

An Examination of the  
Relationship Between  
Music Education  
Participation and  
Graduation Rate in Title I  
Schools in North  
Carolina.

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# Introduction





## Reasoning for the Study: Why Music?

- Downfall of arts education funding
  - The adoption of the “No Child Left Behind Act.”
    - Arts considered non-essential compared to reading and math  
(Lovett, 2014).
- Music programs and other Expanded Learning opportunities are often minimized because of cost.



## Reasoning for the Study: Why Graduation Rate?

- 1 in 5 US students dropout of high school on average (Harris, 2009).
  - Educators must work to increase student retention and promote student success.
- Music courses, as well as other “non-essential” courses have positive impact upon student graduation rate (Harris, 2009).
  - Thus, the financial and academic benefit of increased investments in these programs should be explored.

# Review of Related Literature





# Findings from the National Governors' Association for Best Practices:

- Average dropout: 1 in 5
- Dropout can:
  - Reduce life expectancy.
  - Reduce job opportunity.
  - Increase the chance of incarceration for the individual (Harris, 2009).
  - Cost the US Government 3 trillion dollars over the next decade due to these problems.
    - Costs of dropout may outweigh ELO program costs for Schools.



## Findings from the National Governors' Association for Best Practices:

- Expanded Learning Opportunities, such as athletics and music education, are essential to reducing dropout rate (Harris, 2009).
  - In school and after school activities are helpful.
  - Boost student achievement and involvement.
  - Provides supportive relationships for students that encourage retention.



## Findings from the National Association for Music Education:

- Schools with music programs have significantly higher graduation rates than schools that do not by a margin of 20 percent (Powers, 1994).
- Music education was among the first two content areas to develop a national set of standards (Powers, 1994).
  - Currently every subject area has these standards.
  - Heavily emphasize reading and math and minimize importance given to music programs (Lovett, 2014).





## Findings from the National Association for Music Education:

- Schools with music programs have significantly higher attendance and graduation rates (NAFME, 2007).
- Schools with music programs had an average graduation rate of 90.2 percent and average attendance rate of 93.3 percent; meanwhile, schools without music programs had an average graduation rate averaging 72.9 percent and an average attendance rate of 84.9 percent (NAFME, 2009).



## Texas-based Research Findings:

- Comparison of standardized test scores of music students versus non-music students.
- Well-documented relationship between music involvement and academic success.
- Warns: Music education must not be limited as a source to promote success in math and literacy.
  - The academic benefits should be an added bonus to the intrinsic benefits of the power of music itself. (Horton, 2012).



## Georgia-based Research Findings:

- Studied the relationships between fine arts, culture, and high school graduation rates through the study of 32 participating schools in Georgia (Lovett, 2014).
- Identified a low graduation rate and a lack of arts program offerings which demonstrated shortfalls within Georgia schools (Lovett, 2014).



## Additional Conclusions from Related Literature

- There are not many findings of this kind in North Carolina.
  - The state would benefit from knowing the impact of music education in its schools.
- Studying low-income students will reduce lurking variables created by socio-economic status.
- Methodically contacting representatives from each Title I school will eliminate a sampling bias.

# Methodology





## My Goal:

Through the comparison of data from a sample of Title I and low-income schools in North Carolina, this research will examine the relationship between involvement in music programs and the retention of students.



## Plan for acquiring data:

- Public records: public information about the school overall
  - Overall graduation rate.
- Request interviews with administrators, counselors, and music teachers.
  - Inquire about statistical and qualitative information regarding their school and the music department.



## What are Title I schools?

Title I schools are defined by the National Center for Education Statistics as providing, “financial assistance through state educational agencies (SEAs) to local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic content and student academic achievement standards.”





## What are Title I schools?

- Title I serves approximately 21 million United States students each year (NCES).
  - Only approximately 17% of these students are high schoolers.
- Title I provides additional funding to promote academic success and parent involvement for students who are economically disadvantaged.



## Means of data collection:

- All data collection was completely voluntary and anonymous.
- All collection materials went through the Institutional Review Board of Gardner-Webb University, as well as the Research Boards for specific schools systems (when applicable).
- The responses were collected through a telephone call, email correspondence, in person, and through Zoom™ video chat.
- All correspondences were recorded and transcribed.

Results:





## Overview

- Positive responses were found; however, the data from this study was largely influenced by a non-response bias
  - Bias resulted from a refusal to participate within larger counties in the State.
- The data collected from each source indicated that music education had a positive impact on student success.
- Clear reasons for non-response were given which also allow for better understanding of the circumstances.



## Specific Findings: School A

1. School A is located in the Eastern part of North Carolina.
  - a. Report Card Grade C.
  - b. Over 50% economically disadvantaged students according to NC Report Card.
  - c. Graduation rate in 2017: 86.20%
  - d. Average enrollment of 800 students



## Specific Findings: School A

- This survey response came from a Music Educator who has been working in their school for more than six years.
  - Approximately 80 students are enrolled in band or chorus classes at the school.
  - The graduation rate of music students in 2017 was 100%.
  - The required funding for the program largely resulted from an outside donor, as funding from the school system was recently reduced.



## Specific Findings: School A

When asked to provide qualitative responses regarding the impact of his program on student graduation, Educator A stated that a student from his class began high school with the intent to drop out as soon as it was legal to do so. However, the student became involved in the school's beginner guitar class, and agreed to stay until graduation if he was permitted to take guitar each year.



## Specific Findings: School B

- School B is located in the triad of North Carolina.
  - Average enrollment: 1,100 students.
  - Graduation rate of 94%. in 2017.
  - The interview from School B took place with a counselor who has worked in the school for 10 years.





## Specific Findings: School B

- Approximately 260 of the school's 1,100 students are actively involved in music programs.
  - Of these 260 students, 100% graduated on time.
  - Funding for these programs allows for salaries for three educators, with all extra funding coming from program-wide fundraisers.



## Specific Findings: School B

Educator B stated: “Our top students have historically been a part of our fine arts programs. The arts allow our gifted students to be creative and not only academic. We have sent students to Governor’s School in chorus, band, and theatre and this used to be a very strong program for us. Students who feel like they belong tend to do better in school and they are less likely to drop out.”



## Additional Responses:

Additional survey responses were collected but each were from Title I schools throughout the state that did not have arts programs due to intensive focuses in other areas, such as reform schools and early colleges.



## Additional Responses:

- Severe non-response bias took place across the state; however, the two largest counties in the state provided the largest non-response as the counties did not allow research within their districts at all.
- District C did not allow the survey to take place because they did not want to allow teachers to disclose the state of arts funding in their schools.
- District D did not believe that teachers had access to the data requested in the survey (enrollment, graduation rate, program funding, and personal statement).

# Conclusions





## Overview:

- Non-Response Bias
  - County/District Red Tape for information disclosure
- Interviews support hypothesis



## Positive Findings:

- Indicators that music education can positively correlate with student graduation.
- School A cited students who explicitly chose to remain in school in order to stay involved in the music programs at the school.
- Educator B believed that the most successful students are typically involved in music programs.
- Student disposition is the largest impactor of academic success.
  - Hard-working students are more likely to be involved in extracurricular programs.
  - This variable may also influence the relationship between music involvement and graduation rate.



## Conclusions for Further Research:

- Severe non-response.
  - Change to simpler and more appealing format to increase response.
    - A format such as a SurveyMonkey or a Google Form may be beneficial for increasing the overall response
    - Would still maintain the standards required for the Institutional Review Board approval.





## Conclusions for Further Research:

- Accessing data through the central offices may be more beneficial than through the teachers.
- While all classroom teachers do have the means to answer these questions, school district or county research review panels would be unable to decline requests for public data when directed toward them in this way.

# Final Thoughts





## Final Thoughts

- Though this study yielded small amounts of data it still indicates the positive role of music educators within public schools.
- It is beneficial to see that music students are achieving high rates of graduation within the schools that were studied, and even more beneficial to note the qualitative remarks of Educator A and Educator B.



## Final Thoughts

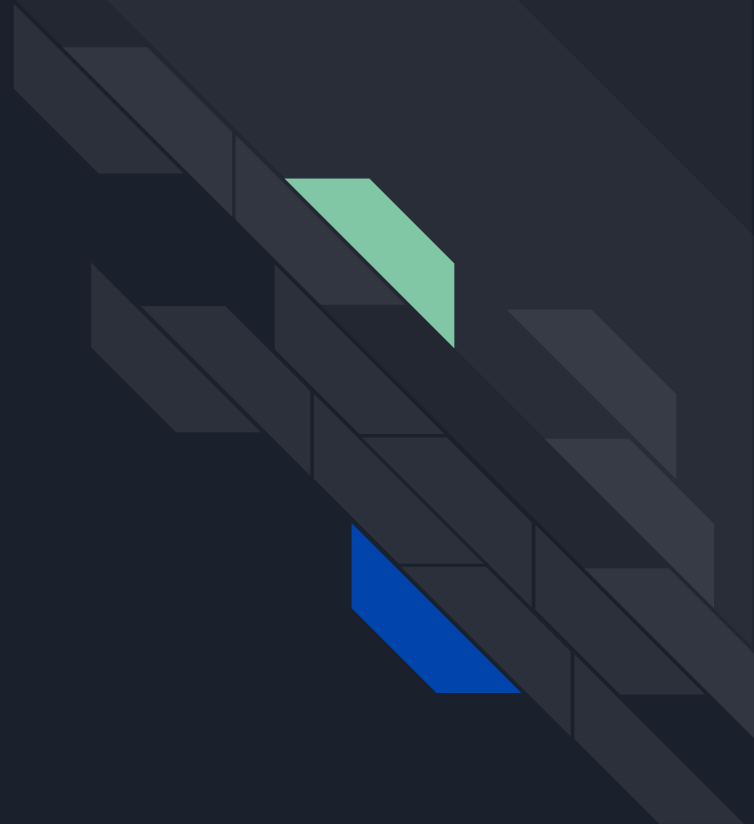
- The hindrances regarding county participation in this study may be indicative as to why research of this kind is not well-documented.
  - Counties specifically did not want the state of funding in their programs to be explored or expressed.



## Final Thoughts

- If educators believe that it is important to determine the impact of expanded learning opportunities, such as music education, on academic success, they must be open to examining those relationships regardless of the implications are found in regards to funding and prioritization.
- Music Education is a valuable tool for enhancing student success, and it is essential for that to be realized and prioritized as education systems move into the future.

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