core standards.

In recent history, education legislation has negatively impacted arts education. Studies and media outlets have reported that the focus on tested subjects has left students with fewer course options in the arts and less time in their schedules to explore these subjects (Beveridge, 2010; Boss, 2007; Boss & Sebastian, 2007; French, 2009; Heffner, 2007; Music for All Foundation, 2004; Spohn, 2008; Von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). Arts educators have also reported decreased contact time with students as districts increase the time that students spend studying tested subjects (Abril & Gault, 2006; Baker, 2011; Beveridge, 2010; Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010; Johnson, 2010; Pederson, 2007; Spohn, 2008; Von Zastrow & Janc, 2004; West, 2012).

**The Ohio Core**

Ohio adopted the Common Core standards as the basis for the Ohio Core, and with these new standards came new graduation requirements (see Table 1). Beginning with the class of 2014, students must complete “an additional year of math and lab-based science to get a diploma” (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, January 19). Students must also fulfill a financial literacy requirement and are strongly encouraged to study foreign language.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Prior Law</th>
<th>THE OHIO CORE</th>
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<td></td>
<td>(Applies to students in</td>
<td>(Applies to students in public and</td>
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<td>public and chartered</td>
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<td>nonpublic schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>English language arts</td>
<td>4 units (480 hours)</td>
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<td>Math</td>
<td>3 units (360 hours)</td>
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<td>(120 hours) of algebra II or its</td>
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<td>Science</td>
<td>3 units (360 to 450 hours,</td>
<td>3 units with inquiry-based laboratory</td>
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<td>unit is a laboratory</td>
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<td>course), including:</td>
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<td>science; and</td>
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<td>• 1 unit of biology.</td>
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<td>other life science, or (c) astronomy,</td>
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<td>space science.</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Electives</td>
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<td>and consumer sciences, technology,</td>
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<td>social studies courses not otherwise</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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Table 1. State minimum high school curriculum comparison (S. 311, 2006)
When the legislation that would become the Ohio Core was introduced in early 2006, students were not required to study the fine arts in order to graduate. As a result, arts educators, students, and their advocates undertook significant action so that the arts might be included in Ohio’s graduation requirements. In December 2006, Senate Bill 311 was amended to include a fine arts graduation requirement (Platz & Collins, 2007). Under this requirement, students must complete the equivalent of two semesters of fine arts study between grades seven and twelve. However, this does not apply to students who opt-out of the Ohio Core or follow a career-technical track. Nancy Pistone, an Ohio Department of Education expert in the fine arts, said the following about the new fine arts graduation requirement:

The fine arts requirement in the Core helps us begin to highlight the visual and performing arts as equal partners with other subjects…Whether they stand alone as design, drama, architecture, music, dance, sculpture, photography, painting and filmmaking courses—or are integrated with other disciplines—the modes of thought and dispositions the arts nurture will prepare students to meet economic, cultural, societal and personal challenges. (Ohio Department of Education, 2012, January 19)

As of 2012, thirty-two states name the arts among core academic subjects. Forty-five require arts study at the elementary level, and forty-one require arts study at the middle school level. Only twenty-seven require arts study for high school graduation (Arts Education Partnership, 2012). Ohio is among the twenty-seven.

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1 S.B. 311 does not define what courses are considered fine arts, but Ohio’s fine arts content standards include dance, drama/theater, music, and visual art.
Many advocates for music and arts education welcome and fight for fine arts graduation requirements (Johnson, 1995; Manzo, 1997). Meyer (2005) calls for arts educators to continue pushing for arts requirements and advocating for semester requirements that place the arts on par with other curricular subjects. Still, there are some who worry about the effects of such a requirement, and are concerned about being able to meet the needs of the general student population.

Historically, music courses at the middle and high school level have been treated as either elective or exploratory options. Students who elect to enroll in music choose to do so out of a desire to develop their knowledge of the subject. Typically, electives at the middle and high school levels are performance-oriented courses (e.g., band, orchestra, or choir). In a study of secondary school music options, Abril and Gault (2008) found that only thirty-four percent of schools required students to study music. Further, middle and junior high schools were more likely to have a music requirement than were high schools. Since the Ohio Core allows students to fulfill their arts requirement at any time between grades seven and twelve, some music educators worry that districts will require music study at the seventh and eighth grade level—making sure students fulfill their fine arts graduation requirement before they enter high school.

Duling (2007), for example, is concerned that Ohio school districts will choose to have students fulfill Ohio’s fine arts requirement through the performance-oriented music courses that already exist in most school districts, “leaving general music out, or relegating it to nine weeks on ‘the exploratory wheel’” (p. 82). He advocates for semester- or year-long general music courses for students who are not interested in
traditional performing ensembles. Without another option, these students may not choose to enroll in music past sixth grade.

Further, Gerber and Gerrity (2007) are concerned that Ohio students can meet their fine arts requirement without studying music. They are also skeptical of the extended amount of time that students have to fulfill this requirement:

While all other core requirements apply specifically to grades 9 through 12, students may complete the two arts semesters anytime between grades 7 and 12. Like the No Child Left Behind Act itself, this exception subtly marginalizes the arts. While surely not what the advocates intended, it affirms the arts as less important than everything else.

The authors assert that if students are able to fulfill their fine arts graduation requirement at the middle school level, then the courses that they take should reflect high school level knowledge and skills. But are middle school ensembles able to match the musical achievement of their high school counterparts? Are there middle school general music classes rigorous enough to warrant high school credit? Will students truly be able to master high school level content by the end of eighth grade? On the other hand, Gerber and Gerrity believe that while Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement poses challenges, it also offers music educators the chance to create engaging and inclusive music courses at the middle school level. These courses may appeal to students who fall outside the traditional performance model, helping these students understand and discover music at a deeper level.
In music education, comprehensive general music courses are best equipped to serve exploratory purposes, but as budgets dwindle, these courses are often the first cut (Gerrity, 2009; Music for All Foundation, 2004). Thus, performance-oriented courses are becoming many students’ only options for fulfilling their arts requirements. If all students are now required to enroll in the arts, music educators may have to adjust their teaching and course content to meet the needs of a changing student population. Teachers may also face new challenges with students who might not find value in the school music experience, yet are compelled by requirements to enroll. These challenges may be exacerbated in traditionally elective music courses.

Need

While some have voiced concerns about Ohio’s new fine arts graduation requirement, there has been no substantial study of its real or perceived effects on teachers and students. As general music programs are often the first programs cut when schools face financial hardships, students who would have traditionally enrolled in general music may now find themselves enrolling in performing ensembles. It is important for Ohio educators to understand how this requirement may be changing the makeup of the student population enrolling in their courses. This changing population may also force music educators to alter the ways that they organize and deliver instruction. This study will examine the perceived effects of Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement on teachers, students, and curricular offerings in music.
Purpose

Performance-oriented classes (e.g., band, choir, and orchestra) make up the majority of middle and high school course offerings and have historically been considered elective courses. As general music classes struggle to survive, more and more students seeking to fulfill their fine arts requirement may find themselves enrolled in music classes with strong performance components. This changing student population could potentially affect how music teachers organize course content, deliver instruction, and view music education as a whole. Thus, the purpose of this study was to investigate how Ohio's new fine arts graduation requirements had affected middle school music curricular offerings, specifically relating to those music courses that have historically been elective in nature.

Overarching questions guiding the investigation included:

- What are the course options available to students fulfilling their fine arts requirement at the middle school level?
- How has the fine arts graduation requirement affected enrollment in music courses at the middle school level?
- How has the changing population of students enrolled in music courses affected music educators’ abilities to organize and deliver instruction?

Although generalizability is limited, based on the methodological approach undertaken, findings from the study provide information about how Ohio's fine arts requirement has affected curricular offerings in music education at the middle school level. Such perspective will provide practicing music educators and music teacher
educators with insight into the changing landscape of music education at the middle school level, and how changing enrollments in music courses are affecting course content.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Under the Ohio Core, all Ohio students are required to earn at least two semesters of fine arts credit between grades seven and twelve. Previously, the fine arts were merely options for students as they completed their elective requirement. Students could potentially graduate without having studied fine arts at the high school level. The purpose of this study was to shed light on the effects of this requirement on music curricular offerings at the seventh and eighth grade levels. I was especially interested in schools that required music study at this level, as a music requirement in middle school would help students fulfill their high school graduation requirement. I began my research by reviewing literature on the current status of music curricular offerings in American education.

I was also interested in how this new requirement might affect enrollment in music courses. As general music programs battle for survival at the middle and high school levels, performance-oriented courses, which have been historically elective in nature, may become students’ only options in music. This may affect the ways that music educators approach recruitment and retention. To gain perspective on this issue, I reviewed research on why students choose to enroll and persist in music and other historically elective courses.
This new student population may also affect the ways that music educators organize and deliver instruction. To better understand this issue, I sought out research examining the factors influencing students’ active engagement in music as well as their influence on behavior and achievement in music courses. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to exploring the aforementioned literature.

*Music curricular offerings*

Throughout its history, the music curriculum has adapted to the demands of a changing educational landscape. In a 1988 survey, Alexander and McEwin (1989) found that general music was more frequently required in grades six and seven than in grade eight. However, between 1968 and 1988, general music was required less and offered less as an elective during these grades. On the other hand, the authors reported a sharp increase in the number of schools offering instrumental music in grades seven and eight. Today, these courses make up a majority of music curricular offerings.

General music courses still face challenges today. According to a survey of Ohio principals (Gerrity, 2009), eighty-three percent of school music programs have weakened or stagnated since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002. In schools that have had to reduce music offerings for budgetary reasons, general music was often the first course cut. This was troubling to the authors of the survey, who noted that general music classes typically serve a majority of the student population. Without a general music course, students’ only options may be performance-oriented music courses—courses traditionally viewed as electives.
Different types of schedules present different challenges for music and arts educators. Typically, music offerings at the middle school level are offered as yearlong, semester-long, or exploratory courses. In an exploratory program, students cycle through a variety of subjects, which they otherwise might not have encountered. This might help them better understand their own interests and abilities (Lake, 1989). However, different types of schedules may pose challenges for elective courses. For example, according to one teacher’s account (Hassenpflug, 1999), block scheduling led to a dramatic increase in enrollment in her elective art courses. With the elimination of study halls, there was nowhere for “less academically-motivated” students to go. Counselors encouraged these students to enroll in “the specials” (e.g., art, music, home economics, physical education), which increased enrollment, leading to overcrowding, an increase in discipline problems, and a perceived decrease in the quality of student work. Further, these educators were expected to serve a larger body of students without a corresponding increase in budget.

With the passage of Ohio’s new fine arts requirement, music educators may be granted the opportunity to serve a larger, more diverse body of students. The next section explores the types of students that have typically chosen to participate in music so that music educators can better understand this potentially new and expanded population.

**Enrollment**

According to Cutietta and McAllister (1997), the personalities of students that typically enroll and persist in music tend to resemble those of the general student population. However, these students tend to be academically and socially advantaged. This is especially true of students who enroll in performance-oriented courses (Kinney,
These students are more likely to come from two-parent or – guardian homes, and their parents tend to have attained high educational and professional status (Brändström & Wiklund, 1996; Kinney, 2010). Many also have a higher socioeconomic status (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998; Kinney, 2010; Klinedinst, 1991). This gives students greater access to those resources that they will need to be successful in music (i.e., private lessons, quality instruments).

A high socioeconomic status also tends to be associated with certain shared values in the school, community, parents, and other influential figures in students’ lives (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998). These parties play large roles in students’ decisions to enroll and persist in music and other electives (Albert, 2006; Benoit, 2007; McGannon & Medeiros, 1995; Ng & Hartwig, 2011). While females are more likely to show interest in and persist in music programs (Brändström & Wiklund, 1996, Kinney, 2010; Lucas 2011), several studies have shown that boys are more likely to be swayed by the opinions of their family, friends, and teachers (Chen & Stewart-Strobelt, 2003; McGannon & Medeiros, 1995). However, in a study of adolescent male choir members, Lucas (2011) found the influence of family and friends mattered less than the students’ enjoyment of singing.

In music, students who persist tend to show higher academic achievement than those who drop out (Kinney, 2010). According to Klinedinst (1991), academic abilities strongly correlate with musical success. Through musical success, students build stronger senses of self-efficacy—an important factor in whether or not students decide to persist in music or other areas of study (Hoffman, 2012; Lewis, 1972; Lowe, 2012; McGannon &
Medeiros, 1995; McPherson & Hendricks, 2010; Ng & Hartwig, 2011). Students who face challenges or do not perform at the same level as their peers may find themselves reevaluating their musical identities, potentially leading to a decline in self-efficacy and discontinued participation (Hoffman, 2012; Lowe, 2012).

This speaks to the influence of teachers in students’ decisions to enroll and persist in music and other courses. Students want to learn in safe classrooms and are eager to build strong rapport with their teachers. Students draw inspiration from these teachers, whom they view as professional musicians (Lowe, 2012). The teacher’s personality and philosophy can draw students into the classroom and encourage them to remain. Students who have positive relationships with their teachers, consider themselves to be part of a classroom “family,” and feel a sense of ownership in the classroom are more likely to enroll and persist in music (Albert, 2006; Benoit, 2007; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003; Hoffman, 2012). Teachers who have high expectations of their students and devise activities that further student achievement also tend to recruit and retain more students (Albert, 2006; Benoit, 2007).

The perception of music education in students’ homes and community also plays a large role in student involvement (Benoit, 2007). In a 2006 study, Albert showed that students are drawn to a music program through exposure, culturally relevant ensembles, the availability of resources for students, and students’ perceptions of the program’s value. If students feel that the community values music education, they will be more likely to enroll and persist.
Ultimately, students tend to enroll in music courses for intrinsic reasons—they report finding joy in the music making process (Baker, 2009; Benoit, 2007; Lucas, 2011). For them, music is an outlet for their feelings, and this passion for music becomes part of their identities. They understand that it requires hard work to develop as musicians, but they feel accomplished when they succeed (Benoit, 2007).

Despite students’ interests, outside requirements often play large roles in their enrollment decisions. In a study of the general student population, Lewis (1972) reported that students felt pressured to elect certain courses even though they might not want to. Students also expressed a preference for a combination of science and arts courses, attesting to the importance of a balanced curriculum. In spite of this, both schools with demanding academic course loads and schools with high minority populations tend to discourage enrollment in music (Stewart, 1991).

Students who are not motivated to enroll in school music make up another population of interest. If schools require music study, these students will find themselves enrolled in courses that they would not otherwise have chosen to elect. If music educators are to reach these students, they must understand what interests and motivates them. Students’ liking or disliking of a class, and therefore their interest, stems from a variety of factors. One of these is how well the student fits into the classroom—how well he or she relates to prototypical students in the class. If a student does not identify with this prototype, then he or she may feel discriminated against. This feeling of acceptance is important for adolescent students, as they tend to have strong desires to fit in with their peers (Kessels, 2005).
A student’s interest in a subject is also related to its perceived relevance to his or her life. According to McPherson and Hendricks (2010), children and adolescents are very interested in music; however, they are far more interested in music as it relates to their lives outside the school than music as presented in the school. This suggests that current curricular offerings may not appeal to the broad student body. Students, then, might be interested in learning about music but not in an academic setting. With this in mind, music educators should seek to provide learning opportunities that are relevant to the needs of the students.

This approach may help retain students even after they have fulfilled their fine arts requirement. Ng and Hartwig (2011) studied what happened to enrollments in music courses once students fulfilled such a requirement. In Australia, students are required to enroll in music through the eighth grade. According to Ng and Hartwig, after fulfilling this requirement, a significant number of students did not elect to continue studying music. Interestingly, general music teachers reported a larger drop in enrollment than instrumental teachers. When asked about the reasons behind this decline in enrollment, most music educators attributed it to factors beyond their control. These included: (a) students’ personal interests and the value that they placed on music learning, (b) students’ sense of self-efficacy, (c) parental and peer influences, and (d) the low status of music in the curriculum. In addition to these factors, Baker (2009) reported that scheduling conflicts were significant deterrents to students who were interested in enrolling in more than one music course. This seems to suggest that despite the best efforts of music
educators, students’ decisions to enroll and persist in music may, in some ways, be largely beyond teachers’ control.

*Teaching a changing student population*

Under Ohio’s new fine arts graduation requirement, all students are required to enroll in at least two semesters of fine arts study. As this was not previously required, music educators in the state of Ohio may find a broader student population enrolling in their courses. To be successful with this new population, some music educators might have to learn how to engage and motivate students with diverse interests. In this section, I examine factors influencing student engagement, how a lack of engagement could affect classroom management, and what music educators may do to motivate their students.

One issue for music educators to consider is how the traditional music curriculum (classroom general music courses and traditional performing ensembles) relates to the interests of contemporary students. Students almost universally prefer and interact with popular music—they have difficulty seeing the relevance in teacher-selected school music (Brändström & Wiklund, 1996; De Vries, 2010). Students also interact with music differently outside of school than they do inside. Technology plays a large role in the way that students listen and respond to music. Despite this, many schools place limits on digital music devices, and many music teachers do not have the resources that they need to offer students meaningful experiences with music technology (De Vries, 2010). These barriers serve to further remove school music from the everyday lives of students.

As music educators consider the appeal of their courses, they must also note that general music courses face different challenges than performance-oriented courses. In a
study of adolescent students, De Vries (2010) found that students in the study had negative opinions of their classroom music lessons. Students reported that if teachers gave them more choices, they might have more positive learning experiences. Specifically, students wanted to study popular music and have more opportunities to actively engage with and make music. Keeping this in mind, classroom music teachers could, therefore, tailor their lessons to the interests and needs of their students, increasing the chances that these students will have positive experiences in music.

Large instrumental and choral ensembles, on the other hand, are often teacher-centered, which is a challenge for music educators as they attempt to cater their instruction to the interests and needs of their students (Gordon, 2002). In spite of this, students in De Vries’s study (2010) expressed positive opinions about their ensemble experiences. They had enthusiastic conductors who gave them a say in the music they performed. Both students and teachers in these ensembles were dedicated to increasing student achievement and were motivated as they worked toward a common goal. Again, students enjoyed actively engaging with music.

When students are not actively engaged in the learning process, they are more likely to be off-task. For example, in a study of elementary music students, Forsythe (1977) showed that students were more likely to be on-task if they were actively engaged. Forsythe judged on-task behavior as “appropriate attending to and/or participating in classroom activities and events. Students judged not to be responding appropriately during each interval” were considered off-task (p. 229). He also found that playing instruments and singing resulted in less off-task behavior than learning through verbal
Findings from this study suggest that the more students engage in the music making process, the less they misbehave.

The reasons why students may find themselves on- or off-task are similar across disciplines. Students may misbehave when they feel frustrated, when tasks are too hard, or when they are not given the tools that they need to succeed. Students with low self-confidence or self-efficacy are also more likely to misbehave. When they feel threatened, students with low self-confidence may act out or engage in power struggles with their teachers. Students with low self-efficacy may have simply given up. This resignation can lead to boredom, frustration, and disruptive behaviors. Also, adolescents may simply act out in attempt to win attention from adults and their peers (Buck, 1992; Landrum, Lingo, & Scott, 2011; Malone, Bonitz, & Rickett, 1998).

For music educators to be successful in today’s educational climate, they must learn how to engage a broader, more diverse student body. Both Buck (1992) and De Vries (2010) suggest giving students a say in their own learning. This gives them ownership of the classroom and control over their own educations. It makes learning experiences more meaningful and actively engages students in lessons, leading to fewer behavior problems and a more motivated student body. In performance ensembles, teachers could give students some voice when selecting repertoire or provide them with opportunities to choose their own repertoire as part of a comprehensive chamber music program. Classroom music teachers can make students active participants in their own learning. Hood (2012) did this by giving her undergraduate students more control and

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2 It is interesting to note that singing showed the lowest amount of off-task behaviors (Forsythe, 1977).
autonomy in the classroom. Her students completed the same lessons and covered the same material that others had in previous years, but this time, they were responsible for their own learning. Students worked together to design assessment criteria and assessed their own progress. Hood’s study yielded a number of positive outcomes: students (a) earned higher grades; (b) demonstrated increased engagement, participation, and confidence in class activities; (c) enjoyed the class more than in previous years; and (d) became more self-critical and constructive when assessing their progress. This case study is an illustration of how student involvement in the learning process leads to increased engagement and more successful learning experiences.

Ultimately, if students are to be engaged in a course, they must be motivated. This is a challenge for courses with compulsory enrollment. While extrinsic motivation comes from the external factors (e.g., from rewards or in response to short-term objectives), intrinsic motivation comes from within the individual or from the task itself. Intrinsically motivated students are more likely to succeed and have positive experiences. These students value what they are doing. They tend to practice more effectively and perform at a higher level than their less motivated peers. They are cognitively engaged in classroom activities and work harder than students who are not motivated by the same factors (Schatt, 2011).

The challenge for teachers of historically elective courses is how to foster intrinsic motivation in a broader student population—students enrolled due to Ohio’s new fine arts graduation requirement rather than by choice. To accomplish this, educators must convince students of the value and benefit of classroom learning activities. Research also
shows that positive learning experiences and positive student-teacher interactions can increase student motivation (Schatt, 2011), suggesting that teachers can influence student motivation. If presented with positive, relevant learning experiences, students can enjoy and succeed in both classroom and performance-based school music courses.

Summary

While general music courses may best suit the needs of a broad student population, performing ensembles tend to make up the majority of curricular offerings at the middle school level. Historically, these performance ensembles have tended to attract a specific student population. These students tended to have more educated parents, a higher socioeconomic status, and higher academic achievement than their non-performing peers. They choose to enroll and persist in music for a variety of reasons, including personal interest; the influence of family, friends, and mentors; and the quality of classroom experiences.

Under Ohio's new requirement, music educators may find a new student population enrolling in their classes. However, if the traditional curriculum does not speak to the interests or needs of the students, music educators may face a disinterested, disengaged, and uncooperative student population. The challenge for educators is to learn what motivates their students and use this knowledge to design relevant and engaging learning activities. By involving students in their own learning, planning engaging lessons, and cultivating a positive environment in which students feel successful, music educators may appeal to a broader range of students.
With Ohio’s new fine arts graduation requirement students are required to complete at least two semesters of fine arts study between grades seven and twelve. As a result, music educators may have to adapt to changes in their enrollments and shifting classroom dynamics. They may have to reconsider the ways that they approach recruitment and retention, as well as the ways that they organize and deliver instruction. Having an understanding of what draws students to the music classroom and what motivates them to succeed will help music educators provide a potentially new student population with quality, positive musical experiences.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Theoretical framework

Given the exploratory nature of this research, I followed a phenomenological methodology built upon the ideas of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Maurice Merlau-Ponty (1908-1961), Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) (Schwandt, 2007, p. 225). Phenomenologists seek to understand “how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). While individuals may interpret an experience in different ways, phenomenologists assume that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience” (Patton, 2002, p. 106).

To uncover the essence of an experience, phenomenological researchers compare the experiences of individuals, and extract common themes from these experiences (Patton, 2002). In this study, I gathered information through in-depth interviews with those who had experienced the phenomena of interest firsthand. The phenomena of interest in this study were: (a) the course options available to students fulfilling their fine arts requirement in grades seven and eight, (b) the effect of the fine arts graduation requirement on enrollments in music courses, and (c) how the changing student population had affected their ways that music educators organized and delivered instruction. I gathered information about these phenomena through semi-structured interviews of practicing music educators teaching at the middle school level. Each
participant was interviewed once, either in-person or via phone. All further communication was carried out via email.

Participants

The ten participants in this study were practicing music educators teaching at the middle school level in school districts requiring at least one music course in grades seven or eight. Participants were chosen purposefully, utilizing intensity sampling techniques (Schwandt, 2007). Because the Ohio Core allows students to fulfill their fine arts graduation requirement beginning in the seventh grade, I was interested in schools that required students to study music at this time.

I selected three participants, whose school districts did not have a music requirement in the seventh and eighth grade years to serve as negative cases, further informing the analysis. These cases gave me greater perspective on the effects of district and state level fine arts requirements.

The ten participants who agreed to take part in this study represented eight different school districts. Participants had taught in their respective districts for an average of approximately seven years, ranging from one to eighteen years of experience. Six of the participants were male and four were female. Five participants taught band, three taught orchestra, two taught vocal music, and two taught general music.

The ten participants in this study represented eight school districts. Six were suburban districts and two were rural. Although this was a convenience sample, the selection of participants was purposeful in order to address the major research questions of the study. Thus, districts were chosen because of their arts requirements or lack
thereof. Additionally, all of the districts represented in this study offered band and choir; however, only four offered string instruction, and only three offered general music options. Table 2 provides a summary of participant demographics, course offerings, and their assigned pseudonyms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Music curricular offerings in grades seven and eight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Instrumental (band), vocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vivian</td>
<td>Instrumental (band), vocal, general (piano in grade seven, guitar in grade eight)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Gillian, Nicole, George</td>
<td>Instrumental (band/strings), vocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>Instrumental (band/strings), vocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>Instrumental (band/strings), vocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Instrumental (band/strings), vocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Kurt</td>
<td>Instrumental (band), vocal, general (grade seven only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Instrumental (band), vocal, general</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Seventh and eighth grade music curricular offerings at districts represented in this study

[Interviews]

I used semi-structured interviews to gather information related to the phenomena of interest. Interview questions centered on teachers’ perceptions of the effect of fine arts requirements on their programs and their ability to deliver instruction. Emphasis was placed on participants’ ability to teach classes that included students who they perceived to be enrolled to fulfill a fine arts requirement. I also asked additional questions pertaining to participant and school demographics as well as participants’ general impressions of Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement (see Appendix B for interview questions).
Interview questions were developed by the researcher and were guided by existing research and this study’s topic. Potential interview questions were reviewed by music education faculty members at a large, Midwestern university for clarity, as well as to determine their appropriateness and ability to answer the overarching questions conceived for the study.

Interview questions served as a guide during the interview. They were not asked verbatim. I attempted to (but did not always) ask questions in a specific order, as many questions built on previous ones. By using the questions as an open-ended guide to the interview, I was able to pursue interesting subject matter and avenues not previously considered, tailoring my inquiry to each individual’s responses (Paton, 2002). This flexible approach allowed me to focus directly on the phenomenon under investigation, while establishing rapport with participants—hallmarks of qualitative research (Glesne, 2011; Patton 2002).

Procedure

I identified a purposeful sample of music educators teaching in districts with a music requirement in grades seven through eight. Additional participants were identified using snowball-sampling techniques. I also identified three music educators who taught in districts that did not have a fine arts requirement to serve as negative cases. Potential participants were invited to take part in the study via email. If potential participants had not responded within seven to ten days, I sent a follow-up email, soliciting a response. Once a participant agreed to take part in the study, I arranged interviews at the participant’s convenience.
Email invitations (see Appendix A) were sent to twenty-eight music educators in the state of Ohio who matched the selection criteria. Of these twenty-eight, sixteen did not respond, two declined to participate, and ten agreed to take part in the study.

After receiving approval from my institution’s Internal Review Board (IRB), I conducted, recorded, and transcribed all interviews. Prior to each interview (and in accordance with IRB stipulations), I informed participants that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could decline to answer any question or discuss any topic. Participants were free to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. By agreeing to these conditions, participants offered their consent (see Appendix C for verbal script).

Interviews were semi-structured. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes. If necessary, follow-up interviews were scheduled. I recorded in-person interviews using a Tascam DR-05 Linear PCM Recorder. Telephone interviews were recorded using Google Voice. I took field notes during each interview and transcribed these notes using Evernote software. These notes proved useful in formulating new questions, analyzing the interview, and identifying emergent themes. They also served as back-ups in the event of a technological malfunction (Patton, 2002).

Once interviews were transcribed, any potentially identifying information was removed from the data and destroyed, protecting participants’ identities to greatest extent possible. This allowed participants to express their opinions candidly and without fear of someone other than the investigators knowing their identity. Each transcript was then sent
to the respective participant to check for accuracy. Interview recordings were destroyed following member-checks.

**Data analysis**

Interview transcriptions and field notes were analyzed for emerging patterns and themes. I began by reading through the transcripts, making comments in the margins, attaching post-it notes, and highlighting potentially useful information. I approached the data on its own terms—treating it as a text, isolated from existing literature (Patton, 2002). During this first read through, I developed preliminary categories and created an index of these categories. On subsequent readings, I applied and refined these labels.

Codes were tested using the principles of convergence and divergence, as described by Guba (1978). I looked for “recurring regularities” in the data (convergence) and grouped these pieces of information together. I then judged the categories by their internal homogeneity (i.e., was the data grouped in a meaningful way) and external heterogeneity (i.e., were the differences between categories “bold and clear”). I constantly assessed the accuracy of categories as I sorted data. I also tested my codes by principals of divergence: making connections between my codes and existing literature.

I asked an external auditor to look at my data and develop her own coding scheme. We then compared and discussed our codes. This process of triangulation was used to gauge the strength of my codes (Patton, 2002).

After reviewing participants’ responses, I developed the following codes related to participants’ perceptions of why students choose to enroll and persist in music. These
codes are also associated with students’ involvement, behavior, and achievement in the music classroom:

- **Fulfillment of requirement.** Once students have completed their fine arts requirement, they will choose whether or not they will continue studying music.

- **Student interest and motivation.** This relates to the extent that the subject matter appeals to students as well as to their desire or willingness to engage the subject. Students may be internally motivated (motivated by personal interest or by the task itself) or externally motivated (motivated to achieve an outcome, such as a reward, or to avoid punishment). Students’ motivations can affect their decisions to enroll, persist, and engage in school music. Students’ motivations can also affect their levels of resilience and perseverance (i.e., their willingness to continue when they face challenges). The relevance of learning activities to students’ lives can also affect student interest and motivation.

- **Academic pressures.** Students’ decisions to enroll and persist in music courses are often influenced by their drive to succeed in their academic courses. They strive to earn high grades and are often pushed to enroll in courses that are perceived as academically advantageous. Because of this, they may believe that they do not have time to devote to music study.

- **Teachers and classroom environment.** Teachers may influence students’ motivations and decisions to enroll and persist in music. How teachers interact with students, the quality of their instruction, and the way that they organize the curriculum can all affect students’ engagement in school music. Further, teachers
that have taught in the same school or district for a long period of time and have built a reputation can play a role in students’ decisions to enroll and persist in music.

- **Classroom experiences.** The quality of experiences that students have in the music classroom can affect students’ engagement and enrollment decisions. Teachers can help students develop the skills and abilities that they need to be successful in the classroom. This can influence how students engage in school music. The quality of learning activities can also affect students’ school music experience.

- **Outside influences.** People or social groups can affect students’ motivations and opinions of school music. These can include teachers, the community, and the family.

The following codes emerged as participants discussed their perceptions of Ohio’s credit flexibility option. This option is described in detail in Chapter 4:

- **Learning experiences.** The credit flexibility option allows students to earn credit for learning activities that extend beyond the school curriculum. These experiences may vary in their pedagogical and therefore, their educational value.

- **Implementation challenges.** The Ohio credit flexibility option demands a significant amount of time and effort from both students and teachers. This may influence students’ and teachers’ decisions to pursue and sponsor such proposals.

- **Impact on school music.** Credit flexibility may have an effect on music curricular offerings, especially, with respect to enrollment. It may also have positive implications for both students and programs.
Participants also discussed changes that they would make to Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement. The following ideas emerged in this discussion:

- **Timeframe.** The requirement stipulates a number of semesters that students must study the arts and a specific period of time that students have to fulfill it.

- **Options.** Students may choose to enroll in a variety of courses to fulfill their fine arts graduation requirement. They have options in music (e.g., band, choir, orchestra, or general music) as well as across the fine arts curriculum (e.g., music, visual art, or dance).

- **Assessment.** The state of Ohio tests some subjects but not others. Participants reflected on whether the state or individual teachers should design these assessments. They also commented on the subject matter that they or the state might choose to assess.

- **Resources.** School districts must decide how to allocate time, money, and personnel.

- **Value of music education.** This relates to extent to which music education is valued in the eyes of the state, community, school, and students.

  **Trustworthiness**

  Validity is a measure of how well the conclusions of a study reveal the true answer (Gaber, 2010). However, if we hold to the phenomenological idea that truth is socially constructed, truth becomes much more difficult to measure. Therefore, it is difficult to verify phenomenological research. For this type of research, researchers must make the claim that their conclusions are “plausible or credible.” This is referred to as
trustworthiness (Glesne, 2011). The following steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study:

- **Face validity.** I assessed my findings from a perspective other than my own, inviting input from individuals who were affected by the research (Gaber, 2010). For the purposes of this study, experts in the field of music education assessed interview questions for their relevance to the topic and overall validity. I also asked an external auditor to review my data and codes. I randomly selected five pages each from four different participants and asked the auditor to develop her own coding scheme. We compared and discussed what we had learned from the data, making sure we drew similar conclusions.

- **Member checks.** After transcribing interviews, I sent copies of the transcripts to their respective participants to ensure that I represented “[participants] and their ideas accurately” (Glesne, 2011, p. 49). At this time I also asked clarifying questions and shared analytical thoughts with participants. No participants chose to omit any information, but one did ask to change the name of a course, as it might identify her school district.

- **Clarification of researcher bias.** Bias is the “tendency in inquirers that prevents unprejudiced consideration or judgment” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 21), and it is possible for this to affect one’s interactions with participants in the field. Throughout this study, I kept a journal, reflecting on my thoughts, experiences, and assumptions. This helped me monitor and control my biases (Glesne, 2011,
Patton, 2002). I wrote in this journal before and after interviews, reflecting on what I expected to find and what my research actually uncovered.

- **Description.** In discussing my data and drawing conclusions, I used “ordinary vocabulary to convey rich and deep meanings about people, places, and programs” (Hurworth, 2005, p. 115). I also analyzed my data in conjunction with existing bodies or relevant research, providing context for the study.

- **Negative-case analysis.** I selected two participants who taught in schools with no music requirement. I compared their responses against those of teachers in schools with music requirements. This allowed me to refine my hypotheses and helped me guard against researcher bias (Glesne, 2011). These negative cases allowed me to put my findings in the proper perspective.
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter will present findings from the study and is organized into four main sections. First, I will describe the course offerings and music requirements in the districts represented in this study. Second, I will examine how enrollments have been affected by Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement. Third, I will discuss whether or not this requirement had affected the way that lower secondary level music educators organized and delivered instruction. Finally, I present participants’ reflections on Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement, its implications for their programs, and their visions for the future.

District music requirements

Before investigating the effects of Ohio’s new fine arts graduation requirements on middle school music educators, I examined each school’s course offerings and music requirements. I was especially interested in schools with music requirements in grades seven and eight. Because students may fulfill their fine arts graduation requirement at any time between grades seven and twelve, districts may choose to require arts enrollment in grades seven and eight, thereby fulfilling this requirement before students even reach high school. Further, many schools have cut general music programs as a result of budget cuts. This leaves performance-based classes as some students’ only options to fulfill this requirement.
The ten participants in this study represented eight different school districts. Of these eight districts, five had a music requirement for students in grades seven through eight. All five of these districts required music in seventh grade, but only two required music in both seventh and eighth grade. The remaining three districts offered music as an elective in eighth grade (see Table 3 for more information regarding district music requirements).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Grades in which music is required</th>
<th>Course options available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Band, choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Band, choir, general music (piano &amp; guitar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7, elective in 8</td>
<td>Band, choir, orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Band, choir, orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Band, choir, orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Band, choir, orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>7, elective in 8</td>
<td>Band, choir, general music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7, elective in 8</td>
<td>Band, choir, general music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. District music requirements and course options available to seventh and eighth grade students

All districts represented in this study offered band and choir. Four offered orchestra, and three offered general music. Of particular interest was District 2. This district required both seventh and eighth grade students to enroll in music and offered two general music courses for students not enrolled in band or choir: piano lab for seventh graders and guitar lab for eighth graders. District 7’s general music course included a singing component. On the other hand, the general music class in District 8 more closely resembled a music appreciation course.
Five of eight districts offered only performance-based music courses to students in grades seven and eight. Of schools with music requirements, three out of five offered general music courses. Participants reported that, in districts with music requirements, students who were not interested in performing music enrolled in general music. If there was no general music option, these students tended to enroll in choir. However, one participant from District 3 (a district with a music requirement but only performance options) reported that some students not interested in music performance still enrolled in instrumental performing ensembles:

Once in a while there may be a kid who just says, ‘I really, really hate singing—so band is not interesting either—but I’d be more comfortable trying to play an instrument than trying to sing.’ (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

In an effort to better understand students’ course options in music, I asked participants if they required continuous enrollment in their programs (i.e., students must be enrolled from the starting point of the program—they cannot drop out, then reenroll in later years) or if their courses were always open to students. Programs that required continuous enrollment might deny students who have not been previously enrolled, limiting these students’ curricular options in music. All participants reported having open enrollment policies—students were free to enroll at any time. However, while participants would allow students to enroll at any time, several believed that the longer that students chose not to participate, the more difficult it would be for them to succeed:

That’s one of our selling points to try and keep kids in eighth grade orchestra is because, you know, it’s really hard to go on in high school if they don’t take
eighth grade orchestra…It’s a lot harder to go back to being in orchestra. (Nicole, interview, February 14, 2013)

It is worth noting that all five of the participants who were concerned about open enrollment were instrumental music teachers. However, one instrumental music educator believed his program’s open enrollment to be a positive policy for his students and program alike:

In fact, I think that’s been a real bonus for the high school band department. Because there are some kids that get to freshman year or look at freshman year and get a little scared about it. But if he finds them, and they’re interested, and they want to come back, he’s very accepting of their coming back. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

Vocal music educators, on the other hand, had no reservations about their open enrollment policies. They welcomed students into their ensembles at any time:

I will open my door to anybody that wants to be in choir. If they decide after seventh grade they don’t want to do band anymore—they want to come join choir—then they’re more than welcome to join choir. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

Under the Ohio Core, students can fulfill their fine arts graduation requirement at any time between grades seven and twelve. I was curious to know whether districts would encourage students to fulfill this requirement before they reached high school. Of the eight districts represented in this study, six had fine arts requirements that would ensure that students fulfill their fine arts requirement before they reached high school:
So technically, a savvy student and parent at [District 8] would never have to take a fine arts elective at the high school. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

Only Neil reported a district fine arts requirement at the high school level.

None of the participants believed that Ohio’s new fine arts graduation requirement had any effect on their district’s previously existing fine arts requirement. Two participants, Kurt and Mary, also doubted that their districts, parents, or communities had paid much attention to this change in policy:

To be honest, I don’t think anybody probably knows or has looked into it. So it hasn’t affected us and probably won’t unless it’s something that’s really pushed. I don’t think there’s going to be any changes in our district, just because they have bigger fish to fry in their opinion. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Richard also noted that parents and students might not have thought much about how this requirement directly affected the courses that students chose to enroll in:

You know, the Common Core may have been created in 2010, but it’s still really just now being implemented, and I don’t think the greater implications of that have really trickled all the way down to the level of parents thinking about their seventh grader getting an arts requirement knocked out. (Richard, interview, February 18, 2013)

Enrollment

With Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement, all students will be required to complete two semesters of fine arts study between grades seven and twelve. I was curious
to know if music educators at the seventh and eighth grade levels had noticed any changes in program enrollment since the adoption of this requirement.

Four of the ten participants perceived no change in total program enrollment. Three believed that their total populations had decreased and three believed that they had increased. Participants identified four causes for these changes: (a) changes in their district requirements, (b) changes in their school populations, (c) scheduling, and (d) teachers.

Two participants, Neil and Richard, who taught in districts with no arts requirements, reported decreases in enrollment. Richard cited scheduling challenges as major impediments to growth in his music program:

Orchestra used to be offered beginning in fourth grade as a part of the school day. And in 2010, they cut that program, and it’s now offered once a week after school…And so, I know two years ago, there were eighty kids in the sixth grade orchestra at our building, and this year, there are forty. (Richard, interview, February, 18, 2013)

Mary, whose school had a music requirement in seventh grade, attributed the decline in her enrollment to a corresponding decline in student population:

[Enrollment] has declined slightly, but then our student body enrollment has also declined. So if we’re talking percentage, it is probably consistent with the decline in student body. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

Similarly, increases in total enrollments were attributed to increases in school population, scheduling changes, and teachers. Nicole noted that an increase in school
population resulted in increased enrollments in the music program. However, in her
district (District 3) all students in grades seven and eight were required to enroll in music.
Any increase in student population would necessarily result in an increase in enrollment
in music. Ryan, a vocal music teacher with no district music requirement, tied the
increase in his enrollment to changes in the building schedule and course offerings:

> It’s just, one day I woke up before school, and I suddenly had 200 kids in seventh
grade choir, which is humungous [laughter]. But I think for us, it was just another
class was being either dropped or changed and then—I think, I’m
hypothesizing—that because they wanted to make sure that everyone is touched
by an art. (Ryan, interview, February 14, 2013)

While Ryan’s district funneled students into arts courses, he believed that this action had
more to do with the district’s transition to the International Baccalaureate curriculum
(which requires study in the visual or performance arts for seventh and eighth grade
students) than Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement. Kurt, on the other hand, attributed
the growth of his district’s music program to the instrumental and vocal teachers
themselves:

> It just depended on more consistency, since both me and my choir colleague has
been here for several years, and we’ve started to build our numbers from fifth and
sixth grade up. So yes, it’s increased, but don’t think it has anything to do with the
requirement. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Overall, none of the participants believed that Ohio’s fine arts graduation had a direct
impact on the total enrollment of students in their music programs.
Along with total enrollment, I was interested in whether Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement had a notable effect on specific music courses (e.g., band, orchestra, choir, or general music). Seven of the ten music educators that I interviewed did not perceive any significant changes related to students enrolling in one music course over another. Gillian and Nicole (both teaching in District 3) reported that vocal performance courses tended to enroll more students than instrumental performance courses. Richard, who taught in a district with no requirement, indicated that his enrollments had been relatively stable. However, he also noted that his program growth had not kept pace with the growth of the student body. He identified poor recruitment at the elementary level as a reason for this disappointing growth. He also noted that scheduling at the elementary-level had inhibited program growth:

[Band is] also during their recess once a week…that is a big factor (Richard, interview, February 18, 2013).

Three participants perceived changes in enrollments in individual music courses, and they identified scheduling policies and the influence of teachers as the primary drivers of change. Even thought students in her district were required to enroll in music in grades seven and eight, Vivian cited her building’s scheduling policies as the reason that she has seen fewer students in her general music courses over the last several years:

I used to see every single fifth and sixth grader in the building for general music, so I used to teach them once a week, every single student at least one time a week. And then when they got to seventh and eighth grade, I would only see the non-band students. Um, now, since our schedule has changed a little bit—we went to a
different system when we got a new administrator a while ago—now, I only see
the non-band, non-choir, fifth through eighth. So I don’t see all of fifth graders. I
don’t see all of the sixth graders any more. My numbers have gone down
dramatically when they changed that. (Vivian, interview, January 31, 2013)
Vivian also noticed that band was becoming increasingly popular among her students,
进一步 reducing the enrollment in general music. George and Mary both noted that the
influence of teachers in attracting and retaining students had led to changes in
enrollments in her district:

We’ve had two retirements in our district recently instrumentally, and young
teachers—young, fun, exciting teachers—and that has brought some more energy
to the instrumental program. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

Recruitment and retention

Out of eight responses, no participants claimed to have changed their recruitment
practices in response to state or local music requirements. Two participants reported that
the music requirement in their district removed the need to actively recruit. It is worth
noting that teachers in District 3 did not compete for students against each other:

We don’t have to do a whole lot of recruiting obviously, because they need to just
sign up for class. But also, we don’t specifically target anybody, because we’re
kind of non-competitive. You know, band and orchestra and choir, we try to be
friendly rather than competitive with each other, so whoever signs-up, signs-up
and everybody’s accepting of that. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)
In schools where students were required to enroll in music, educators identified several reasons why students chose to elect one course over another. These included: (a) student interest and motivation, (b) teachers and classroom environment, and (c) outside influences. Mary, for example, cited learning activities, teacher, and classroom environment as factors influencing students’ choices to elect vocal over general music in her building:

In our building, [general music is] looked at as the typical Bach-to-Rock; paper-pencil; tests, quizzes, and projects class...That teacher has since retired, and he was not a crowd-pleaser. He was a very by-the-business type of person, and that personality isn’t always going to mix with middle schoolers. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013).

Participants indicated that while district requirements compelled some students to enroll in music, other factors determined their choice in specific music courses.

While participants did not believe that district music requirements affected their recruitment practices, seven out of nine indicated that these requirements affected the ways that they approached retention. Participants who taught in districts with music requirements reported facing challenges retaining students once they had fulfilled their requirement. Students in George’s district were required to enroll in music through seventh grade. He then faced the challenge of retaining students as they moved to eighth grade, when they were no longer required to enroll in music:

We tend to have worse attrition from seventh to eighth grade than we do from eighth to ninth grade. I think we have about fifty kids in the eighth grade, fifty-
five kids in the eighth grade band, and we’ll probably send more than thirty to the high school. But in seventh grade, I think currently, we have about ninety—and we may end up with about fifty going on to eighth grade. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

Some participants reported using the perceived ignorance of district and state arts requirements to their advantage:

I guess it depends on how much we advertise that they don’t have to take something. What we typically do is we’ll just take our roster from the previous year, and we tend to just bump them forward. The less we advertise they don’t have to take something, the better it is for them. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Along with district and state arts requirements, participants cited (a) student interest and motivation, (b) academic pressures, (c) teachers and classroom environment, and (d) outside influences as affecting students’ choices to persist in music (see Figure 1).
Several participants noted the importance of student interest and motivation in their decisions to persist in music:

The kids who stay in the program are really motivated to be in the program because they want to be there. Not necessarily because it’s going to help them academically…there’s a lot of pressure in other directions that they’re resisting to stay. (Richard, interview, February 18, 2013)

On the other hand, participants perceived a lack of interest and motivation to be detrimental to student enrollment. For example, when a disinterested student faced an obstacle, he or she might not have the resilience or motivation to persevere:

I don’t think any of the kids who are not interested in music performance continue…Well, for a lot of kids…[who] are interested in music performance but still choose not to continue, I think it’s…it’s harder than they thought it was going
to be, or they don’t really want to practice, or it’s more time than they thought it
was going to be. (Nicole, interview, February 14, 2013)

Participants also believed that academic pressures played a role in whether or not
students decided to persist in music. In achievement-oriented schools where grades were
highly important, students sometimes chose to enroll in courses that they might perceive
to be less rigorous:

As far as trying to keep kids from seventh to eighth grade, that’s kind of a trick,
because we’re sort of recruiting against the art department. And I think a lot of
kids look at art as an easy A option…If they go to art class, it’s…there’s no
homework for art class—just show up, and they’re likely to get an A. There are a
lot of kids here (and probably a lot of places) that are very grade-motivated, so
that becomes an easier path to an A. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

Participants also identified scheduling challenges as impediments to retention. In some
districts music was scheduled at the same time as art or other electives, forcing students
to choose between these courses. Participants believed that students were advised to take
easier courses and leave more time in their schedule for study halls, tacitly discouraging
participation in music.

According to participants, teachers and classroom environments also played a
large role in retention. Teachers who engaged with students and planned meaningful
learning activities were believed to retain more students. Music educators in
performance-based courses identified quality repertoire as central to a meaningful
educational experience in instrumental or choral music:
I’d like to think the repertoire plays a big part in it. I absolutely refuse to do the boxed, cheesy, typical choir music just for the sake of it being choir music. You know, I tend to pick more solid repertoire. And then in the spring we lighten it up, and we have some fun. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

As a middle school vocal music teacher, Mary also advocated for the importance of a safe classroom environment. She believed that if students were comfortable in her classroom, they would be more inclined to continue studying music:

I think in our building, the choirs are split by sex—I have all male groups, and I have all female groups at the seventh and eighth grade level…You know, they boys know they have a safe environment; nobody’s going to laugh at them if their voice cracks…I think that plays a huge role, especially in the retention. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

Participants also cited the importance of consistency in teachers, both in terms of longevity in the district and their familiarity to students:

I think also in our program, we’ve just had really high turnover—they’ve had seven teachers in seven years. So our goal certainly is once I’ve been here several years…we’re going to see a lot better retention across the board. (Nicole, interview, February 14, 2013)

And what we try to do, because we noticed that in the ‘90s…that the kids were changing buildings and teachers. And so, I’m now in a lot of those classes…so they’re used to me, and then we try to get them into this building as often as we can. So it’s a big deal to come to the high school and play for your concert. We
take a whole week and just, you know, ‘Here’s where your instrument goes when it’s concert week.’ So they’re actually excited to get here. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

Some participants reported that their district’s arts requirement had prompted them to reevaluate their curricula in an attempt to make their programs both educational and appealing. Neil, who teaches in a school with no music requirement, felt that he had to focus on how his teaching and lessons would affect enrollment:

I think [having no music requirement] does to a degree affect what we do a little bit …we obviously still teach the curriculum, we want the kids to be able to learn music, but we also have to be cognizant of what they’re doing—if they’re going to plan on staying, or what’s going to help kids stay in the program too—and try to make some conscious effort to help retain them when we know that they don’t have to do it anymore, and they have a lot of other options. (Neil, interview, February 8, 2013)

Educators in districts with arts requirements also reported working to tailor their curricula to the needs of a broad student population—a population that may not have the skills or the drive that a purely elective-based student body might have had in the past:

I’ve just had to adapt the program where it’s still rigorous for the kids who want to be there, but it’s also so that we’re not like having to trudge through mud all year trying to get the remainder of the kids to get remotely interested. So I’ve had to alter the curriculum so that it’s a little bit more versatile than just singing every day. (Ryan, interview, February 14, 2013)
Outside influences also factored into students’ decisions to enroll and persist in required and elective music programs. Participants noted the importance of the community in how students perceive school music:

Mostly the consistency and just word of mouth as far as the programs at the high school level getting better that I think that draws more students to continue. And it also trickles into the community also. So I think that students hear that the music department is successful, and they want to continue in it because of that too. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Family also plays a large role in a student’s involvement in music:

Families have a tendency to follow a pattern, regardless of the legislative fiat that may be, you know, handed down—if your older sister went all the way to French V, it’s kind of expected that you’re going to do that too. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

According to participants, it was challenging to retain students once they have completed their arts requirement. However, they suggested that students persisted for mainly personal reasons—if they enjoyed and were committed to the program, they would be more likely to stay:

I would say that most of the sixth graders sign up for seventh grade, because they…have a blast in sixth grade. So we don’t have a whole lot of attrition problem from sixth to seventh. I think everybody starts out seventh grade really, really glad to be there. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

This pattern continued into high school, with noted exceptions:
But once they’re in the high school program…they’ll do four years—unless post-secondary college option gets in the way, or an illness, or they didn’t take the right classes when they were a freshman and have to make them up. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

*Students enrolled solely to fulfill a requirement*

Finally, I was interested in knowing if participants believed that there were any students enrolled in their courses solely to fulfill an arts credit. Seven participants offered responses to this question (see Table 4). Neither Neil nor Richard believed that there were any students enrolled in their courses to fulfill an arts requirement. However, these participants did not work in districts with music requirements, so the students enrolled in their courses had all elected to participate. Instrumental teachers in schools with music requirements, for the most part, estimated that between five to fifteen percent of their students were enrolled solely to fulfill these requirements. Nicole was an outlier, estimating that at many as forty percent of the students in her seventh grade orchestra were enrolled solely to fulfill a requirement. Participants’ estimations of students enrolled in vocal music to fulfill requirements were varied. Ryan, whose school offered only performance courses, estimated that thirty to forty percent of his students were enrolled in vocal music out of compulsion. Mary, on the other hand, believed that only ten percent of her students were enrolled in choir to meet her district’s music requirement. However, her district also offered a general music option, so students who were not interested in music performance had the option to enroll in this course. Kurt estimated that as many as
seventy-five percent of the students enrolled in his general music course were there as a result of his district’s music requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Estimated percentage of students enrolled to fulfill a requirement</th>
<th>Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gillian</td>
<td>10-15%</td>
<td>Strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan</td>
<td>30-40%</td>
<td>Vocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>General music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-10%</td>
<td>Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Vocal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Estimated percentage of students solely enrolled in music courses to fulfill a requirement

**Teaching under a music requirement**

This section will explore participants’ thoughts on teaching music as a required course, examining the extent to which this population of students has affected the way that music educators organize and deliver instruction. Several participants in this study believed that there were at least some students enrolled in their courses out of compulsion. I was curious to know what made these students different from the students that would have elected to study music. Of the nine participants who offered responses, seven said that they noticed a difference between these two groups of students in terms of
their behaviors and attitudes in the classroom. However, similar to discussions of enrollment, several were hesitant to admit that these students were enrolled solely to fulfill a graduation requirement. Richard, George, and Neil all suggested that it is more likely that these students had enrolled as a result of family pressure, rather than because of any requirement:

There are kids whose parents are forcing them to be there, because you’re eleven and you’re going to learn to play an instrument, you know. But I don’t think that’s the same thing as, ‘you’re going to take care of this so you don’t have to worry about it later.’ (Richard, interview, February 18, 2013)

Vivian did not provide a clear answer to this question, but suggested that she taught courses for students who did not elect to join band or choir, suggesting that much of her student population enrolled in this class not out of interest but out of obligation:

They don’t have…another option to choose not to be in my classes. (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)

Next, I was curious to know how differences between students enrolled to fulfill a requirement and those genuinely interested in studying music manifested themselves. I first asked participants to compare the levels of active engagement between these two groups of students. Six of nine participants noticed a difference in engagement and almost universally cited the amount of time and effort that students were willing to commit to their own learning as the most significant difference:

The kids who want to be here are engaged—they’re asking questions. A lot of them take private lessons, so they’re involved in music opportunities outside of
school...those are my kids that like really want to do this and are really actively involved and are looking for every opportunity to do more music. You know, and then I have other kids who if I’m not, you know, sitting on the same seat as them like, you know, they’re just...they don’t do anything. They won’t even pick up their instrument without prompting and constant, you know, nagging. (Nicole, interview, February 14, 2013)

Richard also noticed that students who were engaged had more pleasant demeanors in the classroom:

Students who are there because they want to be are generally quite a bit more engaged, you know. You can see the eye contact. You can, you know, get one-on-one interaction with them. They like to make jokes. They, you know, are the first ones into the room. They’re the ones who are staying afterward to plink around on the piano. They’re the ones who bring me, you know, Swedish Fish after class. I don’t think it’s hard to distinguish between those groups. (Richard, interview, February 18, 2013)

The participants did not perceive any differences in student engagement all taught performance-oriented courses. They credited their high levels of student participation to the nature of performance courses and their planned learning activities:

Yeah, I don’t really give anybody an option to not be actively engaged—it’s just my teaching style. You know, whether they’re checked-in or checked-out, you know, you don’t really have control over what’s going on in their head. But as far as their participation, even the kids that are just punching the clock a little bit,
there’s full expectation for them to cooperate and be involved. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

Still, George admitted that even though students may appear actively engaged, teachers must still find ways to develop their internal motivations.

I was also curious to know whether students who had enrolled out of obligation caused any notable classroom management challenges. Six out of ten believed that there was a difference in behavior between these two groups. However, the extent of these perceived differences varied widely. Some participants noted that the students enrolled out of obligation were merely not as engaged in the lesson as their more interested peers:

If a student isn’t internally engaged in what’s going on they’re more apt to look at their friend next to them and start up a conversation about something unrelated to what’s going on in class...Whereas if somebody really is internally interested...then they’re naturally...going to pay attention to what that teacher is doing more so than the other students. (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)

You know, I think the kids that I have that are not really interested in being here tend to just zone out, you know. So they’re not really disruptive...they don’t really, I think, hurt the overall instruction of the class. They just aren’t getting anything out of it. (Nicole, interview, February 14, 2013)

Only two participants, Mary and Richard, reported any significant discipline problems with students not interested in studying or performing music:

I have four different sections. Two of them are great. Two of them are not. The two that are not great are, ‘I don’t want to sing. You can’t make me sing’—the
typical problems teachers face when there’s kids in the room that don’t want to perform. They are discipline problems. They do bring down the achievement level of the entire class. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

I don’t have many of these other kids who are just stuck there, but the ones who are there are (it’s obvious) trying to make things unpleasant for the people around them, because they’re unhappy. Like, the way they act is more calculated and less spontaneous. And usually there’s more of a challenge implied in the things they say or do rather than just random immaturity. (Richard, interview, February 18, 2013)

However, both Mary and Richard attributed many of these behavior issues to the ages of their students:

But all the female choirs are very well behaved groups—they’re chatty, they’re middle school girls. My men’s chorus groups…they tend to get a little *Animal House*, but I think that’s kind of the nature of the beast. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

I then asked participants to reflect on the musical achievement of students who were enrolled out of obligation and students who were genuinely interested in the subject matter. Eight out of ten participants reported noting a difference in achievement between these two groups; however, several noted that there are many variables that could affect student achievement. In their opinion, students had the ability to succeed even if they were not interested and vice versa:
I do think that there are also some kids that might not be quite as motivated but are still very talented kids that can still be successful even without as much motivation. (Neil, interview, February 8, 2013)

Participants did think that students who were more motivated and students who were interested in the course material tended to achieve at a higher level than their unmotivated, disinterested counterparts. Much of this stemmed from the effort that students were willing to commit to their own learning:

> Vocally, the kids that are interested they tend to have a bigger growth—bigger, larger growth than the others—because, you know, developing good vocal technique takes time. And you can see it being produced over a year for the kids who actually work on it. Whereas if you’re not interested in even opening your mouth, it doesn’t happen. (Ryan, interview, February 14, 2013)

I think generally speaking, the kids that are more motivated are more successful, because they’re the ones taking their instruments home and practicing and doing the things and taking the suggestions that we’ve made. (Neil, interview, February 8, 2013)

Mary, who did not see a difference in achievement between these two groups of students, attributed it to the culture of her choir:

> I really think they get the whole team concept. I do make a lot of analogies to teams, and sports, and athletics. I was an athlete myself, so they tend to get it, and they tend to understand working towards that common goal. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)
Factors influencing engagement, behavior, and achievement in the music classroom

After learning about the differences between groups, I asked participants to postulate on the reasons that these differences might exist. These factors fell into three main categories: student interest and motivation, the classroom experience, and outside influences (see Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Participants' perceptions of factors influencing student behaviors and success in the music classroom](image)

First, participants suggested that students’ motivations played large roles in their success in the music classroom. Students who were engaged in music courses tended to be internally motivated—they were personally interested in learning about and making music. Participants reported that these students were more focused, cooperative, and worked harder in the classroom:
I think the kids that definitely want to be there are…the ones improving…the kids that tend to be more motivated or for sure want to be there, they’ll be paying attention in class, they’ll be doing what they’re supposed to be doing. (Neil, interview, February 8, 2013)

Gillian noted the importance of understanding what motivates each individual student:

I think something about it is not motivating for those students—that they haven’t found any motivation or reward from practicing or from making music…you have to know the individual needs of your student, not just the general need of your class. But if you’re really going to motivate them, there’s a lot to think about. (Gillian, interview, February 5, 2013)

Participants also noted the role of external motivation in students’ engagement and success in the music classroom:

I think band and orchestra (music, in general) is like a community-building kind of event. So that’s something that’s maybe not necessarily music-related, but they’re motivated to be there for the social experience or doing other things along those lines. (Neil, interview, February 8, 2013)

Kurt discussed the challenges of motivating students in his general music course. Many of them had trouble engaging in the class, because they weren’t interested in the subject matter. He attempted to motivate them using the requirement itself:

But we try to explain: for one, it’s a requirement. And they may not know that, and we have to explain to them, ‘It’s a requirement. The state and our school
district thinks that it’s important for you to learn and be well-rounded.’ (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Participants also noted that many students might not be engaged because they believed that students might not perceive the music courses in their schools to be relevant to their needs and interests:

I think if I were teaching an upper level theory class they might not see the relevance of learning, let’s say, note reading or music history to what they’re doing in their lives. So I could assume that their connectivity with the information might not be there, so they wouldn’t engage in that very well. (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)

We know that many of them have the attitude, ‘Why do I have to learn this if I have no future plans in this.’ And that’s something I think a lot of general [as well as vocal and instrumental] music teachers struggle with—the kids know that they’re not going to use it. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Kurt also reported that this perception led to consistent behavior problems in his classroom. It is worth noting that only participants who taught general music commented on the issue of relevance.

Second, participants reported that classroom experiences played a large role in whether students were engaged or not. These experiences were something that educators believed they could directly control. Participants identified four factors in how the classroom experience affected student motivation: (a) the development of students’ musical abilities and skills, (b) planned learning activities, and (c) the quality of students’
classroom experiences. First, students’ musical capabilities influenced the ways that they behaved and engaged in the classroom. Gillian commented on the importance of teaching students the skills that they need to be successful in music from an early age:

Teach them how to listen and discriminate early on, so they care from an early stage if they’re good or not, or if they sound good…Maybe if those students are taught from day one, ‘I care that I make a good sound. I care that I’m getting better at this,’ rather than like, ‘Oh, that was kind of ugly.’ (Gillian, interview, February 5, 2013)

Next, participants believed that the learning activities that they designed figured into students’ engagement and interest. Several participants discussed the importance of gearing learning activities toward students’ interests:

I try to gear it toward what they’re interested in. That way I can build an internal interest from them, so…even though we don’t have guitar at the high school, they’ll still want to keep playing guitar on their own. (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)

Kurt commented his attempts to replace traditional paper-pencil general music lessons with fun and engaging learning experiences:

But in terms of some of the general music type lessons that we do, we really gear it towards activities, gear it towards things that they will think is fun. Because once they start to get maybe less involved, less engaged with it, they do kind of turn off that engagement and that excitement of it. So we try to do more activities
rather than paperwork with those classes, and it seems to work out a little bit better where they enjoy it. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Third, participants cited quality musical experiences as factors in students’ engagement and success in the music classroom. Ryan expressed a desire to add ability-based ensembles to his curriculum in an attempt to offer developmentally appropriate experiences to his students. He believed that they would have positive educational experiences if he could tailor instruction to fit their specific needs:

I come from the school of I think there should be a ‘y’all come’ choir—everyone is welcome to sing. There should also be something where the kids who are serious about going toward a certain level of growth…A lot of my kids will say like, ‘Wouldn’t it be great if we just had, you know, this group of the committed kids to sing. (Ryan, interview, February 14, 2013)

As discussed earlier, Mary believed that the materials and repertoire that she selected for her students played a role in how students perceived school music. Other participants identified student success and enjoyment as important parts of a quality musical experience:

Well, I think one is that they have successful experiences throughout. Even if they’re there because they have to be there, I think once they experience some success they still can start getting into it and become a little bit more motivated to do things as well. (Neil, interview, February 8, 2013)

So we try to do more activities rather than paperwork with those classes, and it seems to work out a little bit better where they enjoy it…we hope that those
activities might help them find that music is a fun activity. And they may want to continue in it, because they find it’s fun and not just a boring requirement too…we hope they at least remember their music class as something that is great and they enjoy, even if it wasn’t something they’re continuing in and they’re pursuing. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Finally, participants also believed that outside influences played large roles in how students perceived school music. These influences included teachers, families, and the community. First, Vivian spoke about how teachers might motivate their students:

Some teachers can create a connection between every day life and this. It depends on the student that you’re teaching. You have to try and find a way to connect information or the material to this student, and then you’ll create a want inside that student who wants internally to learn that. So it depends on how much you know your students. (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)

Teachers were also responsible for creating and maintaining a safe classroom environment and a feeling of community in the classroom. George noted that even if students were not motivated by the study of music itself, they still might value the classroom experience:

A lot of kids are really happy to be around the music teacher if the music teacher’s fun. A lot of kids are glad to have a break from math class or whatever. So, you know, very few kids are having an awful time here. I mean, I can’t even think off the top of my head who’s having a really lousy time. You know, it just may not be their cup of tea. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)
Second, participants also noted the role that the family played in students’ perceptions of school music. Parents might either support or discourage their children, potentially influencing their success in school music:

If their parents value involvement with music, if their parents were involved with music themselves—I think has just a huge role to play in that. There are students that come and say, ‘I don’t care if I’m getting an F in music, because my dad said it’s not important.’ And it’s no wonder why they don’t try, because they’re told that it doesn’t matter and you do not have to try. And you have parents that really encourage in a supportive way their students to try, because they value it, and they had maybe a positive experience themselves. I think that culture makes a huge difference. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Third, participants believed that the value that the community placed on music education could positively influence students’ opinions of school music:

Communities that value the arts, I think, my guess is they have an easier time maybe with the recruitment, and the attitudes, and the behavior, because of that value…I tried to change that community culture…I think it takes a lot longer than six years to do it—sometimes ten or twenty or thirty years to really create a band culture in a community. So you have a whole generation that’s come up that understands why this is important, and they raise their kids with those values. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Participants believed that if they were to reach all students, they needed to understand their motivations and the factors influencing their perceptions of school
music. They could then devise experiences that would speak to all students, including those who had originally enrolled solely to fulfill a requirement.

_Teachers’ perceived abilities to provide a comprehensive music education_

Teachers in this study were divided about whether their ability to provide a comprehensive music education had changed since the adoption of Ohio’s new fine arts graduation requirement. A majority of participants responding to this question did not believe that their ability to provide a quality music education had changed since the adoption of this requirement. However, several did believe that the state graduation requirement had at least some effect. Richard, on the other hand, attributed this change to local factors. Participants believed that these requirements forced them to focus more heavily on recruitment and retention, as students might choose to drop music once they fulfilled their requirement:

> Around this time of year there is no deciding what they need to learn anymore…We’re not stopping our curriculum for this, but I think I do shortchange what needs to happen, because I feel we’ve got to make today really engaging. And we can do that while we’re working on intonation, and of course we can do that through a really great rehearsal—which all the best teachers do—but it’s always in the back of my mind. (Gillian, interview, February 5, 2013)

Two participants also reported devoting more time to remedial work. As the population in music courses broadened, students lacked the specialized knowledge or background once expected in middle or high school level performing ensembles. As a consequence, some participants felt obligated to reevaluate their curriculum and teaching practices:
As a result of having the people who just have to be in here because they need their requirement, I’ve had to focus more on the…pencil and paper stuff that in a normal performance group you would probably already have…I’ve had to really water-down the performance aspect and beef up the pencil and paper part. (Ryan, interview, February 14, 2013)

Organization and delivery of instruction

With these changes to the music classroom, I was curious to know whether Ohio music educators had changed the ways that they organized or delivered instruction in response to the new fine arts graduation requirement. Since the adoption of the Ohio Core, six out of nine participants reported changing their approach to teaching. However, of these six, three denied that this change had anything to do with Ohio’s graduation requirement; for them, these changes were of a more personal nature. The remaining three reported that, as a result of local and state requirements, they had increasingly focused their energies on recruitment and retention. The fine arts graduation requirement also prompted Kurt to reflect on why the state believed that all students needed to study the arts. This led him to reconsider his approach to his students and to his program:

Well, it’s less to do with the success of my performing group and more to do with this is something important for students to be exposed to. And I think as I started to understand that a little bit better, and I was less selfish maybe in terms of getting the best students who are going to try the hardest, but realizing that it may be valuable for the student even if they’re not of value to me in terms of a performer. Yeah, I think I’ve tried to approach those younger students (fifth and
of Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement had any effect on his program. The remaining participants attributed any changes in their programs to local-level developments. Gillian’s school required students to study music in the seventh grade; therefore, she did not believe that the state requirement had affected her program at this level. However, she did note that some parents might try to get around the district’s music requirement, since the state law does not require students to study music specifically:

The school already has the seventh grade requirement to take music. I think that the only time that [the graduation requirement] may affect [our program] is when more people find out that they can break the [district’s] rules and that they don’t actually have to take music, according to the school. (Gillian, interview, February 5, 2013)

George’s primary concern was that the priorities of administrators and the community might negatively impact music education in his district:
If someone decides that certain things, like an added foreign language requirement or an added emphasis in our school on other things that maybe the administrator thinks outweigh the value of some of the music opportunities we have, you know, I think those decisions…could be driven by either school culture, community, or school board, specific administrator. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

Only Ryan believed that Ohio’s fine arts requirement had negatively affected his program. However, even his concerns seemed to focus mainly on district-level issues. His school offered only performance-based music courses, and he was skeptical that these performance options would meet the needs of all students:

Although the positives are there—like having more kids exposed is good—I don’t know how much (at least in this room that I’m in) that having one model of how to produce music, which is through choir, be the way that they’re exposed to the arts. I think if there is a requirement, for this school where I’m at, that every kid has to be in some type of art, it needs to be more general. (Ryan, interview, February 14, 2013)

This theme emerged later, as participants commented on what changes the might make to Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement.

Credit flexibility

Ohio’s credit flexibility option came to my attention during the interview process. Part of the Ohio Core, the credit flexibility option allows students to “earn units of high school credit based on demonstration of subject area competency, instead of or in
combination with completing hours of classroom instruction” (S. 311, 2006). According to this law, students are able to earn high school credit by completing a variety of activities both within and outside the school. In addition to completing coursework, students can test out of course content or complete any number of “educational options,” such as “distance learning, educational travel, independent study, an internship, music, arts, after-school/tutorial program, community service or other engagement projects and sports” (Ohio Department of Education, n.d.).

Only some of the participants were aware of this option, and none had firsthand experience of a student taking advantage of it in music. David first brought the credit flexibility option to my attention, using an example to illustrate a case where it had positively impacted a student’s educational experience:

The kids came in at the beginning of the year and said, ‘We’re going to China. We think we should be able to get a history credit. Here’s what we’re going to study. Here’s where we’re going’…And they agreed on a curriculum with our history department, and sure enough, they ended up with a half-credit in high school history…They wrote the course…the kids received the credit. It’s awesome, because otherwise they just would’ve been a month in China, but there would’ve been no educational tie to that. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

David indicated that he knew many music educators who might be skeptical of such an option, so I decided to include this topic as part of my questioning. Only four stated their opinions on this aspect of the Ohio Core. David and George had positive impressions of the credit flexibility option, while Gillian feared that it would negatively
impact her program. Richard did not offer a clear position on this issue, but he was skeptical:

I’m not universally opposed, but I’m suspicious. (Richard, interview, February 18, 2013)

As participants described their opinions and experiences with credit flexibility, several themes emerged: (a) student learning experiences, (b) implementation challenges, and (c) the impact on school music (see Figure 3).

![Diagram of themes]

Figure 3. Participants' reactions to Ohio's credit flexibility option

First, participants noted that Ohio’s credit flexibility option allows students to explore educational experiences beyond the standard curriculum. These experiences can have educational value, and participants believed that students deserved credit for them:
My daughter is involved in 4-H, and…some of the 4-H projects are set up very much like an independent study course. And my daughter has done so much learning in her…photography class…that she probably, as a middle school kid…may have learned as much in that 4-H project as someone in a high school photography class. So yeah, I think if there’s a way to reward that, that’s wonderful. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

Participants also noted that many students participated in music ensembles outside of school, and under the credit flexibility option, these ensembles could potentially qualify for school credit. Some believed that these extracurricular ensembles had benefits for the students and school music programs and that students should be rewarded for participating in such activities:

I’ve been involved with the [local youth music ensemble], and I think that’s kind of one of the good parts to that philosophy where the kids have to be involved in their school music program, because I think it helps them become leaders in their own programs within the school and helps those things improve as well. (Neil, interview, February 8, 2013)

I’m always interested in ways that that can help my program…And I try to stay on top of it…before students come in to me and say, ‘Well, I played in a community band all summer. I’m going to get a credit for band and not have to take it during the year’…with my students, I trust that they’re doing it more that just for the credit—they’re doing it for the experience. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)
While some feared that students might take advantage of the credit flex option to avoid participating in school music activities, others believed that students were motivated to participate in school music for intrinsic reasons.

David also noted that credit flexibility gave him the option to help more students earn credit in music. This was especially important for students who, for a variety of reason, might not be able to participate in performing ensembles:

> You know, because you have a lot of instances where a kid can’t finish a year they started—pregnancy, drug addiction, family issues. I had one that had mono and then got mono again, so she was out for a month, got back, re-infected, and that’s not even supposed to be able to happen [laughter]! She missed an entire marching band season, and I was asked to give her a grade. Luckily, we had been working together (you know, the teacher, my administration, and that family), and I was able to extract everything that she missed that had nothing to do with being at a football game, had nothing to do with marching on a football field. It was exciting, I mean, it was one of those career-changing moments for me, because I truly reached that student. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

However, some participants noted that if students were going to receive credit for outside activities, teachers and administrators would have to carefully assess the quality of the experiences. Richard believed that pedagogy played a central role in any educational experience and should be considered if students are to earn credit for such an outside activity:
There are kids who I have taking private lessons who should totally get credit because they’re working with awesome teachers who kick their butts and they’re growing as musicians. There are also kids who are taking lessons, and they work out of their Essential Elements book in their lessons and that’s it…And should they be getting credit for that? Absolutely not…And even if you are taking lessons with someone from the [local symphony], that doesn’t mean you have any pedagogy….And, you know, singing in the church choir is fun and it’s maybe community service, but I don’t know that it’s necessarily educational in the same way. (Richard, interview, February 18, 2013)

Second, participants believed that the amount of effort required to earn credit through this option would deter both students and educators from pursuing it. David related the amount of work necessary for a student to earn credit to the amount of work that would take to be a member of a school ensemble. He did not believe that students would find it worthwhile to follow the credit flexibility route unless there was a good reason:

I’ve had…one kid that had mono twice. It wasn’t kids dropping out of band, saying, ‘Can you come hear my garage band play at [a local performance venue], and I can get credit?’ Because kids don’t want to do the work. You know, who would? All you have to do is come to band, have a good time, learn to play your instrument. You don’t have to create your own class. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)
Others noted that the credit flexibility option also demands a great deal from teachers, administrators, and school staff:

I don’t know that our district is willing to jump into the mess that can come with credit flex…Who’s the teacher of record? How is assessment going to be handled? Who is going to offer the grades? How are the grades going to be handled? The paper-pencil stuff that goes along with credit flex. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

Like, I have a band member who traveled to Japan last year and got credit flexibility for Japanese. It took quite a bit of work for the student. And the guidance counselor was very reluctant, I guess, to advertise things like that because of how much work it really is for him and how much work it is for any teacher that sponsors that credit flexibility. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Finally, several participants voiced concerns about the effect that credit flexibility might have on curricular music offerings. Some feared that students would elect to fill their fine arts requirement through outside activities (e.g., private lessons, youth ensembles, community ensembles). Several participants doubted that these extracurricular activities could adequately substitute for the daily instruction that students received in their schools:

If it catches on in music classes, it can totally demolish our structure. I don’t think that private lessons or youth orchestras—which I think are the two things that really fall for music flex options—are substitutes for daily instruction. (Gillian, interview, February 5, 2013)
However, as noted above, participants believed that students were enrolled in school music ensembles for personal reasons. Because of this belief, they did not think that the credit flexibility option posed a threat to their programs:

I got in a little bit of trouble with credit flex when I was talking to my friends in music, because they were worried that kids would just drop out of band and credit flex. But kids are in the performing ensembles because they want to be there.

(David, interview, January 29, 2013)

George looked on the credit flexibility option as being a helpful tool for students who needed more than school music could offer:

Some kids they are being held back in their school music programs…we have some outstanding kids in the youth orchestras that have so much more ability than the other seventh graders in their class, and are they just spinning their wheels?

But again, as a parent, do I want my kid sitting in the seventh grade orchestra not learning anything when they could be, you know, doing whatever? So yeah, the parent side of me says, ‘Yeah, I think that’s a great idea.’ The program director side of me says, ‘Nah, that would kind of hurt us.’ But I think that the needs of the kid, of the individual kid, are probably more important than my program at the end of the day. (George, interview, February 19, 2013) [emphasis added]

George believed that the credit flexibility option could be beneficial to certain students. If this was the case, he put the needs of those students above those of the program.
Participants’ comments on the future of Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement

Finally, I asked participants if they would make any changes to Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement. Two participants declined to answer, expressing a need for greater perspective and more research before they would feel comfortable suggesting any changes. The remaining participants identified several key issues relating to any future iterations of Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement (see Figure 4): (a) the timeframe that students had to complete the requirement, (b) the course options available to students, (c) assessment in music education, (d) the challenge of devoting resources to the arts, and (e) the perceived value of music education in the curriculum.

Figure 4. Teachers' perceptions of issues surrounding Ohio's fine arts graduation requirement

When considering changes to Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement, several participants commented on the timeframe governing students’ exposure to the arts. Some participants believed that students should be required to study the arts for a longer period of time:
It needs to be increased… I would love to see it maybe four or five [semesters]… nine through twelve with middle school/junior high having its own set of different requirements. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

However, David offered an alternative solution to the semester requirement. Rather than focusing on the amount of time that students are enrolled, he believed that educators should focus whether or not students have actually mastered the course content:

We’ve gotten away from a number of hours that a child has to sit in a seat, yet we’re coming right back with a credit requirement… Whereas with the IB [International Baccalaureate] program or some of the other programs that are out there, however long it takes you to complete this unit. If it’s four years—if you truly feel that four years of choir is what it’s going to take for you to complete your fine arts unit, that’s great. If you can do it one semester: great. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

According to the Ohio Core, students can fulfill their fine arts graduation requirement anytime between grades seven and twelve. However, some participants believed that the grade level range that students have to fulfill this requirement is too large. Instead, it should reflect other high school requirements:

I think should be either eight through twelve or nine through twelve so that it aligns with the high school level math courses and English courses that eighth graders are available to take… it should be the same across the board. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)
At least follow what foreign language does with letting eighth grade be a foreign language credit, but I don’t think seventh grade classes are foreign language credits. (Gillian, interview, February 5, 2013)

Participants also felt it was important to consider how these semesters of fine arts were scheduled throughout students’ educational careers. This was especially true of younger students who are building a foundation in music; it takes time and practice to develop the skills needed for students to be successful. Ryan suggested the fine arts requirements should consider this and require students to enroll in a fine art for consecutive semesters:

I feel like saying seven to twelve is just fodder…because a lot of the foundations that we set for their future success as musicians in high school and beyond start even before they even get to middle school. So if you’re involved in a program that, you know, a third of the people don’t want to be there while you’re trying to make yourself better, it’s a little bit more challenging. So I would make it not necessarily two semesters over five years of education. I would say one semester here, one semester there. (Ryan, interview, February 14)

Second, participants noted the importance of offering a variety of course options in the arts. According to participants, if students were required to enroll in a music or arts course, they should have the opportunity to elect courses that they found interesting and relevant:

I think there’s some ways through things like technology…that can maybe draw on some of the kids’ interests. And other programs, like, I know I have a lot of kids that are interested in like rock music and like rock band. And so through my
jazz band sometimes we’ll try to incorporate a little bit of rock music, which
draws a few more kids in that sense…But I think there are some opportunities
through technology, through various genres of music. Like you can create and
compose through things like Garage Band, which is a little easier now for kids to
just experiment with. (Neil, interview, February 8, 2013)

Participants also believed that it was important for students to experience a variety of art
forms:

It would be great if you could have at least one performing arts credit and one
visual arts credit in high school for everyone…or not necessarily performing arts
but a music credit, because not every kid is going to be in band, choir, or
orchestra. (Gillian, interview, February 5, 2013)

Some participants suggested that students should not be required to enroll in courses that
did not interest them:

Yeah, sure, I would love all kids to take music every year, you know, from now
until they graduate from high school and beyond. But I think there are a lot of
other great class offerings out there, and kids that want to take those should be
able to. And you know, music is not for everybody I guess…or at least performing
is not for everybody. (Nicole, interview, February 14, 2013)

David also suggested integrating the fine arts with other subjects, forging connections
between disciplines.

Third, several participants brought up the issue of assessment. Many music
educators wondered how long it would be before standardized testing found its way to the
music classroom. A number of participants commented on the challenges that might come with standardized testing in music. First, participants worried about who would write the assessment and what they would choose to assess. Rather than making it the state’s responsibility, participants suggested that teachers at the local level should be allowed to create their own assessments:

You can either write your own assessments, or they can be handed to you. If you can establish local control, you can make it unique and meaningful for your unique and meaningful students. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

I could absolutely validate that I am teaching this, and this, and this, and this from the state standards. I can completely validate that. I can show how I’m doing that. I can definitely have the kids show that they’re learning that. (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)

Participants also reflected on the course content that might be assessed. For example, how one would measure the more abstract aspects of music, such as aesthetics or creativity:

I know that was debated when we were going through the state standards in 2011. The people that were in my group, that I was facilitating, were saying, ‘You can’t assess aesthetic-natured items.’ (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

But when you take all of that information and you sum it up and make a computerized standardized test that’s going to be graded by a computer, how do you assess creativity in all the forms that it can take part in by a computer? How does the computer do that? (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)
Participants also noted the challenge of assessing performance-oriented courses. David commented on how important it was to test students’ knowledge and skills that extended beyond their performance abilities:

We try to never give a kid’s grade solely based on musical ability. A student should be able to be in a performing ensemble and learn something that’s assessable that has nothing to do with performance…I had a student that in seventh grade developed Bell’s palsy. He was a clarinet player. There was no way I could assess his performance, but he was actively participating in the course, so I was able to put together a rubric to get him one full year, you know, without ever having to play his clarinet. That’s the challenge that we as music teachers should be begging for. (David, interview, January 29, 2013)

Kurt was concerned that the nature of standardized testing would not be conducive to the large ensemble experience. He was also uneasy about the current focus on accountability. He believed that devoting time to his students was more important than recording assessment data:

We’re encouraged to start assessing in certain ways that are not suitable to our ensembles…For example, at our last in-service, which was Friday, we are talking about a data entry program where we’re encouraged to put all of our assessments in. And it’s tied with our standards, which can be good for music—it’s nice to see which students are doing well. But it’s not practical necessarily. I can tell you which kid has good tone quality, and which kid needs help with articulation, and which kids understand music theory, and which kids don’t…But the time it takes
to input this data, I’d rather be teaching that hour saxophone sectional with those kids…I know this kid and everything about how he plays and how he understands music, but to input it in a computer just to prove that what I’m doing…is valuable I understand, but I think we need to take a step back and start looking at the big picture before we force this on all of our teachers. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Further, Vivian worried that standardized testing would force music teachers to teach to the test, leaving them with less time to explore relevant and meaningful learning experiences with their students:

I honestly would rather have the flexibility of being more creative with my students…They can pick a song and then they bring it in the next day, and we randomly just learn this new song that’s tied into the chords that we just learned or you know, whatever else. But when it comes to putting testing into that factor, you have to really mind your p’s and q’s to make sure that you’re teaching exactly what you feel they’re going to have to know… if we were to test, I would worry that teachers would just start teaching to the test. (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)

Another looming challenge for music educators was a lack of resources. Participants suggested that they could do a better job of addressing the needs of their students if there were more music teachers in their districts. With more teachers, they could serve more students and offer more classes. They could then design these courses to appeal to a broader range of students:
I do think there are a lot of cool things you could offer like, you know, guitar, or a Garage Band class, or whatever, you know, that definitely might attract some kids. I don’t know if it would attract enough kids to, you know, to make up for having a teacher teach that class. You know what I mean? Like, to find the manpower and the staffing to support a class like that. (Nicole, interview, February 14, 2013)

I would love more students to be involved with arts. I think we all would, but I can’t teach it all…So what would I change? I would give us more funding, so we can hire more teachers…I would add in that music theory course that we taught one year when we could, or a music technology course…I don’t want the students that don’t want to be in there, but I do want them to be exposed to something that they find interesting…And there are students in this school that I know would love to take some of those courses that aren’t, because we can’t offer it. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

Unfortunately, participants were not optimistic that they would receive the resources they felt they needed to serve their students:

Um, it’s too expensive and unrealistic [laughter]. No district can afford that many teachers. (Mary, interview, February 28, 2013)

Finally, despite the Ohio Core listing the arts among the core academic subjects, participants believed that music and the arts occupied relatively low places in the curriculum. While this apathy toward the arts might not be explicit, George believed that it manifested itself through the actions of decision-makers at all levels:
We did have a situation this year in our first grade music program with the…first graders were having music twice a week…the superintendent said, ‘Hey, we can offer Chinese to the kindergarten…or to the first graders once a week if we take one day of music away’…We could get our building grows or schedule clashes, you know, could result in somebody saying, ‘Well, the solution to this schedule clash is to, you know, not make everybody required to have seventh grade music class,’ whatever it might be. ‘So, you know, yeah, we’ll alleviate your choir overcrowding by offering German.’ And you just don’t…you know, you don’t ever know when that’s coming. It’s not something you necessarily plan for. You hope you don’t have to, but those are the kind of things that are always potential threats. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)

Kurt observed that even though there was a requirement for students to enroll in the fine arts, this requirement was mild when compared with requirements in other subjects. This sent the message that music was less important than traditional core academic subjects:

I think we all hate that, when it comes to credits on the page, it looks like math is valued more than fine arts. It looks like English is valued more than fine arts. From a psychological standpoint, it’s very frightening, I guess, to look at that and find out that it’s not as important in terms of credit. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)
Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter ties together this study’s findings with extant literature. It also draws conclusions about the effects of the Ohio Core’s fine arts graduation requirement on middle school music curricular offerings in the state of Ohio. The chapter is divided into nine sections: (a) districts and their requirements; (b) enrollments; (c) recruitment and retention; (d) student interest; (e) student attitudes, behavior, and achievement; (f) participants’ perceived abilities to provide a quality music education; (g) organization and delivery of instruction; (h) participants’ suggested changes to the Ohio Core’s fine arts graduation requirement; and (i) participant concerns. After the discussion of findings, I offer suggestions for future research followed by concluding remarks.

**Districts and their requirements**

In this study, I examined five school districts that required students to study music at some point between grades seven and eight as well as three districts with no music requirement at this level. Only one participant reported that his district required students to study the fine arts at the high school level. This is congruent with findings by Abril and Gault (2008), who reported that music was required at the middle school or junior high level more often than at the high school level.

Most of the courses available to students in these districts were performance-based. All eight districts represented in this study offered band and choir. Four offered
orchestra, but only three offered general music. This is troubling, as some recognize general music courses as being those best suited to meet the needs of a broad student body (Gerrity, 2009). Relatedly, findings from this study suggested that, even in schools that required participation in music, general music courses were under threat of revision, reduction or possible elimination. Specifically, Vivian, Gillian, Nicole, Richard, George, and Mary reported that general music programs in their schools have been negatively impacted by district-level budget cuts, scheduling challenges, and academic policies. This is consistent with findings by Alexander & McEwin, (1989), Gerrity, (2009), and the Music for All Foundation (2004). Despite this, both ensemble and classroom teachers participating in the study expressed their willingness to offer and teach non-ensemble courses for students who were not interested in performing. This is consistent with findings by Fallis (1990). While several had submitted course proposals to their districts, the districts were not able to offer these courses due to a lack of resources (which I will discuss the issue of resources later in the chapter).

Participants hoped that students would elect to enroll in music consistently from year to year, but they all reported having open enrollment policies (i.e., students could join or return to the program at any time in their educational careers). Even though it might be difficult for students to jump into the curriculum (most notably in instrumental classrooms), participants believed that this policy was beneficial for the students and program alike. Teachers were willing to help students succeed even if it meant slowing down the pace of their class. Remediation was a common theme as participants discussed adapting their teaching to district and state fine arts requirements.
In several of the districts represented in this study, students who fulfilled their districts’ fine arts requirement also satisfied the state fine arts graduation requirement. Even students in districts without requirements were capable of fulfilling the state requirement at the seventh or eighth grade levels, eliminating the need to study fine arts at the high school level. However, it is worth noting that under the old requirement, students were not compelled to study the fine arts at the high school level at all—the fine arts were simply options among electives.

Enrollments

Participants’ perceptions of the total numbers of students enrolled in their music programs were mixed. Four did not believe that they had seen any changes in their enrollments; and while three perceived increases, another three perceived decreases. All participants attributed changes in student enrollment to local influences, including district requirements, changes in local populations, course scheduling, and teachers. These findings are congruent with those of Albert (2006), Benoit (2007) Hassenpflug (1999), and Lowe (2012). No participants suggested that the changes in enrollment were related to state-level legislation.

Participants’ perceptions of the numbers of students enrolled in individual music curricular offerings (e.g., band, choir, orchestra, and general music) were similarly mixed. Although, participants noted that vocal and general music programs tended to attract larger numbers of students than their instrumental counterparts. Therefore, as a result of requirement changes, it may be that vocal and general music teachers will feel the effects of a changing student population more than instrumental teachers will.
Recruitment and retention

Participants did not believe that Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement affected their approaches to recruitment. Some even suggested that their district’s music requirements eliminated the need to recruit at all. Even though some students may have been compelled to enroll in music, they still had the freedom to choose which music courses to enroll in. Consistent with findings from previous research (Albert, 2006; Baker, 2009; Benoit, 2007; Chen & Stewart-Strobel, 2003; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003; Lucas, 2011; Lowe, 2012; McGannon & Medeiros, 1995; Ng & Hartwig, 2011), participants in this study believed that enrollment decisions were guided by personal and local factors, such as personal interest and motivation; the teacher and classroom environment; and outside influences, including the family and community.

While participants in this study did not indicate that state or local requirements had directly affected their recruitment strategies, a majority did believe that these requirements had affected their approaches to retention. Several participants reported drops in enrollment after students had completed their district-level arts requirements. This is similar to the findings of Ng & Hartwig (2011), who found the same phenomenon in their investigation of Australia’s music requirement. Participants attributed students’ decisions to persist in school music to personal and local factors, such as student interest and motivation; academic pressures; teachers and classroom environment; and outside influences. Again, these factors are consistent with existing research (Albert, 2006; Baker, 2009; Benoit, 2007; Chen & Stewart-Strobel, 2003; Hargreaves & Marshall,
Implications related to this study’s findings in recruitment and retention are vast. Even though teachers cannot control all factors influencing recruitment and retention, there are strategies they can employ to encourage persistence in music. For example, teachers can create motivating and engaging lessons that pique student interest. They can also oversee safe, welcoming classrooms and help students develop the skills and dispositions that they need to be successful in music. They can even influence the community’s perception of their program by increasing program visibility and promoting the successes of their students. However, due to the public nature of performance ensembles, it may be easier for these types of classes to showcase their efforts than it is for classroom music courses such as general music. This is something that music departments should consider as they work to increase their stature in the community. Finally, if students have positive experiences in music, they may be more likely to persist. As participants in this study noted, these efforts require a great commitment of time, perseverance, and patience, but they may bear fruit in the form of more successful and inclusive music programs.

**Student interest**

Participants who taught in districts with music requirements believed that there were at least some students enrolled in their courses as a result of district or state fine arts requirements. Overall, participants estimated there were larger populations of disinterested students in vocal and general music programs than in instrumental
ensembles. However, Mary estimated that the percentage of students enrolled in her choir solely to fulfill a requirement was similar to the estimations of her instrumental counterparts. Her school offered a general music option, which might have attracted many of the students who were not interested in music study or performance. She also noted that general music had a bad reputation in her school. For this reason, some disinterested students might have chosen enroll in vocal or instrumental music instead of general music. Kurt estimated that as many as seventy-five percent of the students enrolled in his general music course were there solely to fulfill a requirement. This estimation is reasonable as general music courses have historically served the broadest student populations (Gerrity, 2009).

Unlike their colleagues in schools with music requirements, participants with no district music requirements did not believe that there were any students enrolled in their courses solely to fulfill the state graduation requirement. This suggests that local requirements have more influence than state requirements on students’ enrollment decisions.

Even if students were required to enroll in a music course, these music educators made it clear that they were dedicated to reaching every student:

If they all had a nametag on that said ‘I’m interested’ or how interested they are, I think our job would be a lot easier, because we’d be able to gear our teaching maybe a little bit more onto those attitudes. And not to say we would ignore the kids that aren’t going on, maybe quite the contrary where we actually work harder
to change their attitudes with some of those students. (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013)

*Student attitudes, behavior, and achievement*

Most participants observed differences between those students they believed were enrolled simply to fulfill a requirement and the students they believed were enrolled out of genuine interest in music. For the most part, teachers believed that students enrolled out of interest were more engaged than their disinterested counterparts. Interested students were reported to be more likely to participate in classroom activities, ask questions, and take advantage of extra opportunities. On the whole, large ensemble teachers believed that all students in their classrooms were consistently engaged in classroom activities. This may be a byproduct of the large ensemble experience, as students who are actively involved in making music have no choice but to be engaged—a finding supported by Forsythe (1977). However, it should be noted that there is a difference between merely participating and being actively engaged. While these students may be physically involved, it takes more to actively engage their minds.

Participants also noticed difference in the behavior between these two groups of students. However, teachers did not believe that students who they perceived to be enrolled to fulfill a requirement were any more disruptive that other students. Instead, these students were not as engaged as their more interested counterparts. While this lack of engagement might have led to off-task behavior, these students were not particularly disruptive. Only two participants reported having any significant discipline problems with students who, they believed, had been compelled to enroll. Mary and Richard
believed that some students openly rebelled when expected to participate in classroom activities that they did not find worthwhile. According to participants, this rebellion had detrimental effects on the classroom environment and student achievement. However, while these behaviors may have roots in student disinterest, they may also be related to a more innocent adolescent desire for attention.

Generally, participants believed that students who were genuinely interested in studying music achieved at a higher level than their disinterested counterparts. Students who were interested in school music tended to commit more time and energy to being successful in the classroom. They practiced more, participated more in class, and took advantage of extracurricular opportunities.

Participants believed that motivation, classroom experiences, and outside influences played a role in why these two groups of students differed in attitude, behavior, and achievement. Internally motivated students are genuinely interested in the subject matter and learning experiences. They are more focused, more cooperative, and work harder in the classroom and at home. Participants suggested that if they knew what motivated their students, they would tailor their instruction to nurture this motivation. As suggested by previous findings (Brändström & Wiklund, 1996; De Vries, 2010; Gordon, 2002; Hood, 2012), a task will also be more motivating to students if they believe that it is relevant to their interests or daily lives. By making learning opportunities more relevant, teachers may be able to motivate even those students who may have enrolled in music solely to fulfill a requirement. Participants also believed that some students could be externally motivated by social experiences. Kurt even reported attempting to motivate
students by explaining that the state and school district thought it was important that they learn music. While attempts to externally motivate students may work in the short term, it is preferable to develop their internal motivations. As suggested by Schatt (2011), intrinsically motivated students will be much more likely to succeed and have positive experiences in music.

Participants also cited students’ experiences in the classroom as playing important roles in how students related to music courses. These experiences could draw students in or further push them away. Teachers believed that if students were given the tools and the skills that they needed to be successful, they would be more likely to be engaged in classroom activities and to persist in the face of challenges, confirming ideas by several researchers and theorists (Buck, 1992; Hoffman, 2012; Landrum, Lingo, & Scott, 2011; Lewis, 1972; Lowe, 2012; Malone, Bonitz, & Rickett, 1998; McPherson & Hendricks, 2010; McGannon & Medeiros, 1995; McPherson & Hendricks, 2010; Ng & Hartwig, 2011; Schatt, 2011).

According to participants, learning activities also influenced students’ engagement and interest in course content. Participants reported working to make music meaningful and relatable so that students would have positive experiences. This is something that music educators should consider as they attempt to relate to those students whom teachers perceive to be enrolled solely to fulfill a requirement.

Participants also believed that quality musical experiences played a role in students’ attitudes toward school music. Ryan proposed ability-based choirs as means of providing students of all ability levels the instruction that they need to be successful.
Further, Mary noted that quality repertoire could affect a student’s ensemble experience. Participants believed that if students were successful and had positive experiences in school music, they might be more likely to enjoy school music and could potentially choose to continue studying music in the future. These findings echo those of De Vries (2010).

Participants also noted the importance of cultivating an atmosphere of community and trust in the classroom, a finding compatible with Albert (2006), Benoit (2007), Hargreaves & Marshall (2003), and Hoffman (2012). It is important to note that participants believed they had direct control over these experiences. If they helped students develop the technique and skills they needed as musicians, designed engaging learning activities, encouraged positive learning experiences, and maintained a safe learning environment, they might appeal to a broader student population—including those that might have initially been skeptical of school music.

Participants also noted the influence of the family on students’ perceptions of school music. Unlike student-teacher interactions and classroom activities, teachers have less control over family values. Consistent with previous research, parents may or may not support students’ decisions to study music (Albert, 2006; Benoit, 2007; Corenblum & Marshall, 1998; Ng & Hartwig, 2011). If parents provide students with the resources they need and encourage their children’s development through practice and extra-musical opportunities, then students will tend to be more successful. However, negative attitudes toward music may trickle down from parents to students and become obstacles to achievement. These effects may be especially pronounced in students who are required to
enroll in music courses. If neither students nor their parents see the value in music education, the teacher may face significant challenges in convincing students of the merits of school music.

Likewise, participants identified the community as influencing students’ attitudes toward school music. A strong tradition of school music in the community can help bolster a program. Alternately, a community that does not value the arts could pass on this apathy (or even antipathy) to students. While it may take a long time, music educators can work to develop the reputation of their programs in their communities so that these communities “understands why this is important, and they raise their kids with those values” (Kurt, interview, February 21, 2013).

*Participants’ perceived abilities to provide a quality music education*

Participants were divided about whether or not their abilities to provide a comprehensive music education had changed since the introduction of Ohio’s new fine arts graduation requirement. Participants without music requirements did not perceive the state graduation requirement to have had any affect on their programs. However, others believed that local developments had affected their abilities to provide quality educational experiences. Still others perceived state legislation to have had at least some effect on their abilities to provide their students with quality music educations. In some cases, this requirement forced participants to devote more time to retention. Participants also reported having to slow down the pace of their curriculum and spend more time reviewing and teaching concepts that students previously would have learned in comprehensive general music courses. This suggests that Ohio’s fine arts graduation
requirement has had at least some impact on the quality of music education at the middle school level.

Organization and delivery of instruction

Six of nine participants reported changing how they organized and delivered instruction since the adoption of the Ohio Core. However, of these six, three believed that these changes were of a personal nature—they had nothing to do with the state requirement. The remaining three participants reported changing their teaching to focus more on retention. One even claimed that these state-level changes prompted him to reconsider his philosophy of music education. He reflected on why the state would decide it was important for all students to study the arts and what he could do to encourage positive musical experiences. Many educators may find themselves contemplating similar ideas as legislation continues to impact education. They will have to reconcile their personal philosophies of education with that of the state.

One aspect of the Ohio Core of particular interest to participants was the credit flexibility option. According to S.B. 311, students are able to earn high school credit by demonstrating their competence in a given subject area. In addition to completing coursework, students can test out of a subject or complete any number of “educational options” outside of school. Among participants in this study, feelings about this option were mixed. While some believed it to be a great way for students to receive credit for out of the ordinary learning experiences, others were skeptical of their pedagogical value. Participants also feared that students might flock to these extracurricular experiences, fleeing from school music programs. However, others believed that most students were
enrolled in school music for reasons beyond the fulfillment of a requirement. Participants believed that this option could prove valuable to students facing unexpected obstacles or who are looking for more than what schools can to offer.

Overall, only one participant, Ryan, perceived Ohio’s new fine arts requirement to have any real effect on his program. However, when he explained his rationale, his concerns seemed to lie with his district’s curricular offerings. He was skeptical that the exclusively performance-oriented courses offered in his district were able to meet the needs of the general student population. Participants wanted students to have positive experiences with music and the arts, but this was difficult if students were forced into courses that they were not interested in. Many participants were willing and eager to teach non-ensemble music courses that might appeal to the broad interests of the general student population, but they were often limited by district resources.

Participants’ suggested changes to the Ohio Core’s fine arts graduation requirement

Participants outlined several changes that they would make to Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement. Many believed that the requirement should extend longer than the two semesters required by the current law. Further, the Ohio Core indicates that students can complete their fine arts requirement any time between grades seven and twelve—no other subject has a window so large. Participants believed that the arts should be treated the same as other core subjects in this regard; students should have to complete their fine arts requirement at the high school level (in grades nine through twelve). However, several participants suggested that because students could earn credit in other subjects beginning in the eighth grade, music could follow suit. It is worth noting that the
National Association for Music Education’s official position on fine arts study is that students should be required to study music every year through grade eight and that every high school should require at least one year of study in the fine arts (The National Association for Music Education, 1997).

Participants also stressed the importance of offering students a variety of options in the arts. If students are going to be required to enroll in an arts course, they should enroll in a course that they find compelling. This may require many schools to expand their course offerings in music and other arts. While traditional performing ensembles may appeal to some, they do not appeal to all. Participants believed that schools should seek to offer students courses that are meaningful and relevant to their lives. They also suggested that students might be drawn to courses with popular music or technology components. De Vries (2010) made similar suggestions after studying how students engage with music in their daily lives. Further, several participants believed that students should not be forced to choose between the arts—they should not have to sacrifice visual art to study music, or vice versa.

Participant concerns

If these changes were to come to the Ohio Core, participants realized that they would require more financial resources—resources that are often unavailable. If districts were to expand course offerings and students were required to study the arts longer, they would need to hire more teachers. However, participants were doubtful that they would receive these resources.
Another issue that concerned participants was the idea of assessment in music education. On the whole, these participants were skeptical of standardized assessments. They worried about who would write the assessment and who would decide what content was important enough to be tested. Participants who commented on this issue argued for local control over assessment, believing that they could effectively show how their students had grown. Also, by maintaining local control, they could tailor their curriculum and learning activities to the needs of their students. Further, they feared that standardized testing would force teachers to teach directly to the test, which would discourage students from exploring music on their own terms.

In addition to being a measure of student progress, some viewed assessment as a measure of the extent to which society values a subject. As a non-assessed subject, participants believed that music held a relatively low place in the curriculum. If this attitude is universal, it could manifest itself in the actions of decision-makers at both the state and local levels. For example, in an effort to devote more time to tested subjects, administrators could choose to decrease contact time in music. This loss of instructional time distressed Vivian:

I’ve always felt that I don’t see my students enough, and I worry that in the future, if they begin standardized testing in music—I worry that they are not going to equalize it out with teachers…being able to see these students as much as they need to, to match what the state standards say that they should know…I worry for the near future that when they start testing these students in music that I will not have the basis that these students need to have. I will not have been able to teach
them the basic facts that they need to know. And then music education is going to look very poor, because we haven’t been able to see our students as much as all the other core classes have. (Vivian, interview, February 7, 2013)

Participants also noted that while including the arts among the core subjects was a positive development, Ohio’s fine arts requirement was inconsequential when compared with the requirements of other core subjects. For participants, this only reinforced the perception that the arts were considered less important than other subjects.

Suggestions for future research

This study focused on the perceived effects of Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement on middle school curricular offerings. I chose this level, because this requirement allows students to fulfill their graduation requirement as early as the seventh grade, and I was curious to know if this had affected middle school music programs. This study could be extended to high school music programs as well. Of the eight districts I studied, five had a music requirement in grade seven or eight, but students in all districts could potentially complete their fine arts graduation requirement before they entered high school. Only one district represented in this study required arts study at the high school level. Therefore, this study could be extended to examine teacher perspectives of Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement at the high school level. Would these teachers perceive a change in enrollment since the introduction of this requirement? Would students enroll in a performing ensemble solely to fulfill a requirement? Have curricular offerings changed at all since the introduction of this requirement?
It may also be worthwhile to narrow the scope on individual music courses. Vocal music programs may prove especially interesting, as they were reported to have higher student populations and a higher percentage of students enrolled to fulfill a requirement. It would be worthwhile to take a closer look at how this population might have affected performance and educational experiences in the vocal music classroom. For similar reasons, it would also be worthwhile to look closely at the effect of this requirement on general music courses.

While this study examined perspectives of teachers on Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement, it would also be interesting to gather student perspectives on such a requirement. First, how aware are students of the requirement, especially at the middle school level? If they are aware of it, did it influence their enrollment decisions at all? Further, several participants in this study were unsure how aware the parents and community members were of this requirement. A future study could examine how much parents really know about the Ohio Core and how much it influences their perspectives on their children’s educational choices.

One of my main concerns approaching this study was the effect that such a requirement might have on enrollment, especially if schools decide to implement an arts requirement for students at a specific grade level. A future, longitudinal study could gather data about enrollment in a music program over the years. By understanding how fine arts requirements affect enrollment, music educators may be able to recruit and retain students more effectively.
Ohio’s credit flexibility option may also prove to be a fertile area for future research. Several participants were unfamiliar with this requirement. In fact, I only became aware of it through this study’s interviews process. Even those educators that knew about this option had not seen a student attempt to earn credit in music by these means. A future study could shed light onto how this process works for students hoping to earn credit in music through the credit flexibility option. What kind of an activity would qualify as a high school credit for this experience, what does the curriculum writing process look like, and how much work does this require both of the student and of school staff? This could help music educators who may be encountering the credit flexibility option for the first time.

Finally, researchers could look beyond music to other arts courses. Several participants noted that students might perceive visual art as being an easier option than music to fulfill their fine arts graduation requirement. When there is no music requirement, how many students would choose to elect other arts over music, and how might this student population impact fine arts courses? Hassenpflug (1999) discussed how block scheduling had a significant impact on one visual art teacher. It would be interesting to extend this research to arts educators working in schools with fine arts requirements.

The Ohio Core was adopted relatively recently in 2010. With perspective, researchers in the future may better understand its impact on music and the arts. The better we understand the powers that influence the way that we teach, the more that we
can learn to work within this system to provide our students with the best educations possible.

Limitations

Given the nature and purpose of the phenomenological research design employed, findings from this study are not intended to be generalized beyond the participants’ opinions provided here. The participants in this study, though diverse with respect to their teaching assignments, may or may not be representative of the prototypical music educator in Ohio. In the case of these participants, each taught in largely suburban and/or rural school districts with middle to upper socioeconomic statuses. Therefore, the voices of urban music educators and those teaching in districts with lower socioeconomic statuses were absent in this study and might have provided confirming or disconfirming accounts of the effect of new legislative policies on music teaching practice. Participants for this study were chosen for their convenience, availability to the researcher, and because they represented data rich sources in regard to the topic under investigation. Future researchers are encouraged to investigate a broader, more diverse, or disparate population of teachers to determine if the themes that emerged from this study are ubiquitous.

Conclusion

Unlike previous graduation requirements, the Ohio Core requires all students between grades seven and twelve to complete two semesters of fine arts study. While some celebrated the addition of this requirement to the Ohio Core, others worried that requiring all students to enroll in the fine arts would have negative effects on music
education programs in the state of Ohio. They feared that districts would require students to study the fine arts in grades seven and eight, so they would not have to study these subjects at the high school level.

At the seventh and eighth grade levels, performance-based courses make up the majority of curricular offerings in music. It is debatable whether or not these courses serve the needs of the general student population. Unfortunately, general music courses, which have been cited as best equipped to meet this goal, are offered less often at the middle and high school levels. This may force students to enroll in courses that do not suit their interests or meet their needs. Music educators must figure out a way to address these challenges so that they may provide all students with a quality music education and positive experiences in school music.

The participants in this study did not believe that Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement had directly affected student enrollments in music, but it has affected the ways that they think about retention. In particular, once students fulfilled the requirement, they could (and sometimes did) choose to leave the program. While some factors influencing retention are out of the control of individual teachers, there are things that teachers can do to attract and retain more students. If teachers are able to fashion relevant and engaging learning activities, nurture a safe classroom environment, and build positive relationships with parents and the community, these educators can reach more students, drawing them into their courses for reasons that go beyond fulfilling a requirement.

The factors that participants believed most affected students’ decisions to enroll and persist in school music tended to stem from personal and local interactions.
According to Johnson (2008), individuals relate to each other and to larger segments of society at three different levels: the macro, meso, and micro levels. The macro level deals with large-scale social systems, while the micro level refers to smaller-scale, face-to-face encounters. The meso level falls between these two. For the purposes of this study, meso level structures would include social constructs such as the school district and local community. The results of this study suggest that developments at the meso and micro levels have the most influence over teachers and students, while the effects of the macro, state-level requirement are not as noticeable.

Participants in this study were divided about whether Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement had affected their teaching. Many reported feeling effects from the macro and meso level, as state and local requirements pushed them to focus their energies on retention and remediation. Teachers were aware that their students were under no obligation to continue studying music after they had completed their fine arts requirement, but they believed that they could influence their students at the micro level through positive interactions and meaningful learning opportunities. They wanted to make sure that all students (no matter their level of interest or ability) were given the best chance to be successful. However, some believed that this focus on retention and remediation had affected their ability to provide students with the same quality music education that they were able to offer prior to the introduction of this requirement.

Overall, only one participant believed that the Ohio Core’s fine arts graduation requirement had any affect on his music program. However, this participant’s concerns were related to his district’s course offerings. With this in mind, all participants seemed
to suggest that developments at the individual and local levels had far more impact on their teaching and students’ educational opportunities than state-level legislation did. Still, participants recommended several changes to the state requirement, including the number of semesters students must complete and the length of time that they have to fulfill the requirement. They also believed that expanding course offerings would help students find courses that would meet their needs and best serve their interests.

While participants believed that the Ohio Core’s fine arts graduation requirement had not yet left a noticeable impact on middle school music curricular offerings, it had affected the ways that they thought about the status and the role of music education. Some have expressed fears that this legislation could harm music programs, but participants in this study were willing to reconcile their philosophies and practices with the demands of the state. Ultimately, they believed that they taught to serve the needs of their students, rather than the needs of their programs:

I think that the needs of the kid, of the individual kid, are probably more important than my program at the end of the day. (George, interview, February 19, 2013)
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Dear [recipient],

My name is John Blasko, and I am a master’s degree candidate in music education at The Ohio State University. I am writing to invite you to participate in a study investigating how Ohio's new fine arts graduation requirements are affecting secondary-level music curricular offerings, specifically relating to those music courses that have historically been elective in nature.

In 2010, Ohio adopted the Common Core State Standards. By the 2014-2015 school year, these standards will guide curriculum and assessment in the State of Ohio. Their adoption has also influenced Ohio’s graduation requirements. Beginning with the graduating class of 2014, students not following a career or technical course of study must complete two semesters of fine arts study between grades 7-12. Some music educators worry that districts will choose to fulfill this requirement at the middle or junior high level through performance ensembles rather than comprehensive general music courses. This information raises the following questions:

- What are the course options available to students fulfilling their fine arts requirement at the middle and high school levels?
- How has the fine arts graduation requirement affected enrollment in music courses at the middle and high school levels?
- How has the changing population of students enrolled in music courses affected music educators’ abilities to organize and deliver instruction?

Finding from the study will provide information about how Ohio's fine arts requirement is affecting the way that music educators deliver instruction. Such perspective will assist practicing music educators adapt their teaching and course content to the changing needs of their student populations.

We will collect data through semi-structured interviews lasting approximately forty-five minutes. Participation is entirely voluntary, and participants are free to decline to answer any questions or discuss any topics. Participants are free to end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. Participants will be anonymous; all identifying information will be removed following the interview and will be permanently destroyed at the conclusion of the study. The study will pose no more than minimal risk to participants.
If you have any questions or would like to participate, please contact Dr. Daryl Kinney or John Blasko (contact information below). For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Daryl Kinney
Associate Professor of Music Education | The Ohio State University
kinney.61@osu.edu
614.247.6151

Mr. John Blasko
M.A. Candidate in Music Education | The Ohio State University
blasko.15@osu.edu
330.321.1946
Appendix B: Interview questions

Section I: Demographic Information

1. Please describe your teaching assignment. What grade levels and courses do you teach?

2. How long have you worked in this district?

3. What are music courses available to students in grades seven through eight in your district?

Section II: Fulfilling the Fine Arts Requirement

1. Does your district require students to study music in grade seven and/or grade eight? If so, please describe this requirement.

2. Are there course options available to students who may not be interested in performance or who may not be interested in studying music at all?
   a. In which course does this population typically enroll?

3. Beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, the Ohio Core mandates that students complete two semesters of fine arts study between grades seven and twelve. Did this affect your district’s music requirement? If yes, please describe how it affected this requirement.

Section III: Enrollment

1. Has total enrollment in music changed since the implementation of the fine arts graduation requirement in the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year? If so, please describe the nature of this change.

2. Have enrollments in individual music courses changed since the implementation of the fine arts requirement? If so, please describe the nature of this change.

3. What do you think has caused these changes?
4. Has the Ohio’s fine arts requirement affected the way that you approach recruiting and retaining students? If so, please describe the nature of this change.

5. Do you require continuous enrollment, or can students leave your program and re-enroll later?

6. In your estimation, what percentage of students is enrolled in your courses solely to fulfill the fine arts requirement?

7. Could you compare the retention rates of students who show interest in music (or music performance) and those who do not show an interest in music (or music performance)?

Section IV: The Effects of Changing Populations in Lower Secondary Music Courses

1. Do you notice any difference between students have chosen to enroll in this class out of an interest in music and those who are enrolled solely to meet an arts requirement?

2. To the best of your ability, compare the active engagement of enrolled students who exhibit interest in music and those enrolled to fulfill an arts requirement.

3. To the best of your ability, compare the behavior of enrolled students who exhibit interest in music and those enrolled to fulfill an arts requirement.

4. To the best of your ability, compare the musical achievement of enrolled students who exhibit interest in music and those enrolled to fulfill an arts requirement.

5. What do you think might account for any differences between these two groups of students?

6. Have you changed the way that you organize and deliver instruction since the adoption of the fine arts graduation requirement?

7. Has your ability to provide a comprehensive music education to each student changed since the implementation of Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement?

8. Have you had an experience with students exercising the credit flexibility option? Could you offer your opinion on this option? [This question was added during the interview process]
9. In your opinion, has Ohio’s fine arts graduation requirement affected your program positively, negatively, or not at all? Why?

10. If given the opportunity, what changes (if any) would you make to the fine arts requirement?

11. Are there any further comments that would you would like to offer?
Appendix C: Informed consent script

Informed Consent Script

Your participation is voluntary. Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will offer verbal consent. This consent will be noted in the interview transcript.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Ohio's new fine arts graduation requirements are affecting secondary-level music curricular offerings, specifically relating to those music courses that have historically been elective in nature.

We will collect data through semi-structured interviews lasting approximately forty-five minutes. If necessary, follow-up interviews will be scheduled. The investigator will make field notes during the interview, and will complete a full transcription of the interview within forty-eight hours. At this point, any potentially identifying information will be removed from the data and destroyed, protecting participants’ anonymity. Each transcript will be sent to the respective participant to check for accuracy. Recordings of interviews will be destroyed following member checks. Transcriptions will be analyzed for emerging patterns and themes.

Data will be stored on the investigators’ password-protected computers. Only the principal and co-investigator will have access to this data. All participant data will be properly deleted at the completion of the study.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Participants will not be able to be identified to anyone other than the investigators, and the information that they provide will pose no more than minimal risk.

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups:
• Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies; and
• The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices

There are no financial incentives to participating in this study.

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By agreeing to participate, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and determined it exempt from IRB review.

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Dr. Daryl Kinney (kinney.61@osu.edu or 614.247.6151) or John Blasko (blasko.15@osu.edu or 330.321.1946).

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Do you have any questions about the study procedure or your rights as a participant?

Do you voluntarily agree to participate in this study?