

# **They're Schooling Me: Student Leadership in Elementary Instrumental Music**

**By: Steven A. Jonkman  
The College of New Jersey**



For my students, my true masterpiece in life: a symphony of beautiful harmony and, yes,  
occasional dissonance.

### **Acknowledgements**

This thesis would not have been possible without the love and support of my parents and sister. I am a better person because of them and words cannot express my deep gratitude for all that they have provided me. My father has been my greatest role model. He is my best friend and continues to inspire me each and every day.

Of course, this thesis would not have been possible without the love of my life, Caitlin. Her support and patience when I could have helped dry dishes does not go without thanks and appreciation. I look forward to thanking her for the rest of my life.

I have benefited greatly from the expertise, wisdom, and guidance of Dr. Lynnette Mawhinney. She helped make what seemed like a daunting task into something that was within my grasp. I also extend a huge thank you to Andrew Pfaff, a good friend and fellow music educator. His words of encouragement and support were invaluable to the completion of this thesis. I also wish to thank all of my colleagues in Dr. Mawhinney's research class.

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### **Abstract**

This teacher research explores the effects of student leadership in the elementary band. Seven sixth grade students were selected to represent and lead their respective sections after a thorough application and interview process. In addition, one sixth grade student was selected to be student conductor after a similar process that included a conducting audition. All of the student leaders participated in group meetings and filled out brief reports on the happenings in rehearsals. The rest of the band community, consisting of both fifth and sixth grade students, was encouraged to answer journal prompts throughout the course of the study. Many of their responses were shared with the rest of the band in an effort to create a stronger community that listened to and respected each other. The findings suggest that student leadership helped foster a community and collaborative environment within the elementary band. The vast majority of students felt that the student leadership program should continue.

### Question in Context

If you would have told 12-year old me I was going to be an elementary band director, I probably would not have believed you. At that time, I was on the verge of quitting band and even witnessed my sister quit one year earlier. The truth is I did not have the guts because the band director was a man I loved and respected, my father. I ultimately stuck it out and kept my self-doubt and lack of passion to myself. I hoped that once I got into the high school I would exit the music program. To my surprise, something changed within me. But what changed? I always assumed the answer was that I was away from my father and that I could finally be free. I felt as though my father was comparing me to his other students, and I feared that many of those students did not like me because I was the band director's son. However, upon further reflection, it was not my father's fault. He was and still remains my best friend and my greatest source of inspiration and strength.

I was nervous on the first day of high school band camp. I did not fit in. I did not love music like everybody else did, nor did I aspire to be the greatest trumpet player in the band. No, I only practiced to save myself from embarrassment. In my first year of high school, I noticed the seniors in the band. They had these awesome pins on their uniforms that identified their rank. Some pins said orchestra, jazz band, and marching band. Some said things like trumpet section leader, president, and perhaps the most intriguing of all, drum major. It was different to see fellow students, only a few years older than me, actually help run the band. I could not help but feel a sense of belonging. As my love and respect for them grew, so did my love and respect for music. I was hooked. By the time I was a senior, I was first trumpet in the orchestra and leader of the marching band trumpet section.

As an elementary band director, I not only recruit children by capturing their imagination, but also train them on their respective instruments and keep them excited to join the middle school band. I feel that it is my fault if a student quits band, that in some way I failed them. Deep down I know that it is an unfair statement because there are so many factors outside of my control from home life to peer pressure that affects a student's decision. But that feeling is always there. Unfortunately, I have had several students quit while under my watch, and each one hurts! One of my students was a tremendous saxophonist. He was a natural and an absolute joy to work with. One day out of the blue, after a year and a half of instruction, he told me he was quitting. I asked him why, and he avoided the answer like the plague. Other students do not commit themselves and never get off the ground. Eventually, they convince themselves that they do not have what it takes, which I do not believe. Every human being can play music. Last year, five members (or 9%) quit the fifth- and sixth-grade band, and each student's decision to quit weighs heavily on me.

Every time a student quits band it reminds me of myself and how I wanted to do the same thing. My peers inspired me to stick with it, which helped my love for music grow. Perhaps some of my students need another source of inspiration, someone other than me. I mean real student leadership. I hope that when a fifth grader sees a sixth grader waving a baton in front of the band something will click. I want my students to see what they are capable of and how their opinions are just as important as the band director's. I want an intimate band community that collaborates and inspires each other. So my research question is this: What happens when I create and encourage student leadership within the elementary band?

## **Where I Teach**

My school district serves a town that once flourished as the center for the region's slate industry. The town was also notable for the opening of a canal that made shipping possible, and the town really started to blossom when the railroad was built in the late 1800s. Today, the downtown area still features large Victorian homes with beautiful slate roofs. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), the town had a population of 4,232, with Caucasians making up 94.1% and Blacks/African Americans consisting 1.6%. The superintendent refers to the district as the "gem of the valley." Chalkington Elementary School, where I teach, is one of four schools. It educates grades three through six, and in the 2015/2016 school year, it had about 468 students (PowerTeacher, 2016). Each grade has five classes with anywhere from 18 to 27 students per class, though the typical class size is about 25. There are 20 general education teachers, seven support teachers (guidance, interventionists, life skills, etc.), and five specials teachers including myself (art, gym, computers, library, and music).

The population has a considerable amount of economically disadvantaged households. In the elementary school, 192 students received free lunch (41%) and 38 students received reduced breakfast/lunch (8%) in the 2015/2016 school year. These are situations that no student should have to endure. I am constantly aware that my students may have a troublesome home life, and I often wonder how much this is a distraction, particularly to the students in the band program. I think music is a gift of escapism, but I know sometimes it is not enough for my students. I hope that student leadership may refocus them and will ensure student interest in band remains high and strong.



## **About My Band**

As an elementary band director, I am fortunate because I get to teach my students for several years. I first meet my students in third grade. From there, I begin recruitment, which involves starting on the flutophone and coming to an Instrument Petting Zoo. At the petting zoo, the students pick and try out any and all instruments offered in the band program. We work together to find the best fit, and throughout the course of fourth grade, they learn their respective instrument. By the end of the year, they put on a brief performance alongside the fifth- and sixth-grade band members.

For the purposes of this research question, I focused on my fifth- and sixth-grade band, which is called the intermediate band. The fourth-grade band is a separate entity since their skill set is limited. The intermediate band is 48 members strong: seven flutists, 12 clarinetists, eight alto saxophonists, nine trumpeters, three trombonists, and nine percussionists. I see the intermediate band twice every six-day cycle, once for a 40-minute rehearsal and once for a 30-minute small group lesson. Nine members have individualized education programs (19%). One of my percussionists in sixth grade, Kevin, has epilepsy and speech impediments and requires a great deal of assistance in doing some physical functions. He has been one of my success stories. By the end of his first concert his mother was crying with pride as she watched her son play the drums. I was unsure how student leaders will affect him, but certain students in the percussion section have already instinctively helped him out in rehearsals and concerts. However, I believe student leadership would have benefited one of my fourth-grade clarinet players who often needed to observe others in order to be successful. She relied heavily on visual and kinesthetic cues, so simply reading the notes was difficult for her. Unfortunately,

she quit just prior to the implementation of this study. Perhaps designating leaders for each section would have helped students like her know who to model after.

Three members have gifted individualized education programs (6%). Scott and Leah are in the percussion section and are extremely bright students. Scott, the more outgoing of the two, may jump at the opportunity to become a leader when he reaches sixth grade. Despite being quiet and reserved, Leah, a sixth grader, showed great promise. Jacob is a gifted student who plays saxophone. He joined the band just as the study started getting underway. A student does not need to be gifted to be a leader; a few students with IEPs have the potential to be leaders in the band as well.

Several students have home lives where the parents are divorced, or they are raised by some other guardian. Six band members fit this description, which is 13% of the intermediate band population. While I do not know the details of their situations, I did have a student with a particularly difficult home life. She lived with her grandparents and flourished in music. After one of her grandparents passed away, she became withdrawn and music was no longer a source of happiness for her. She moved out of the district before I could implement my study, but I wonder how student leadership might have helped her, or whether she might have found some happiness in becoming a leader herself. These students may find comfort in a band that has student leadership, a band that is more intimate and no longer just considered a club.

I assigned band positions based on past experience, interest, an application, and a brief interview. The positions included section leaders (flute, clarinet, alto saxophone, trumpet, trombone, and percussion) and drum major (student conductor). Essentially, the section leaders listened to the concerns of their section and reported those concerns to me. The student conductor helped rehearse and conduct a selection for the band concert. I had many questions

Header: They're Schooling Me

pertaining to my research question. Will student leadership sway students into staying in band when they feel like dropping out? How does conferring with my students (and with each other) help them become better musicians? What will I learn about my own teaching when students report up the chain of command? That said, what can I do to further meet my students' needs? What do my students want to accomplish? How will my students interact? And lastly, how will this experience make my students better prepared for middle school band and beyond?

## **Literature Review**

The question I chose to research is, "What happens when I create and encourage student leadership within the elementary band?" Both secondary and university students have been provided opportunities to reflect, whether by teacher evaluations or student councils, but younger students' perspectives are seldom used to strengthen the work of researchers (Damiani, 2013). And while there is considerable research on student leadership, there is a lack of teacher research on the development, engagement, and effects of elementary band student leadership. I anticipated this well in advance of my initial research because it is something more associated with high school bands. Therefore, my main concern was being able to relate my research to fifth and sixth graders. There are several main subjects in the articles that I read.

1. Foster a band room where students feel comfortable expressing themselves.
2. Flexible band director leadership facilitates student leadership.
3. Provide opportunities to exercise leadership.
4. A writing program offers opportunities for band members to communicate.
5. Student leadership can have a lasting effect on students.

## **Student Self Expression**

"Schools are not measured by how well teachers, superintendents, or even principals perform; they are measured by the strengths and weaknesses of the students" (Damiani, 2013, p. 233). In order to develop student leadership in ensembles, students should be encouraged to voice their opinion (Shieh, 2008). Sadly, many band directors succumb to the traditional teacher-centered classroom. Scruggs (2009) says, "Good performances are the goal, and whether or not students achieve individual musical growth might be of secondary importance in the teacher-centered classroom" (p. 54). Reading this makes it abundantly clear that my band room

reeks of dictatorship. For example, the chairs are all arranged facing the conductor's podium. I even have a sign that says, "Rule #1: The band director is always right. Rule #2: If the band director is wrong, please refer to rule #1." Of course I am not serious, but these are strong signals to my students that their thoughts and opinions are not welcome. This needs to change.

I was particularly moved when Shieh (2008) described a situation in which students were able to recognize and respect their differences. One of his best students, Marcus, expressed his hatred for performing popular music for a fundraiser. He allowed Marcus to express himself and even asked him to consider alternatives that might be more pleasing to him. After the final serenade, Shieh brought his students together for a meeting. When he encouraged Marcus to speak, he said that though it was not his favorite activity, he could see the value. One of the ensemble members, who had previously belittled him for his lack of enthusiasm, thanked him and even noted how difficult it must have been to admit that (Shieh, 2008). This story brought to light that differences of opinion are going to happen, in which case it is best to allow the student to express it. The student needs to know that his or her opinion matters too. If this conflict is not treated appropriately, I am doing a disservice to everyone involved. Differences are what may bring my ensemble closer together.

In order to generate an environment in which differences of opinion are respected and welcomed, the band director needs to build a relationship with all of his or her students (Shieh, 2008). It is too often the case that band directors mistakenly take for granted that students share a goal of teamwork to achieve success. Elementary band directors, including myself, know this to be false. Students need to be taught how to collaborate in harmony so as to achieve synergy (Criss, 2010).

Shieh (2008) urges band directors to meet with each student to talk about his or her goals and expectations as soon as the students start to settle into a routine (Shieh, 2008). Students join the band for several reasons. Perhaps their parents sent them, or perhaps the students are there for socialization (Criss, 2010). I have had a few students who have either joined the band or choir because one of their friends was already a member. Or perhaps they are in the band because of a power struggle, in which the band director is trying to coax them into staying with the band. And finally, perhaps the student has a clear picture of what it means to create beautiful music (Criss, 2010). These students, I assume, will make the best candidates for leadership. It usually takes me the first few months of school to get to know my students, and even then, I wonder if they know that I respect their opinions. As soon as the lesson starts, I become fixated on teaching the instrument, and forget that my students have a reason for being there. For my teacher research, I can do a better job by setting aside time in their first few lessons to discuss their reasons for being in band, their goals, and their expectations. It is essential that band directors assure students as soon as possible that their reasons for joining band and their strengths can help the band (Shieh, 2008). And in order to help encourage cohesion within the group, shedding light to the entire group of why its members are there may contribute nicely.

### **Facilitating Student Leadership**

There is no doubt that the band director will have a crucial role in creating, managing, and encouraging student leadership. Ohlson discovered that behavior needs to be modeled by the director. In addition, the students' lives and opinions should be valued, and no longer are directors to do all of the thinking (2016). My own approach as a leader will have a direct impact on the success of my student leaders. Indeed, Shieh (2008) also states that in order to develop leadership in ensembles, the director must be a flexible leader. Davison (2007) discusses the

relationship between the band director leadership style and student-led leadership style. His results are based on various data collected from band directors of the Texas Music Educators Association and regions of the Arkansas School Band and Orchestra Association. In his research, Davison concluded that “band directors with greater facilitative leadership characteristics tended to have stronger student leadership within their programs” (p. 5). He describes facilitative leadership as a style in which the band director strengthens the leadership qualities and opportunities of the student leaders. Conversely, he describes autocratic leadership as a style in which the band director views his or her ensemble from the top down. In other words, he or she views student leaders as those who carry out orders necessary to meet goals set by the band director (Davison, 2007). Even before reading Davison’s article, I already anticipated having a more facilitative role, which is a drastic change from what I have been doing as a more traditional teacher-centered band director. After all, a significant reason that helps explain why many students do not continue music after graduation is because their music education was mainly teacher-centered (Shuler, 2011). I no longer see my question as having a primary focus on my students, but rather a focus that is equally on me and my own leadership.

Davison (2007) encourages band directors to first consider the leader ability level of their students. He argues that it may be difficult to use facilitative leadership if the band director has little confidence in his or her students’ capabilities as leaders. Since my student leaders will only be in sixth grade, I will need to strongly consider each prospective leader’s ability and determine the best approach. In this fashion, I may need to differentiate by leader to ensure success. But I will not abandon facilitative leadership with all of my students. Rather, as Davison (2007) suggests, the process of incorporating facilitative leadership will need to be developed slowly. For example, if there is a problem that the band members are committed to, but I do not

see it as a problem, there is no harm in allowing the students to create and implement problem solving strategies on their own. It may prove instrumental in leading toward a more facilitative environment, where students can make more critical decisions.

It should be noted that Davison's research correlated with festival rating scores. Festival rating scores are given to bands at competitions, and though they are conducted by professionals, the scores can sometimes be subjective. While it is important that my band has more successful performances in the future because of student leadership, I also want my students to have a stronger sense of community. I believe Davison's research would have benefited from further insight into the climate and community of the bands, which is something I intend to explore in great detail.

### **Opportunities to Exercise Leadership**

According to Shieh (2008), the last component in developing leadership in an ensemble is providing students with opportunities to lead. It seems like a simple idea, but even traditional teacher-centered bands can incorporate leadership. Scruggs (2009) says that basic leadership roles include taking attendance and filing music. Hruska (2011) agrees and notes that these smaller tasks can help students connect their efforts to the success of the band program. Through this they can form positive learning experiences. These jobs provide valuable help to the busy band director, but Scruggs (2009) argues that it should not stop with clerical work. She describes her constructivist approach as an interactive social relationship in which students internalize what they learn until they are able to function independently. For example, the director can call upon students in rehearsal to analyze the group's performance. I have been practicing this strategy for several years. If we have been rehearsing a crucial section in a piece and my students still are not getting it, I will select one or two students to join me at the podium and



listen to the band's performance. This always gets my students' attention because the message is no longer coming from me. Instead, my students tell each other what the problem is and sometimes even offer the same advice I had been giving them all along. This practice at least partially aligns with Scruggs' constructivist approach. Hruska (2011) also encourages student leaders to talk about problem areas in music as a means to motivate his students to make adjustments in their sections and gather ideas for prospective alterations to the band program.

Damiani (2013), who did a study on student's perspectives of leadership, suggests that the constructivist should first ask students what it is they think their principal, or in this case their band director, does. If the students do not know, then what do they think and feel about their relationship with the band director? I need to remember that my students are young and they will probably be apprehensive about what they should do as student leaders. By opening up a conversation in this manner I may be able to break down initial barriers that will inhibit student growth early on in the study. Student empowerment occurs when the school asks them what works for them.

Scruggs' constructivist approach has also helped broaden the scope of my research question. Initially, I was only planning on having a small group of leaders to lead discussions on how to improve the ensemble. However, she believes that all students should have a part in the discussion (Scruggs, 2009). One of my concerns is that the students will not know what to say to their section leaders. They are not used to voicing their opinions in class. While I still plan on keeping the focus on a small group, I see the relevance in keeping discussion open to the entire ensemble. I need to plant seeds so that thoughts can blossom and my leaders can pick from those flowers of ideas. Ohlson believes that group discussions that only involve hand raising

encourages extroverts but leaves out introverts. Therefore, it is better to hand out index cards and ask them to write their thoughts and then lead a discussion using their prompts (2016).

Scruggs (2009) also mentions the inclusion of a student conductor, which has been weighing heavily on my mind. She argues that allowing a capable student to direct will allow the music teacher to focus solely on the members of the ensemble. However, Scruggs is a high school orchestra director, and while this may be possible for her ensemble, I doubt that this will be possible for my elementary band. At the most, I suspect my student conductor can conduct a simple 2/4 or 4/4 beat pattern, but I would not expect him or her to actually direct the ensemble. Of course, I reserve the right to be wrong. I have begun thinking about ways to encourage my student conductor to address musical interpretation. I will need to sit down with him or her to discuss the music, and perhaps come to an agreement on what the student is comfortable with. It will undoubtedly be a slow process, but one worth implementing.

Student leaders can be the adhesive between the band director and the band members. Student leaders can speak for the band members and be positive role models for the rest of the community. They are members who are loyal to the band program and who have the best interests of the band in mind. Section leaders must have a desire and ability to reach out to their band members and be supportive (Criss, 2010). Student leaders, whether they be section leaders or student conductor, will be important to building a stronger community.

### **Writing and Leadership**

A self-analytic band can help build a more cohesive and empowered community. In order to learn from experience, directors might create a conversational space, such as at the end of rehearsal (Criss, 2010). But, as Olson mentioned, this may inhibit participation from introverts

(2016). In addition, group discussions will probably be inhibited by time constraints. Therefore, I believe journaling would be an excellent alternative.

Since I learned about journaling in my previous graduate course, I found it to be particularly useful for myself, and I wondered if it would be effective for my students. Cohen (2012) studied the effects of journaling. She wanted to build camaraderie between her and her 60-member choir, which comprises community members and inmates of a medium-security prison. Granted, this seems far away from my elementary band, but she encourages her readers, regardless of the ensemble type or age group they rehearse, to strongly consider utilizing a well-designed writing component to add depth to both learning and group cohesion. Indeed, social support among band members is critical when fostering a successful group of musicians. For students it is important that they have a strong connection with their community, and it would be wise for a band director to capitalize on this need (Criss, 2010). The band director should help “generate a mutual sense of well-being for all members and to build bonds between them” (Criss, 2010, p. 34).

Similar to my situation, Cohen had limited time with her ensemble and needed to find a way to communicate with her members without sacrificing rehearsal time. Therefore, once a week, she would give a list of two to six writing prompts via email to her choir. She encouraged them to choose one of the prompts, but also welcomed them to explore more if they wished. The prompts ranged from writing introductions for songs to even personal reflections on their musical experiences both in choir and outside of choir. Her members can either put their responses in an exchange box, which other members could look through and make additional responses, or put their responses in a private box, which only she read. Allowing my students to write their thoughts on paper will permit them to express themselves without fear of judgment in

front of the ensemble. Even as a trumpet section leader in high school, I was very shy about speaking up to my band director. Putting my thoughts into a journal would have helped significantly. Furthermore, as stated previously, it will save on time since my band only gets 40 minutes of rehearsal every six school days.

However, the writing should be organic. In other words, students should not feel forced into providing feedback if they have nothing to say. Instead, students should feel encouraged to respond. Since my students are accustomed to a teacher-centered band room, this may not be easy at first. In fact, Shieh (2008) noted that one of his seventh-grade ensembles remained timid and dependent on the teacher for several weeks, and some did not start becoming comfortable with sharing their differences of opinion until February. I hoped my sixth graders would be able to adjust more swiftly since they had been in the band for a year and a half. I thought that the inclusion of a writing component that made them feel important would be enough motivation to get them to write.

Cohen (2012) describes later in her article how her program could be specifically incorporated into an instrumental ensemble. She hypothesizes that each section of the band (i.e., flutes, clarinets, alto saxophones, etc.) could take turns writing newsletters. She argues that this type of structured writing will bring the ensemble members closer together and give a voice to students who might otherwise never be heard by their peers. Unfortunately, some of my sections are too large for a group activity like this, but I can certainly incorporate this strategy by taking responses from the exchange box and including them in a monthly band newsletter, or perhaps even just placing them on our bulletin board. It may prove to be a way of pulling the ensemble closer together and showing them that their thoughts and opinions are strongly valued in the band. I do not recall ever doing something like this in school, but I imagine it would have

allowed me to take a step back and take stock of what the band had accomplished and maybe even feel a sense of pride in the process.

### **Lasting Effects**

While the pros of constructivism and student leadership may not be experienced immediately, the true profit will become obvious as the school year continues (Scruggs, 2009). Providing students with empowerment results in improved behavior, better engagement, and development of collaborative goals between students and teachers (Damiani, 2013). Furthermore, students will manifest authentic experiences and begin to generalize them, and they will start to be leaders in the outside world as well. Cangro (2004) says that providing music students with opportunities to interact and work together will serve several purposes, including, but certainly not limited to, higher level of engagement and encouragement of disparate thinking and different solutions to tasks. Leadership is easier for older students as it requires self-awareness and maturity (Shieh, 2008). This is why it will be interesting to see elementary band students take more initiative.

According to Pedersen, Yager, and Yager (2012) it can. They conducted research that focused on 22 educators from two elementary schools in the Midwest regarding the effect of student leadership on school-wide climate change. Both schools initiated the Student Leadership Ambassador Program in which students leaders routinely influenced and challenged their peers to help generate a positive learning environment. Educators chose these student ambassadors based on their leadership qualities. Surprisingly, the students chosen were not necessarily the best behaved. In fact, it was most important that the students demonstrated peer influence and had great potential for becoming leaders. As an elementary band director, I will need to choose students who are exemplary on their instruments and command respect from their peers. These

students are not always the best behaved. Therefore, it is certainly refreshing to know that behavior is not necessarily important in making my selection.

The program was a resounding success: 77% of the respondents thought that the program made a considerable impact on positive character development of all students; 82% believed the program generated a more positive school climate; and 86% wanted to continue it in the years ahead. One of the respondents found that the younger students looked up to the older student leaders and looked forward to taking on a leadership role when they got older (Pedersen et al., 2012). This is exactly what I hope my fifth-grade band members are thinking when they see the sixth graders leading. It will give them more reason to stick with it! I can remember being a ninth grader and seeing the seniors help run the show. It instilled something within me that encouraged me to push myself. Another respondent thought that the program helped the students see the school as 'theirs' instead of one where the teachers or administrators set the tone (Pedersen et al., 2012). Again, this has been one of the motivating factors in my decision to pursue my research question. I want my students to feel ownership of what they do in band!

## **Conclusion**

Although I found a lack of peer-reviewed literature pertaining to elementary band student leadership specifically, I believe my literature review was successful. I am actually more excited than when I first started because I now feel a sense of duty to help fill the gap! It is as if I am embarking on uncharted waters. With the research I reviewed, I feel better prepared and ready to begin developing my methodology. I have come across ideas that I had not yet considered, such as journaling and considering my own role as the leader of the classroom and how that will affect the outcome of my student leaders.

## **Methodology**

The purpose of my study is to transition from a teacher-centered band program to a constructivist one in which students are given a voice. Every once in a while students lose interest in the band program, and I hoped that implementing student leadership would reinvigorate those students in the same way I was reinvigorated going into the high school band. Therefore, my question is, "What happens when I create and encourage student leadership in the elementary band?" I wanted student leaders to conduct logistical duties, such as attendance and maintaining the cleanliness of their section area, but I was also seeking to encourage my student leaders to confer with their peers in making musical suggestions that were more akin to a teacher's role as interpreter and facilitator. According to my research, student leadership in an elementary band is rare at best. I embarked on uncharted territory, and despite how well prepared I was, I had hesitations that my teacher research would be successful. However, my curiosity was great, and I was excited to begin.

I had many sub-questions worth exploring. Would student leadership sway uncommitted students into being committed to the band? How would conferring with my students (and with each other) help them become better student musicians? What would I learn about my own teaching? That said, what could I do to further meet my students' needs? What would my students want to accomplish? How would my students interact? And lastly, how would this experience make my students better prepared for middle school band and beyond?

## **Description of Study Setting**

It is important to remember that there are a considerable amount of economically disadvantaged households in my school. Slightly less than half of the student population receives free lunch or reduced breakfast/lunch. The intermediate band, which is the focus of my

teacher research, is 48 members strong. Approximately 13% of them have home lives where the parents are divorced, or they are raised by some other guardian. I suspect that many of these students who are economically disadvantaged and/or have different guardianship may see school as a safe haven, and I have no doubt that for many of my band students, music is integral to their enjoyment of school. I hoped that student leadership may reinvigorate their enthusiasm and help them feel more of a sense of belonging. The band room may become a second home, which is very much how I felt about the band room when I was in high school.

I saw the intermediate band twice every six-day cycle, once for a 40-minute rehearsal and again for a 30-minute small group lesson. In late October, the band began having one additional rehearsal after school every week until the winter concert, which will be in mid-December. About 19% of the band population has an IEP, and just 6% has a gifted IEP. I assigned student leadership positions to members of the sixth-grade band, of which there are 26 of them.

### **Data Sources and Collection**

I collected the following data: personal journal, section leader reports, student journals, interviews, and surveys.

I reflected in a personal journal at least three times a week. It allowed me the opportunity to answer my sub-questions related to the growth of my students and how well they interacted with one another. I also documented moments when my student leaders began to exert stronger leadership. Additionally, I used my personal journal to reflect on student leader interviews. Finally, journaling also let me address my sub-question regarding my own teaching style. My leadership was integral to the success of my student leaders. As I began to look back



through my journal, I rectified any shortcomings and continued any positive qualities that enhanced my students' independence as leaders.

I also conducted brief interviews with students. The first set of interviews was done when students applied to be student leaders. Because this was likely their first interview, I encouraged students to submit an application (see Appendix C) with the same questions I would be asking them in the interview. This gave the students the opportunity to rehearse what they would tell me in person. However, I spent five minutes to record less formal interviews (more like conversations) with the section leaders, as well as the drum major (student conductor), throughout most six-day cycles throughout October and November. These served as follow up conversations to the section leader reports mentioned in the paragraph below. Through these interviews, I gained greater insight into the student leaders' personal growth and preparedness for middle school, what I could do to meet my student's needs, and what my students wanted to accomplish. It also gave me a heads up about any members who might be thinking of quitting.

At the end of every rehearsal, each section leader submitted a brief report (see Appendix D) about his or her section. In the report, the section leaders shared their observations. For example, the section leaders described any areas of the music that their section had been successful with as well as any areas that their section is struggled with. Also, the section leaders reported the overall morale of their section through a simple rating system and were welcome to provide any comments that may be helpful to the band. The section leaders were encouraged to consult with their sections at the end of rehearsal. This was intended to be a good way for all of the students to reprocess new information and share their successes and areas in need of improvement with me. Similar to the conversations with the section leaders, these reports informed me of what my students wanted to achieve and what my students needed help with. I

followed up the reports with a brief meeting at the section leader's next lesson. In addition to the aforementioned reporting system, I also encouraged my drum major to complete her own brief report (see Appendix E) once she began conducting the ensemble at rehearsals. It was due at the end of rehearsal. In the report, the drum major reflected on her performance and how well the band followed along.

I also assigned one optional journal entry (see Appendix F) per six-day cycle to the entire band. I provided a selection of three to four journal prompts, of which students only needed to choose one, or they were invited to create their own journal prompt. The purpose of this data was to collect thoughts from band members who might not be willing to share during rehearsal. It was impossible, for example, for 11 clarinet players to confer with their section leader in only three minutes. Also, there were always going to be students who would not be willing to share because they were possibly nervous about being wrong. Journal prompts were anything from questions about favorite activities in band to reflective questions about individual musical performances. Again, the journal prompts helped answer my sub-questions related to what the students wanted to accomplish and what I could do to help them get there. In order to motivate students, I made the journal prompts extra credit. Students had the choice of either submitting their responses into an exchange box, which could then be shared on the band bulletin board, or they could submit their responses into the private box, which only I read.

Lastly, I conducted two surveys (see Appendix G and H) that use a Likert scale. The first survey occurred during the first rehearsal. Among other questions, it asked the students to weigh in on their thoughts on band community as well as how often they sought help from fellow students. The second survey occurred at the end of my study. It was identical to the first survey, but I did add an additional question inquiring if the students felt student leadership ought to

continue. I was interested to see if there was a shift in how the students felt about leadership, and though the other data sources would prove beneficial, I felt that this would be a concrete way of examining change in student attitude toward leadership.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

To analyze my data, I created a list of seven a priori codes based on my sub-questions. For example, the most prominent of these codes were examples of what my students wanted to accomplish, how my students interacted with one another, and what I was learning about my own teaching. While going through my data, I also used six emergent codes, the most prominent of which were evidence that leadership existed prior to my study and the struggle between maintaining rehearsal time and meeting with student leaders. Most interestingly, I created an emergent code specifically for one student, whose progress I monitored carefully.

After I recorded my discussions with both individual students and the student leader group, I listened back and transcribed specific moments. These moments included times when a student demonstrated growth in understanding their new role in the band as well as times when the student struggled to adapt. In addition, I also looked for instances showcasing my transition to becoming a more facilitative educator.

### **Ethics Review**

I informed my principal about my teacher research, which he was very excited to see implemented. After he talked to the assistant superintendent, I was given approval to go forward with my research. In order to protect the confidentiality of my students, I assigned pseudonyms for the faculty, students, staff, and district. I blocked out names on any raw materials or journal entries displayed in my presentation. Because I recorded conversations and collected their work for use in my teacher research, I also needed to obtain permission from the parents. To do this, I

sent a permission form (see Appendix I) home with my students on the day of our first rehearsal. It clearly explained the purpose of my teacher research and reassured them that the study was being used to further benefit their children's successes not only in band, but also to better prepare them for the future.

### **Conclusion**

Conducting this inquiry project was vital to my success as a music educator. I have often believed that my ensemble was a family, but as I conducted my literature review, it became apparent that my band was still teacher centered. This teacher research helped me refocus to a more constructivist approach, which in turn hopefully reinvigorated students who were losing interest. I wanted my students to become independent thinkers, but I also wanted them to collaborate with one another. In addition, I wanted them to grow as musicians who were better prepared for middle school and beyond. I believe this teacher research will help me realize these aspirations.

## Findings

### Opening Survey

At the start of the year, the students were surveyed (N=48) and only 16.7% (n=8) of the students reported that they strongly agreed that their opinion matters in the band, while 60.4% of the students agreed that their opinion matters. On the other hand, 22.9% of the students reported that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed that their opinion matters in the band. Sadly, there were more sixth graders than fifth graders who felt that their opinion did not matter. Based on these statistics, I suspected that the longer a member is in the band, the more restricted they felt as we rushed to prepare for each concert. As an authoritative band director, I have found myself so preoccupied with teaching the music that I forget to consider how the band feels or if they are even enjoying the process. I am afraid that I have neglected to listen to my students. With this in mind, I have been unable to reach out to every member of the band and have, therefore, perhaps suppressed their creative freedom. This is an obstacle because it may be a reason for students losing interest in the band program.

An overwhelming 87.5% of the students reported that they felt a sense of community in the band. Conversely, 12.5% of the students disagreed. I fear that these are the students that are more at risk for leaving the band program, and hopefully student leadership will help bring about a change. I think that student leadership will help give these students a sense of ownership, or at the very least, a sense of family. Also, 10.4% of the students reported that they disagreed that other students can help them. In contrast, 43.8% reported that they agreed and 45.8% reported that they strongly agreed. I suspected that many of my students are helping each other out without my knowing it, but there were a few instances when I observed students helping each other out last year, and these are the students that I felt would make the best student leaders.

I also asked the students if they felt that I was able to meet all of their needs. I found that 8.3% disagreed and 2.1% strongly disagreed. These responses were a detriment to my ego. I have long feared that I am not able to reach the needs of all my students. Sometimes it can be hard to distinguish if it is because these students are not practicing enough or if it is because I am failing them. The thought of it being the latter is almost too much to bear, and now that I know it to be true, I feel hurt and even more driven to be successful. Clearly, these students were the most at-risk for quitting the band. In fact, I lost two band members the day before announcing who the student leaders were. I hoped that by implementing student leadership into the band program it would have helped keep more band members from quitting. Unfortunately, it was too late for them. However, in fact, since the start of the program, I have not lost any more members. I hoped that student leadership would create a new avenue for at-risk students to seek help. Sometimes it is better coming from a peer than the teacher. I wish that I knew who these at-risk students were, but in an attempt for complete honesty, I did not require their names.

### **Qualifications for Student Leaders**

I wanted my student leaders to be as self-sufficient as possible, or at least as much as an 11- or 12-year old can be. They are at the very beginning of their musical journeys and require my constant guidance and support. More specifically, they should have an excellent record of practicing at home and demonstrate an eagerness to learn and grow, and if possible, a candidate whose musicality did not begin and end in the band room. In other words, I was looking for a student who pursues music outside of school or demonstrates a deep passion.

Perhaps ironically, I did not necessarily seek the best behaved students, because what was perhaps most important, was finding students who had peer influence (Pedersen et al., 2012). Basically, the students I chose needed to have a good rapport with their classmates; otherwise, it

would be far more difficult to get the student leadership program off the ground, and worse, it would discourage enthusiasm from my students. I was also seeking students who already helped their bandmates. It became clear to me it was already happening after reading through the results of the aforementioned survey. After all, 45.8% of my band students reported feeling very strongly that their peers could help them. I assumed correctly that plenty of my applicants had already been helping their peers to some extent. In short, the students I chose had to be somewhat independent, passionate about music, possess good relations within the band, and already demonstrate some form of willingness to help others.

### **Selecting Leaders**

Choosing leaders was a long and difficult process, but it allowed me the opportunity to get to know several of my students on an unprecedented level. On Sept. 8, 2016, I introduced student leadership to the band. In my journal, I wrote that “the students were listening intently” and went on to say, “I don’t think I’ve ever heard them so quiet.” Clearly, I struck a chord with them, and I noticed one of my sixth grade flute players, Angelina, looking very nervous. I wondered what was going on in her mind. Suffice to say, she never applied for section leader or drum major. Throughout that first week, I encouraged students to apply, and about a month later, on October 4, after reading through applications and interviewing each candidate, I announced the section leaders and drum major. I was afraid that I would have a lack of interest, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that 15 of the 25 eligible sixth graders (60%) jumped at the opportunity to be a student leader. There was one trumpet player, Andrew, who joined the band from another school district, but by this point auditions concluded, and the study was well underway. Of the 15 applicants, there were nine (60%) interested in being section leader, three (20%) interested in being drum major, and three (20%) interested in both positions. I was taken

aback by just how courageous several of the applicants were. As an elementary student, I would have been very nervous about applying and putting my neck on the line, but for a student like Ryan, whose dream is to become a band director, to be seemingly unfazed by not being chosen for drum major is remarkable. These students are much more resilient than most adults who stress about job interviews.

I discovered that a few of my students were very passionate about band, more so than I could have possibly imagined. The first question in the application was “Why do you want to be drum major and/or section leader?” One of the most remarkable responses came from Jackie, an applicant for drum major, who wrote, “I want to be drum major because I want ‘bandos’ to love music and be as interested in music as I am.” As mentioned previously, Ryan, another applicant for drum major, wrote, “I hope to be a music or band teacher and this will help me on my way.” I was truly inspired by their responses, which made the prospect of making decisions far more difficult. One of my greatest fears was not picking a student like Ryan and breaking his heart. I wanted my students to live out their dreams and not be shot down so early in their lives. As it turns out, it was an empty fear because none of the applicants who were not chosen decided to quit band or demonstrated any resentment over not being chosen.

Not all of the application responses were exciting though. Typical responses included being able to help their section, simply because it would be fun, or they thought they were a good leader. Thankfully, the interviews allowed me to dig deeper into their responses, and indeed, there were moments of deep insight. For example, Linda, an applicant for trumpet section leader, originally wrote that being a section leader or drum major would be fun. However, at her interview, she sat tall and proud with a smile on her face as she told me how her mother was a drum major in school and that she wanted to be just like her. Suddenly, I saw Linda in a



different light. I no longer saw her just as a child learning an instrument, but as a child with ambition and passion. These conversations let me see that my students were in the band for reasons far more mature than I could have ever imagined. For some, this was a part of their lives even before they met me. Just like Ryan, Linda had great aspirations, and I wanted to help foster them.

The most intriguing question on the application asked the students how they would handle members in the band who were gossiping about a member's poor playing. It was important that the students I chose were mature in their responses because situations like these may arise. Several students gave weak responses. For example, Ryan wrote in his application that he would put up the "fist of silence," which is a sign we use in band to get members to stop talking, and then tell me. Avoiding confrontation and coming directly to me, while appropriate for a follower, did not exert the potential for leadership. Jacob, who was applying for alto saxophone section leader, responded, "Well to be honest, I would just ignore them because I don't wanna get involved." While Jacob's response did not demonstrate leadership, it was mature in that he was willing to admit he did not do well with conflict. Most adults do not do well with conflict, but are not always willing to admit it. A few of the students, however, demonstrated the kind of leadership I was looking for. Beth, an applicant for the clarinet section leader, wrote, "I would say: Hey, I overheard you talking about (so-and-so's) poor playing. I just want you to know that nobody's perfect, and maybe he/she is just having a little bit of trouble playing the notes." Another excellent response came from Samantha, an applicant for the alto saxophone section leader, who said in her interview, "I'd ask them to stop and I'd actually help the person who is doing poorly get better at playing so that they don't have to be bullied for how they're playing." I thought these responses were excellent because they showed initiative.

In their applications, Damien, Linda, and Ryan recited the school wide behavior policy, which is to be responsible, safe, proud, and respectful, when asked what qualities a student leader should possess. Originally, I thought this was a weak response because it did not demonstrate a deep enough understanding on what it takes to be a good section leader or drum major. As far as I was concerned, it was as if they were simply reciting expectations without any clear understanding of the meaning behind those words. I was looking for more original statements that dug deeper. As I continued with my study, this turned out to be a foreshadowing of just how impressionable the students were to their teachers.

I always thought that my students relied solely on me for guidance and support. However, it turns out that student leadership was always there. Throughout the interview process, several students provided me with examples of either helping their friends or them being helped by their friends. For example, Jackie, who would later become drum major, told me that she patiently helped her friend Jessica from time to time and that a sixth grader from last year helped her. Beth, another student who would later become a clarinet section leader, told me that she also looked up to the sixth graders when she was in beginning band. Essentially, I discovered that I was simply giving what was already happening in my band a name and formalizing it. Just like I did when I was a student, my students looked up to the older players for inspiration.

### **My Decision**

As I was choosing, I was consciously aware that my choices did not have to be the best behaved students. In my research, I learned that even students who are not the best behaved could still be leaders so long as they demonstrated peer influence and had great potential (Pedersen et al., 2012). Without this understanding, I may not have chosen Katy for trombone

section leader. Katy, a passionate young musician, has a reputation for being temperamental. One of her teachers told me that she has been caught stealing in the past. Despite her previous behavioral issues, I did not deem this disqualifying. Again, even ill-behaved students have the potential for leadership.

However, it was unclear to me at this point if she had peer influence. As best as I could tell, she was willing to help her section, as demonstrated during her lessons when she would give pointers to the others, primarily about slide positions. She was my only choice, and in one of our many conversations, she pointed out this out to me. I told her that she would still need to earn the title, and in the weeks leading up to my decision, I did see her giving the other two trombone players advice on using alternative slide positions. I was struck by her willingness to help others and saw potential in that moment.

Finally, in her interview, I asked her why I should pick her and she said, "I think you should pick me because I basically help everyone in the section, like especially when Patrick and Taylor don't know the positions. I try to look back at my book and try and help them." This helped reaffirm my faith in her despite the fact that she also admitted to not practicing over the summer. She told me she was aware that it hurt her playing, so I thought that perhaps her experience as section leader would push her to try harder. Frankly, Katy is not technically better than the others in her section because she is at the same playing level in their practice books as the rest of her section, who are one grade lower than her. I did not believe she practiced enough at home, or even could recognize when she was not as good as she could be. I thought she had great potential and passion. She told me about her grandfather and how he started her on trombone. There seems to be a strong bond between her and her grandfather, and the trombone

symbolizes that bond. With that kind of passion and her willingness to help her section, I wanted to give her the chance.

I had two girls apply for flute section leader, and it was a particularly difficult decision. Both Felicia and Jamie are good flautists and demonstrated mature responses. The major difference between them was that while Felicia was unmistakably nervous during her interview, Jamie was more calm and collected. Furthermore, I was particularly intrigued when at the end of Jamie's interview she asked if the band could do solos, duets, and trios, which is something I had the summer band do. I told her I would think about it, and later on I brought up the idea to the student leaders. I was excited to hear her with such an ambitious goal for the band. It was stuck in my mind for days. It was important to me that student leaders not be afraid to speak their minds, so this was a big factor in choosing Jamie. I should mention that Jamie is a Jehovah's Witness. While this was not a deciding factor, it did mean that Jamie would have more time to observe and help her section during Christmas songs.

I was proud that all of my sixth grade alto saxophone players applied for section leader. However, the choice was very clear. Both Wilbert and Jacob gave similar responses in their interview when asked how they would handle a member gossiping about another person in their section. Both of them said that they would not want to get involved, which did not exert leadership. Samantha, however, responded by saying she would tell the student that she would talk to me about changing seats and that in the meantime to ignore the gossiper. She later added in her interview that she would actually help the person who was being picked on by working with them to improve their playing skills. I was also impressed when I asked her why I should choose her and she said, "The person I sit next to, Wilbert, I help him out a lot if he doesn't get a

note. I do help him already so I already help someone.” She was clearly respected by her peers and her clear example of leadership was a key factor into making my decision.

Linda also gave a solid example of helping her peers and demonstrating leadership within the trumpet section. She noted in her interview that she helped someone read music at the beginning of last school year. Also, much like Jamie, she was cool and collected during the interview. She sat back in her chair and did not rush her answers. Instead, if she did not know the answer right away, she would take her time to carefully respond. My other applicant for trumpet section leader, Damien, struggled to come up with an example of leadership and was very nervous and fidgety throughout the interview. Linda already had the respect of her peers and had clear motivation to follow in her mother's footsteps, who was a drum major in the high school band. Therefore, I decided she was best fit for the position.

Leah, who is a gifted student, is undoubtedly my finest percussionist. She is a straight up rocker. She usually wears a rock band shirt and is always ready to give it her all in rehearsal. Last year, she helped Kevin, a percussionist who has epilepsy, which affects his speech and fine motor skills. I would often find her at his side helping him count his parts. I had to encourage her to apply, and I am glad that I did. She mentioned Kevin in her interview. “Kevin was having a lot of trouble with that section too. So I'd just come up to that whenever he played and he'd start getting it on too.” She also understood the importance of communication within the band. She said, “Right now it's pretty much everybody does what they do. Just talking with leaders it can be easier because people can report back stuff.” With that, and her previous experience helping Kevin, it was a clear and easy decision to choose her for percussion section leader.

The largest section in the band is the clarinet section, of which there are 12 members. Therefore, I decided to choose two section leaders. I did not deem it appropriate for one person to help 11 other students. Luckily, I had two excellent candidates. Both Beth and Jessica are hardworking musicians. Jessica, an outgoing student who I often find myself telling to stop talking and calm down, surprised me when she said about the position, "It sounds like an opportunity, sort of. That I should take a chance to do it. Maybe learn something new. Maybe get over a fear of talking to people." This is an example of me getting to know one of my students better. Although she portrays herself to be an extrovert, deep down she feels more introverted and wants to get over her fear. I admired her ambition. Beth, who is a very quiet and reserved young girl, but with a huge heart, has always been one of my most dependable players. She said in her application, "I want to be section leader because I love playing the clarinet and I want to pass that on to younger players and I think I would make a great helper to other people."

Perhaps my biggest and easiest decision to make was choosing the drum major. Jackie not only plays the clarinet exceptionally well, but she plays in an ensemble with adults at her church. In addition, she is a skilled pianist and is currently studying music theory on a level that far exceeds the knowledge of the rest of the band. I watched her closely in general music as I taught everyone how to conduct in 2/4. She eagerly tackled the skill and earned the highest grade possible. At her conducting audition, she had excellent timing and adjusted the size of her pattern based on the dynamics of the song. In her application, she wrote that it is important that the drum major is patient and is willing to help out band members. She also demonstrated great passion when she referred to her band mates as "bandos" and mentioned that she wanted everyone to be as interested in music as she is. No other candidate for drum major came close to her resume.

The finalized selection is displayed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Band Leaders**

<b>Leader Name</b>	<b>Band Section</b>
Jamie	Flute
Beth and Jessica	Clarinet
Samantha	Alto Saxophone
Linda	Trumpet
Katy	Trombone
Leah	Percussion
Jackie	Drum Major

### **Section Leaders Adapting To Their New Responsibilities**

Their responsibilities included checking attendance, helping members in their section, keeping their section area clean, and filling out brief reports on successes and areas in need of improvement after each rehearsal. I made these expectations very clear on the first day of band practice and especially clear on October 4, when the student leaders were finally announced. However, nothing changed overnight. In fact, I was still dealing with constant chatter during that initial rehearsal. The section leaders even forgot to make sure their section area was cleaned: instruments were left on the floor and band music, that should have been brought home to practice, was still sitting on music stands. I had to remind the student leaders of their responsibilities during lessons.

However, after some time, the student leaders started to fall into their new roles, and after about two rehearsals, I began interviewing the student leaders to see how they felt they were doing. In the beginning, both Beth and Jessica complained it was difficult to pay attention to their section, but said that they felt they would get used to it. When I asked why they felt it was stressful and if there was anything we could do differently to put them more at ease, both of them said the same thing. They thought they would be more successful if their seats were changed.

As time went on, I learned to give both of them, as well as the other section leaders, specific directions to encourage interaction. For example, at a rehearsal, I noticed that several clarinet players were not playing G# correctly. Because I was confident in both Beth and Jessica, I asked them to go around their section and check everyone's fingering. It was a wonderful way to get them interacting with each other. This was especially good for Beth who has always been a quiet and reserved student. It was also good for Jessica who said that one of the reasons she wanted to be section leader was so that she could get over her fear of talking in front of people. In early November, she reflected on how being section leader has helped her personally:

Yeah, it's helped. It's helped walking in front of people. It's not that I have nervous problems. It's well, I do karate stuff, so I'm always performing in front of people. But that's karate, it's not this. So it's helped get over my fear of talking in front of people, because in karate you yell, you don't really talk.

In my first conversation with Linda, she said, "It was a little here and there, I had to - it was a little, kind of stressful. Because I was like ahhhhhhh!" Just as with Beth and Jessica, Linda was uncomfortable in the beginning and complained that she could not hear or see her entire section during rehearsal. Linda noted that she sat next to the trombone section, which is furthest away from the fifth-grade trumpet players. Therefore, we decided it was best if we allowed her the freedom to leave first chair (designated seat for the lead player in each section) and roam her section as she deemed appropriate. In early November, I asked how she was doing and she told me, "Well, I like it all. I don't know. It's just all yay! I like to help the other people, not that I couldn't do it before." Indeed, Linda is an example of a student naturally fit for the position. Even in her interview, she already mentioned helping other students. She said, "I helped Donald because in the beginning of the year he couldn't read so well. So I pointed it out



for him.” Section leaders must have a desire and ability to reach out to their band members and be supportive (Criss, 2010). Linda was no exception.

Samantha also struggled with paying attention to herself and the other students in her section. However, because the saxophone section is not nearly as big as both the clarinet and trumpet sections, we did not think it was necessary to change her seat. Instead, she decided to simply focus on only one or two players at a time from her seat. For example, in one rehearsal she focused on Wilbert, even going as far as to walk over and tell him what parts to work on at home. At the next rehearsal, she told me she would focus on Janine and Isabelle, both of which are fifth-grade saxophone players. Wilbert actually came to both of us during an interview and proudly showed me the things that Samantha helped him with. I was astounded to see both of them working so well together because he applied to be section leader as well. I expected there to be bad blood between them, but instead he was more than happy to listen to his new section leader. In early November, Samantha wrote in her student leader report that, “Wilbert was a great helper in Clip, Clop, Clap. I can count on him whenever I need help.” Even though she was supposed to be the helper in her section, she appreciated Wilbert’s extra help. This is exactly what I intended for this study, to see the band come closer together.

Leah seemed quite comfortable with her new responsibilities. As noted previously, she has been known to help out Kevin in the past. Just as suspected, she fell into the role naturally. Fifth grader Scott, when asked if student leadership has made a difference, wrote, “Yes it really has because there have been many times when I needed help and the section leader helped me and they also help the rest of my section as well.” Indeed, there was one occasion where I needed to work with the wind section and instead of staying idle Leah pulled her section to the floor behind the percussion equipment so that she could review parts with them. It was a truly

remarkable sight to behold, and I could not be any prouder of her. Leah also told me an interesting story of how her relationship with another student has improved.

Lawson before wouldn't even speak to me. I don't know why he was so bitter, but then once I became section leader he started warming up to me and I helped him and stuff.

Like on the triangle before he'd only listen to the other kid who was on the triangle.

He'd only listen to Matt for it but now the other day, yesterday, he would actually let me help him with the counting and stuff.

It was refreshing to get such a clear example of how her section has reacted positively to her as their section leader. Lawson, in a survey, reaffirmed how well things were going when he wrote, "I feel about the section leader is she is great and she helps when people needs [sic] help with the drums and bells."

Jamie exclaimed that she liked having the responsibility. She said that she memorizes her music, which helps make it easier for her to observe the others. I found this surprising and hard to believe, but I decided to take her word for it. However, several weeks later into the study I did check with her section to see how she was doing. As it turns out, Felicia, another sixth-grade flute player who applied for section leader, complained that Jamie was sometimes immature. For example, she witnessed Jamie playing with a ball, which I confiscated during rehearsal. But more moving was what she wrote in a survey. "Me and her are not being as close as we were in the begging [sic] and last year." Indeed, the two of them were once close friends, and it seems that her new position has put a strain on their friendship. Both Felicia and Angelina, another sixth-grade flute player, complained that Jamie does not help them enough. Instead, Jamie tended to focus on the fifth graders. It was not until early November when Jamie asked me if she should be helping the sixth graders, which I told her of course. It should be

noted that Cailyn, the only other sixth grader in the group, was grateful in her survey answer toward Jamie, noting that it was nice to have someone her age helping her. It is still too early to conclude if relationships will be healed. Time will tell.

Katy had a particularly difficult time transitioning to her new role, and even now as I write this thesis, I am not entirely sure whether or not she has transitioned. On October 11, I met with Katy during her trombone lesson and went over her responsibilities. She seemed to be in good spirits, even smiling and laughing just before Patrick and Tyler joined us for their trombone lesson. However, about half way through the lesson she started complaining her head hurt because of a gym class injury. I allowed her to put her head down, and at the end of the lesson, she actually denied ever getting injured during gym class. I was very confused and told her to head down to the nurse just in case. Later that day, I visited the nurse and discovered Katy was just fine. The nurse explained to me that last year Katy would often lie so that she could get out of uncomfortable situations. It suddenly occurred to me that perhaps she was uncomfortable with her new title and responsibility.

At her following lesson, on October 19, I asked her what the easiest part of being section leader was. She said, "The easiest part is I've been playing since I was four and my grandfather first taught me how to play it." She went on to say that he taught her all of the notes and positions, so teaching the others in her section was very easy. However, when I asked her what the hardest part of being a section leader was, she told me it was trying to play new notes, which was contradictory to her first statement. She went on to explain, "When we first played the songs that you gave us they kind of didn't get it and then they asked me questions like what position is that and what position is this. So I had to look because I really didn't know, because I can't think off the top of my head." In our conversation, she came to the realization that she

would need to study and practice her music in advance of rehearsals to ensure she knew the material before her section asked her questions. Essentially, unlike what she did over the summer, she would need to practice. According to a practice calendar signed by her mother, she practiced quite diligently throughout September and October.

Katy also had difficulty completing her section leader reports. At the end of each rehearsal, the students had about five to 10 minutes to reflect on the rehearsal and submit their report. She was always the last one to turn it in and on a few occasions even forgot to turn it in. As it turns out, there was an oversight, and I did not receive an IEP for Katy until October 21. According to her IEP, Katy has a specific learning disability in reading and requires extended time. In addition, she benefits from a small classroom setting, individual attention, and replacement instruction for reading. Since I was made aware of her IEP, I was able to better accommodate her needs by allowing her extra time after rehearsals to read the section leader report and write out her responses. But that was only the beginning to helping Katy adjust to her new role.

Katy also struggled with identifying areas of improvement for her section. From October 21 to October 31, Katy would either write, "No problems" or "My section didn't struggle at all." I knew that this was not the case and that everything was not perfect for the trombone section. Therefore, I met with her for additional instructional time on November 3. I pretended to be either Patrick or Taylor and play sections of the band music on trombone. I asked Katy to listen and follow along with her music to discover any mistakes. She was able to accurately identify each mistake and even provided the correct feedback I would expect her to tell one of her section members. For example, I would play G in third position instead of fourth position or hold a note for too long. Finally, that same day, Katy wrote constructive criticism. She wrote, "We got lost

in CC (Celtic Christmas) at measure 19-20." It was a breakthrough moment for her, but it did not mean that she was indeed helping her section.

On November 14, Katy complained that Taylor did not listen to her. She said, "He just doesn't listen to me. I say, Taylor, and he looks at me. I say it's all in first position and he's like, 'And?' and then I just leave it go because I don't want to get sass back." On that same day, Patrick and Taylor both answered a survey and told me that they did not feel Katy was helping them. Patrick wrote, "I don't feel good aboyt [sic] it she doesent [sic] help that much all she does is get mad at me and Taylor so I don't like it." This was most concerning, so I decided to meet with Katy again the following morning for about 10 minutes. Again, we practiced role playing, and I pretended to be Patrick and Taylor. In my journal, I wrote, "At first, she went straight to the point, but after two or more examples she started to give me positive remarks before going in for the kill." I told Katy it is just as important to give her section members positive remarks as it is to provide them constructive criticism. If she only told them what they were doing wrong, then no wonder they were not listening to her.

On December 6, I saw the trombone section for their small group lesson. At one point, Patrick blurted out that Katy was mean at rehearsals. Suddenly, a three way conversation broke out between the group and I became a pseudo-psychologist. All of the frustration and tension seemed to reach a breaking point. The boys were upset that Katy was being overly negative, and they even accused her of yelling at them. Katy was automatically defensive and said that if they would not be talking, perhaps she would have no reason to be upset. Patrick then responded with "Oh, and it's OK when you talk?" This was a nightmare. I felt as though the section was falling apart. I tried to alleviate the situation by validating each side's point of view, and trying to bring the boys to understand that they are right to feel the way that they do, and also that Katy was

indeed trying her best. After pointing out that Katy cares about them and that we all need to work together, I decided to talk to Katy independent from the group.

In my follow up conversation with Katy, she said she felt nothing about what the boys said to her previously. She said that she is used to it, and that it was just typical banter she experiences with them. She opened up with me that she has “anger issues.” It appeared to me that despite a long conversation on how she ought to cool down and give the boys more understanding, she was still disconnected from what was happening and immediately changed the subject. Granted, I could see her eyes water up as I brought up how much she cares for her section. It is almost as if there is a glimmer of hope that I am getting through to her, but at this point I am only guessing. Therefore, I decided to talk to the guidance counselor and together we decided it was best to pair Katy with Linda who exhibited good leadership skills. I sat down with both girls and explained that Katy would be observing Linda in band rehearsals. They would now be sitting next to each other. I also advised Linda to offer any helpful tips on how to lead if the opportunity presents itself. Katy had a defensive expression on her face, but I reassured her that she will be fine. We all learn at different paces. For some people, leadership skills simply do not come naturally, and it is something that must be learned. At this point, I have not had the privilege of seeing both girls work together.

When I finally discovered the friction going on in the trombone section I decided we were overdue for a discussion on how to provide constructive criticism with all of the section leaders. On November 16, I had a meeting with the section leaders and went around the room and asked them how to best provide constructive criticism. Jackie gave an example of what she might expect a section leader to say, “Well, you’re playing it with two fingers instead of three so try doing it with two.” I countered her suggestion and asked if there was anything we should

add. Jamie added, "You did very good, but" and through group discussion we discussed the importance of giving specific positive feedback. I made the suggestion that for every constructive thing they say they should also find two positive things to say to their sections. I told them that some members can be turned off if all they ever get from their section leaders is negative feedback. The students nodded in approval at the suggestion and seemed eager to get started. As of yet, I have not seen any specific examples of my students following through with my suggestion. However, they have reported doing so.

### **Drum Major Adapting to Her New Responsibility**

I really could not have asked for a better drum major with Jackie. She exceeded my wildest expectations of what an elementary student conductor was capable of doing. She initially surprised me when she asked if she should use cues, which is something I never addressed in the sixth-grade general music conducting unit. I told her it was not necessary, to which she was relieved and admitted it was difficult for her. I was not upset when she decided not to cue for her audition because it was refreshing just to know that she was aware of the concept. In my audition notes, I wrote, "Her pattern is perfectly shaped" and "her beat is consistent and even the prep is clear." She clearly worked hard to master conducting technique, and in our post-discussion she shared with me that she was the youngest member in an otherwise adult church orchestra.

On October 13, Jackie conducted her song, *Jingling and Jollying*, for the first time. I asked her the week before if she would feel comfortable conducting, and she seemed quite apprehensive and told me she would let me know two or three days before practice. She never got back to me, and at the end of practice, I simply requested her to stand next to me as I rehearsed the song. She would continue to conduct by my side for the next two rehearsals, and

on October 31, I asked Jackie if she would be fine conducting while I sat in with the trombone section. She jumped at the opportunity. I expected her to conduct until the end of the piece, but eight measures into the song, Jackie stopped the band and started trying to correct their performance. At the moment, I was not recording the rehearsal, but as soon as she started to talk I rushed over to my recording device. After conducting a short segment of the piece, she stopped the band again. "You guys aren't together," Jackie explained. "I heard some trumpets playing while the flutes were playing and you were a beat off and the beat was horrible." As proud of her as I was, she incorrectly diagnosed the problem, which was actually the percussion not being together. But I did not fault her for this. She was already exceeding my expectations because she was trying to actually rehearse the band. What I was most concerned about was her use of the word horrible. I cringed at the thought of the trumpet section being offended and not appreciating her attitude. I immediately blamed myself because I will often be very frank with my band. It got me wondering whether or not I was hurting my band by using such language and was eager to talk to Jackie about her use of the word.

"I don't want to mean that they're horrible at playing or that they're the worst band ever," Jackie said while sitting with me at my desk in the band room. "I meant like that one thing was like pretty, it wasn't pretty bad. I don't know." Jackie was surprised as she listened to a recording of herself rehearsing the band. I tried to console her by saying to be careful with her words. Later in our conversation, she brought up an interesting point. "You know, the sixth graders probably got it, but the fifth graders probably took it the wrong way." She gave specific examples of various sixth graders applauding her at the podium and giving her words of great encouragement. Indeed, I had noticed her friends showing wonderful support. Now Jackie was



determined to be more careful with her words, which may have detracted her confidence, as demonstrated two days later.

We were approaching the end of a long and very successful rehearsal when I called Jackie up to the podium to conduct her piece. As she conducted, the band started to fall apart because the percussion section was not watching her and keeping time with each other. I had to quickly rush over to the section and help keep the pulse as she conducted. It was at that moment when I glanced at Jackie and noticed she was conducting backwards, which was not helping the percussion section find their time. Suddenly, I could see Jackie shrinking. She knew something was wrong and as far as she was concerned it was all her fault. Here was a child assuming the role of band director and feeling the band fall apart in her hands. Unlike other times, she walked away from the baton with a frown. As the students packed up and went to go find their parents, I pulled Jackie aside and reassured her that what she experienced was not her fault. I learned two things from this event. Firstly, I should not have Jackie conduct at the end of a long and grueling rehearsal. She should have the band when they are fresh and at their best. Secondly, we had not spent enough time conducting in her lessons. From that point onward, Jackie and I conducted to an audio recording during her lessons for about five to 10 minutes at a time. I stressed that first we need to be able to conduct the piece from beginning to end and that once she felt confident with that then and only then should she get back to actually rehearsing the group. I was so excited to see her rehearse the group that I naively glossed over the fact that she was moving too fast. She has such a passion for music that she wanted to become just like me. And it was too much, too soon.

Since the change in strategy, Jackie has met greater success. As of November 8, Jackie was able to conduct the song in its entirety. Furthermore, with my guidance, I had her rehearse

the end of the song which features a fermata, or a hold in the music. She practiced holding and cutting the band off until the band could do it correctly and effectively. It was fun as we both identified sections that held over too late, and even the band was enjoying the activity. Finally, I saw myself, Jackie, and the rest of the band working as one to accomplish something together. I think it was a liberating moment for all of us, but especially for Jackie whose smile had returned. In my journal, I wrote, "Jackie was smiling. I can tell she was enjoying herself, and I'm wondering how much of an impact this is going to have on her. I may be changing her life and wouldn't even know it."

Jackie continued to make progress. On December 2, I allowed Jackie to conduct five other clarinet players during small group lessons. Since she herself is a clarinetist, she must have felt right at home. I saw a far more confident and daring Jackie. A Jackie who instinctively went around and asked her friends to play their pitches, and adjusting the fingering of one of them with great detail and ease. At one point, one of the students was struggling to produce a B above the break, which is a fairly new area of study for the clarinet section. I decided to back off and see what she would be capable of doing. Although she was unable to help him produce the note, she gave some very sound advice, which was to play the note one octave lower. She then proceeded to experiment with him and asked him to try playing G instead. It was exhilarating watching her rehearse the group, and together, including myself, we decided the player in need of help should play the original note one octave lower until he felt comfortable with the original note. I am happy to report that the struggling student finally was able to play B above the break after a day of extra lessons with me. All parties involved were successful!

### **Student Leaders Taking Ownership**

The student leaders were excited from the get-go to come up with new ideas for the band. During her interview, I was taken aback when Jamie brought up the concept of having the band do a selection of solos, duets, and trios. She was the first candidate to ask me a question at the end of the interview. Initially, I was quite apprehensive about the idea. How would we select students to audition? What music would they choose? How many students would I allow to perform individually and/or in small groups? Would we have enough time to pull it together? But Jamie was passionate about the idea, referencing her experience in summer band when she performed a duet with her friend, Felicia. I decided to keep her idea with me and present it to the rest of the student leaders at a later time, after I had finally made my decision.

On October 13, I had never intended for a meeting to take place after rehearsal. I was simply going to allow my students additional time to complete their student leader reports. Still, conversations started to break loose within the group, and I decided to capitalize on the moment. I brought up Jamie's idea and the student leaders reacted positively. They were so excited that they began to discuss with me who should take part in auditions. "What do you guys think about making it sixth grade only?" I asked them. "But if they have one good fifth grader," replied Jackie, "maybe they should get an audition too." Jackie expressed further concern with the idea that if fifth graders do not get to audition, that perhaps they would quit the band. Leah countered Jackie's argument and said, "If you do it every year possibly she [one of the fifth graders] can't get the part this year she might be more motivated to find a harder song to practice more." Jessica concluded our discussion with, "I like the every year thing. They might get it next year." Because not everyone shared their thoughts, and we had limited time, I decided the group should vote at the next meeting.

Initially, I thought it best to have sixth grade only because I was afraid that I would get an overwhelming amount of students auditioning, and frankly, I did not know when it would fit into my already crammed schedule. However, after listening to the conversation we had, I became convinced that opening it up to everybody would be the healthiest option for the band. I did not want the fifth graders to feel segregated from the sixth graders, especially after they were not allowed to interview for student leader positions. So in essence, my students were schooling me.

To my great surprise and astonishment, the student leaders voted overwhelmingly in favor of sixth grade only. Where did this come from? The group was so vocal about including everyone. Right away I started blaming myself. In my journal, I wrote, "I was seriously moved by my students, but here they surprised me! Was their change in mind because of what I said last week? Should I be keeping my mouth shut and be less opinionated?" I felt obliged to investigate this further and briefly spoke to two of the girls that were originally adamant on including everybody. While Jessica expressed guilt over not voting to include fifth graders, she felt strongly that she did the right thing. Jackie felt the same, so at that point, I decided to drop it and accept their decision. The whole point of my study is to give them ownership. I was afraid that I would be stifling it and giving the wrong message that I did not trust their decisions if I questioned further.

On the same day we voted on the solos, duets, and trios, the student leaders also discussed the band's behavior. While I did notice less chatter during rehearsal, the student leaders were adamant on getting a better handle for the sake of making rehearsals more productive. Samantha started the conversation, noting that the students were talking during rehearsal. The others readily agreed, and I asked for any suggestions from the group. Katy chimed in and reminded the group of a behavioral technique I have used in the past, which

involves putting up an X on the board every time someone talks and if they reach 10 they lose a privilege. I have never been totally satisfied with this approach because it was negative reinforcement, so I kept the floor open for more suggestions.

Finally, Jackie came up with a more extrinsic approach, which the others got very excited about. She suggested that I add an X to a section's tally every time someone from that group misbehaves. The section with the least amount of Xs gets a special prize. As we came up with ideas for prizes, I suggested I could bake cookies, which the group quickly shot down! We all laughed and decided we needed to vote on whether to divide by families (woodwind, brass, and percussion) or by rows (four rows). The group voted overwhelmingly in favor of families, and I implemented the new behavioral system at the following rehearsal. The results were very successful.

In all my years of teaching band, I have never had rehearsals run so smoothly and efficiently. I felt that because the student leaders came up with this suggestion of managing the group's behavior and not me, it was more effective. While I cannot prove this, my feeling of this was reaffirmed in a discussion with Linda. She noted that rehearsals were running smoother probably in part because of student leadership. However, she did note that while the fifth graders were happy with the chart, some of the sixth graders in her section were struggling with it. She mentioned Ashton, an excellent trumpet player who does not always conform with the rest of the group. On more than one occasion, I have added an X because he would either be talking or playing his trumpet when he should not have been. Despite how successful the discipline chart has been, it does cause friction in the group when one person does not comply and is the frequent reason for a section gaining Xs. Fortunately, since my conversation with Linda, I have had to

discipline Ashton far less. I assume it is because his section is holding him more accountable for his actions.

Overall, the group seems to be very happy with what I feel to be shared ownership of the band. In a conversation, Jamie expressed great satisfaction with the new discipline chart the group came up with and added, "People are starting to be more responsible cause section leaders are helping them." Leah also felt strongly about student leadership when she said, "Personally, I really like the fact that we did that solo vote. I think that was a really good idea. That was cool." She also added that the meetings are great, saying, "And just the meetings in general. The stuff that you bring up, the changes in the band are for the better." Band members like Freddie, a fifth-grade clarinet player, agreed in a survey when he wrote, "They come up with great ideas."

### **Journal Prompts and Bulletin Board**

About 65% of the band participated in journal prompts throughout the course of this study. One of the first journal prompts asked students to write about what they looked forward to the most this year. Some students, like Tim, wrote short responses. He wrote, "The Christmas concert." Meanwhile, other students like Jackie wrote more detailed responses, which gave me greater insight. She wrote "The thing I'm looking forward to the most is having a drum major and section leaders. I'm looking forward to it because I signed up."

On rare occasions, I might get brief dialogue going. If students chose to share their response, I put it up on the band bulletin board, and if other students in the band liked what they read or had something to say they could use sticky notes to comment on the board. For example, when asked what the students thought about having solos, duets, and trios in the Spring concert, Jackie wrote, "I would be interested in doing this because I think it would be fun for the band especially for a jazz or blues song." A few days later, Samantha wrote a note to Jackie and

posted in on the board. She wrote, "Yeah I'm excited for solos too." Another student wrote that she agreed about using jazz music as well.

On another occasion, I asked what kind of music they would like to see performed at the Spring concert, Ryan wrote, "I would like to play jazz, because I enjoy seeing the middle and high school jazz band." Later, Isabelle said that she would like to perform a jazzy song that was supposed to be performed in summer band. I posted a comment on the board saying how both of them seem to agree on jazz music and that I was already planning on using Isabelle's suggestion for the Spring concert. It was instances like these that enabled me to find out what my students wanted to accomplish, and having a conversation through the bulletin board was a great way for students who do not usually talk with one another in person to communicate. It also may have helped students feel like their opinion was still valued even though they did not have a leadership position. However, I did notice that as the weeks went by, the number of students who responded to journal prompts decreased, which then led to less participation on the bulletin board. I address this issue in the Obstacles section.

### **Swaying Students to Stay in Band**

One of my sub-questions was whether or not student leadership would have an impact on students thinking of quitting band. Rebecca is an energetic, happy-go-lucky trumpet player. I often see her with great joy as she passes me in the hallway. However, she has gained a reputation for being a bit of an outcast. As I observe her among her fellow trumpet players, I can tell she does not fit in. She is often distracted and off in la-la land while the others are working hard to master their parts. However, she has a wonderful heart. As far as I could tell, she was happy to be in the band. But then one day she dropped those three terrible words that no band director wants to hear their students tell them: "I am quitting." I looked at her puzzlingly and

asked her why, and she told me that her grandmother wanted her to quit. She then proceeded to show me her trumpet case, which was beaten up very badly from being hit by a car. The trumpet itself was unplayable, the brass twisted like a pretzel. After playing phone tag for a few days, I finally got a hold of her grandmother and inquired her reason for pulling Rebecca out of band. She told me that her granddaughter was not practicing, so she saw no reason to pay for a rental that was not being used to its fullest potential. In addition, the father, who she does not live with, has not been able to make payments for the rental, and the grandmother simply was not sure how to afford it, especially now the instrument was destroyed. I offered a free loaner from the school for a few weeks until they could get the destroyed trumpet replaced and encouraged the grandmother that band can be good for her daughter. She agreed to let Rebecca stay, and with that conversation now over, I wanted to make a difference in her life. Just as I found myself thinking of quitting band in my youth, here was Rebecca having those same doubts, which were being further deepened by her grandmother's encouragement to quit.

Before the phone call, I also had a meeting with Linda, Rebecca's section leader. I asked if she could help keep an eye on Rebecca. The morning before my phone call with the grandmother, I witnessed Linda helping her out. Rebecca looked so lost, but Linda was quite persistent in helping keep her focused. I even told the grandmother, "I think Rebecca made a friend today," which may have persuaded her to give her more time in band. Linda told me the following in our meeting:

She doesn't like to play. She likes to listen to everyone else, and when she doesn't play she says it's too hard. I try to tell her what the notes are, what to do, doesn't play. And then she's distracted with everything else, like the percussion behind her.



She even noted that since trying to help her, her job as section leader has gotten much harder, but that she feels good doing it. What Linda did not know, however, is that since she started sitting next to Rebecca she has come to my room on two occasions seeking extra help with her band music. This was a different Rebecca. This was a Rebecca inspired to better herself and become more involved. "I like it [student leadership]," wrote Rebecca in a survey. "Linda helps me pay utenton [sic] and focuse [sic]." And I suspect Linda paying attention to her and recognizing her as part of the group has helped her feel more welcomed and more inspired to further herself so that she might fit in more. But will Rebecca continue to work hard and stay in the band? Only time will tell.

### **Student Leader Reports**

The student leader reports were meant to be my primary source of information for insight into what my students felt they did well with and where they felt they needed the most work. Hopefully, they would come up with their own suggestions for improvement. I found the student leader reports to be very helpful in both lessons and rehearsals. For example, both Beth and Jessica wrote in their clarinet section report, "Clip, Clop, Clap measure C untill [sic] end. We stayed together with the flutes and sounded good." Conversely, they wrote, "A Celtic christmas measure 27 through 35 couldn't keep the melody." Most times I was aware of the issues, but it was great to see that my students could recognize these troublesome spots as well. I would often keep their reports on hand and use them as a focal point in my lessons. It was a great way for me to more accurately pinpoint problem areas, and I suspect my student leaders felt important when they saw me using their notes. I also took their concerns and applied them in rehearsals. For example, Samantha wrote "Celtic Christmas 17-27. We are behind when it comes to the rest." I wrote this into my rehearsal plan and made a point to address it. Again, typically I was aware of

these issues, but sometimes I was taken by surprise. For example, Samantha wrote a special message to me that read, "JUST LISTEN. You could just wait till they stop talking." I was humbled that she caught me forgetting to be patient. It was a pleasant reminder that I truly appreciated. Perhaps the most difficult report to swallow was one by Katy. At this particular rehearsal, we had finally started to take Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer at the appropriate tempo and all seemed to be going well. But in her report she wrote "Rudolph the red-nosed Reindeer is way to [sic] fast but 13 to 16 was great." I am ashamed to admit it, but I had no idea I had lost the trombone section. Thankfully, I was now aware and in a better position to focus on it more at later lessons and rehearsals. I would have gone home happy that day, but instead I was thinking of ways to help them. I thanked Katy the following day and told her just how much it meant to me that she included that in her report. I was so proud of her.

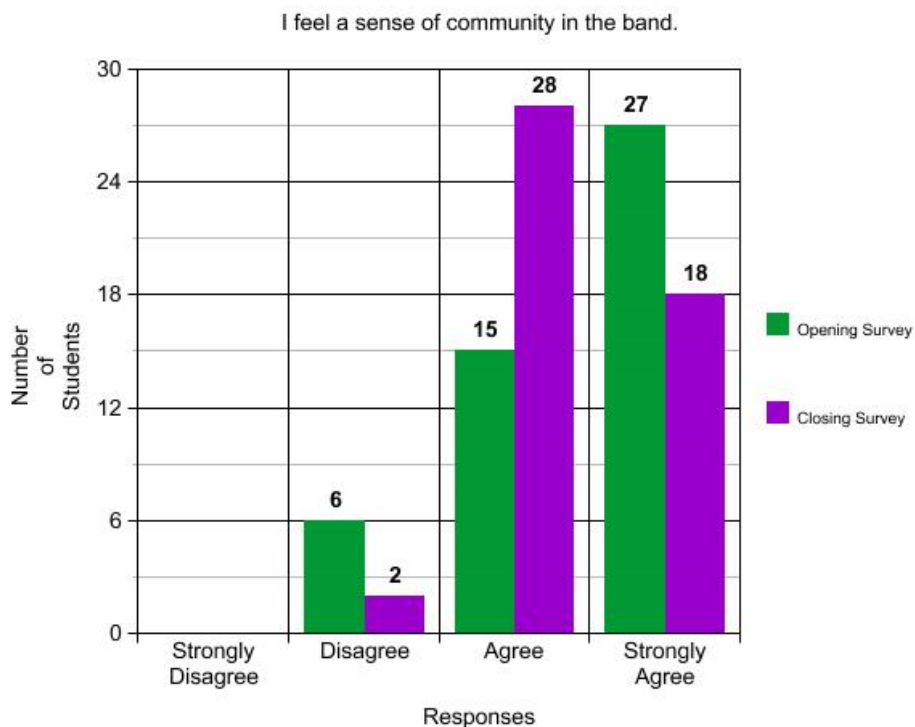
### **Closing Survey**

On November 30, my band students (N=48) completed a closing survey, which included identical Likert scale statements to the opening survey, though with one additional item: "I feel that continuing student leadership in the future is a good idea." Just as with the opening survey, the students were not required to write their name. While the number of students in the band had not changed, it should be noted that between when I gave the opening survey and when I announced section leaders two fifth graders quit the band and two sixth graders joined. Overall, the survey yielded some pleasing results, especially in comparison to the opening survey results. An overwhelming 83.3% (n=40) either agreed or strongly agreed that their opinion matters in the band, compared with the slightly less 77.1% (n=37) in the opening survey. I was concerned that students who were not student leaders might feel that their opinion mattered less, but I suspect

the inclusion of the journal prompts may have done what was intended, which was to encourage students who are generally quieter to have a place to speak their mind.

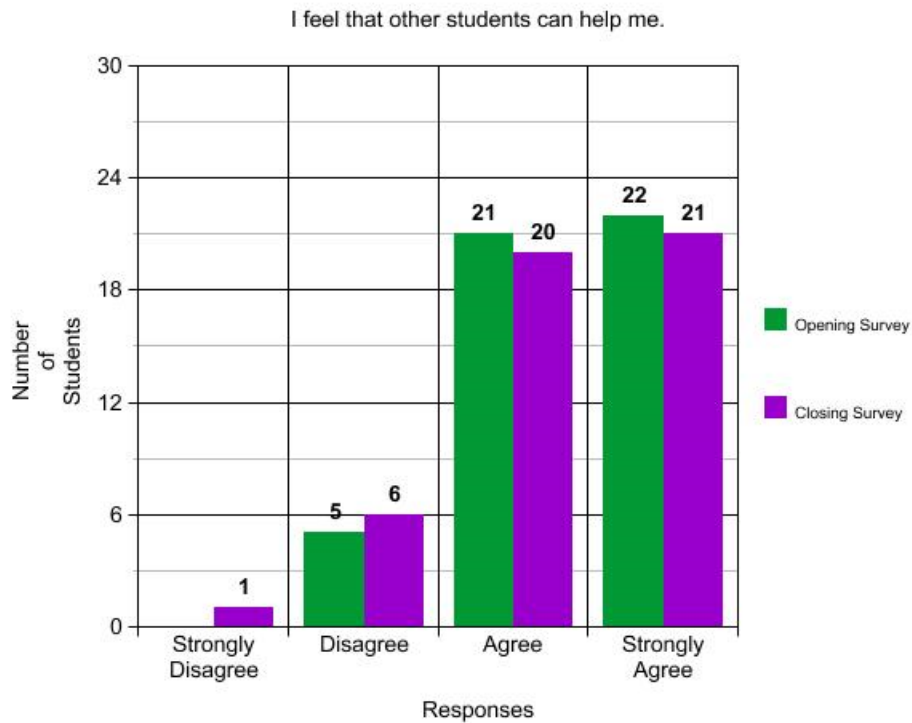
As shown in Figure 2, 95.8% of the band felt a sense of community in the band, compared to 87.5% in early September. Of course, I would rather the entire band feel a sense of community, but the fact there was an increase is very welcoming news indeed. Sadly, however, only 37.5% of the students felt strongly about this, compared with 56.3% in early September. I am unclear why there was such a significant drop. Perhaps students who were not section leaders felt left out. I can only imagine what they think when I tell the section leaders to stay after practice for a few minutes. If I were in their shoes, I might feel jealous or even just curious as to what goes on in the meetings. Honestly, I would not blame them for feeling slightly excluded.

**Figure 2. Student Response to Community in the Band**



As displayed in Figure 3, there was a slight difference in how the students felt about their peers being able to help them compared with the beginning of the year. Surprisingly, 85.4% of the students felt other students could help them, while 89.6% felt this way back in September. It is not a huge drop, but I suspect this reflects those moments when students like Katy struggled to communicate effectively with her section. As I continue to work with the section leaders, I imagine seeing the percentage rise considerably. After all, the study has only been underway for three months, and only two of those months were actually spent with the section leaders doing their jobs. The entire first month was spent trying to find suitable section leaders.

**Figure 3. Student Response to Peer Assistance**



In terms of how the students felt about me meeting their needs, I was pleased to find that 93.8% of the band felt that I was being successful. This was an improvement over the 89.6% at the start of the school year. Perhaps the students recognized the fact that I provided them the

unique opportunity to work together as a team, or perhaps, most likely, I was listening to them through their journal prompts and even through my section leaders. I actively addressed their needs through the feedback they provided me. However, I was surprised to discover that there was a drop in the number of students who felt strongly that I was meeting their needs. The percentage dropped from 47.9% to 33.3%. My only explanation is that perhaps some of my students' needs were getting fulfilled elsewhere. In other words, perhaps the section leaders were stealing my votes! Of course, the remaining 6.3% of students are either students who have not indulged in the optional journal prompts or who I have simply not reached out to strongly enough. Either way, I intend on reaching out to these students throughout the year. Again, the study has only been in existence for about three months.

Finally, the most interesting, and perhaps most exciting result, came with the final question in the survey. I am pleased to say that 97.9% of my band students feel that the student leadership program should continue. Only one student disagreed, and of those students who agreed, 60.4% strongly agreed. Clearly, I have struck a chord with my students, and they appreciate the new band room climate that student leadership has provided. A few students left comments at the bottom of the survey. In one of them, a student wrote, "I feel very good about student leadership," and in another a student wrote, "Thanks for letting us do this!"

### **Implications**

Shieh (2008) stated that in order to develop leadership in ensembles, the director must be a flexible leader. Furthermore, Davison (2007) stressed that the most successful student leadership programs are those with band directors that possess facilitative leadership characteristics. This was undeniably true as I learned to let my student leaders talk more and actually experiment with their suggestions. It was an organic process in which I simply asked them for their thoughts on anything for the betterment of the group. For example, the students brought up concerns they had about too much talking during rehearsal. I could have taken the authoritative route and come up with a new plan and simply ordered my leaders in an autocratic fashion, but instead I threw the ball back into their court and received student-driven suggestions that eventually led to the successful implementation of a new behavior chart plan. I believe that experiences like these helped strengthen my student leadership program. When asked what their favorite part of the program was, several of my students referenced group meetings in which ideas were produced. Even students who were not leaders recognized these meetings. When asked if student leadership has made a difference, one student wrote, "Yes, because of your suggestions in your meetings. Keep doing them I like the amazing ideas."

In years prior, it was common for me to come to rehearsal with a great weight on my shoulders. The task of getting young musicians ready for a concert seemed insurmountable at times. But that weight has lessened as a result of student leadership. Now that my student leaders are responsible for attendance and straightening the room up, I can more easily focus on the making music part of my job. Furthermore, the aforementioned behavior chart has done wonders for increasing focus and accountability in my group. Knowing that I have eight student leaders who are both inspiring and motivating their peers is an amazing feeling. I cannot believe

I am saying this, but I do not feel overly stressed about the upcoming winter concert. In fact, I am energized and looking forward to it. The combination of student leader meetings, reports, conversations, and ongoing submissions of journal prompts that are shared with me and the rest of the community have made me feel closer to my band. I feel that I know this group better than any of my previous groups, and I am convinced that the implementation of student leadership has been instrumental in making that possible.

This is only the beginning. I will continue student leadership in my elementary band for years to come. But instead of choosing student leaders in September, I will be choosing them in May of the previous school year. I have had a few students in the past move or quit over the summer, but I do not think this should be a deterrent. I suspect that students who are chosen to be student leaders will be so motivated that the thought of leaving would never cross their mind. Regardless, starting earlier will allow student leaders to begin growing sooner and hopefully better adapt to their responsibilities. Because the student leaders will be chosen earlier, I will be encouraging them to meet with and talk to the student leaders that have already served. In essence, the veteran student leaders will be handing the torch to their successors, passing along with them experience and advice on how to be successful.

Scruggs (2009) noted that the pros of constructivism and student leadership may not be experienced immediately and that the true profit will become obvious as the school year continues. At this point, it has only been about two months since student leaders have started taking on their new responsibilities. In that time, I have recorded growth, but I have not determined any long-term effects of the program. In fact, I doubt I will be around to see them. My hope is that this experience will stick with my student leaders for years to come. I can only imagine how Jackie's experience conducting will influence her decision to possibly pursue a

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career in music or how Linda's dream of being like her mother and her experience being a section leader will influence her confidence when one day she hopefully applies for drum major in high school. Katy's future is unclear as well. At the moment, she is making small steps toward mastering her new responsibility, but whether or not she decides to continue learning or loses her self-confidence remains to be seen. I fight for her every day, but in the end, it is her path to decide.

I honestly believe there is a bias from other music teachers that elementary band is not suited for student leadership, but I am now here to tell them that they are wrong. I struggled to come across any literature that specifically talked about it. Most discussions were either aimed at secondary music education or at elementary students in general. I would recommend music directors of any age or ensemble type to give student leadership a chance. The benefits are extraordinary, and there is no way of telling how powerful the experience will leave a mark on their students.



## **Obstacles**

Obstacles are unavoidable, and my teacher research was no exception. My first obstacle occurred as I planned my study. I had to decide whether or not to pick the section leaders based on my knowledge and familiarity with the students or instead encourage them to apply and interview for the positions. Ultimately, I decided to take the fairer route and encouraged all of my sixth graders to apply. The sacrifice, however, was giving up valuable time that could have been spent teaching the music. I spent anywhere from five to 10 minutes interviewing candidates during their 30-minute lessons. I conducted interviews from September 22 to September 28, and I did not come to any decisions until October 4. It took almost a month before my study could get truly underway.

There is no doubt it was the best decision I could have made because I felt more confident with my decisions, and the students could have accused me of favoritism if I simply chose students without giving everyone a chance. Still, I lost valuable time to rehearse music, and the prospect of losing additional time in the future was a reality. My rehearsals are only 40 minutes long, and in that time I also wanted my student leaders to fill out a brief report describing the successes and failures of rehearsal as well as give any suggestions for improvement. It was a terrific way for them to recap the rehearsal and relay any important information that I could use at the next rehearsal. I quickly found that ending practice three minutes early was not enough time for them to complete their thoughts, and I did not dare sacrifice any further rehearsal time. After all, seeing my students only 40 minutes every six school days was hard enough. I finally had enough of losing rehearsal time, so I emailed my students' home base teachers and requested an additional 10 minutes for my student leaders to write after rehearsal. The teachers were supportive, which alleviated the issue tremendously.

With that additional time, I could have longer group discussions that were dynamic and really helped to bring the student leaders' minds together. Of course, not losing another few minutes of rehearsal time was invaluable as well.

While I knew that I would need to change my leadership style to facilitative from authoritarian, I underestimated just how difficult it would be, especially in interviews. In my journal, I wrote, "I had a hard time asking questions. I would often interrupt to help them get their point across." I could not stand silence. I would immediately start talking again if a student could not give me an answer right away, filling in the awkward silence in the hopes that I could help them come up with a response. I wondered what they would have said if I did not interrupt them. Would their answers have been different? Probably. Therefore, I learned that sometimes it is okay to have awkward silence no matter how uncomfortable it felt for myself and the student. I learned to be more patient, and there were times with Katy, for example, when I would simply tell her she can give me her response if she thinks of it later. I was so patient that a few of our interviews were over 10 minutes long, which again, sacrificed valuable time to rehearse the band music. But the sacrifice was worth it.

To combat losing rehearsal time, I invited students to the band room during my morning prep time. Because I spent so much time interviewing Katy, I would let her visit me for extra help with the music and/or leadership skills. Amazingly, my student leaders recognized that we were losing rehearsal time. In fact, they helped us overcome this obstacle when they suggested I let students in the room earlier. I always assumed that the home base teachers needed them for morning work, but they reassured me that their teachers would allow them the freedom to come early. I checked with the teachers, and the students were correct. By early November, I had

students coming to my room sometimes 15 minutes early to practice their music, which also served as a terrific time for section leaders to work with their classmates.

Journal prompts proved to be an obstacle as well. I did not make them a requirement, but I did offer extra credit to any students who completed them. Unfortunately, while it started off strongly with many wonderful responses, as time progressed I received fewer and fewer responses. Consequently, the bulletin board was also not getting the kind of attention I anticipated because it relied on a constant flow of responses from the students. I was counting on this source as a way to get quieter students to begin sharing and also as a way to better triangulate my data. While several quieter students did participate, I was not getting a big enough perspective on how students felt about student leadership. Even when I asked specifically about student leadership only a small handful of students would actually respond. To overcome this obstacle, I eventually decided to make a required survey to get the perspective I was missing. Of course, journal prompts have been successful in that it is another avenue for students to express themselves and share their ideas.

Another obstacle was choosing an appropriate song for the drum major to conduct. I knew that I wanted to keep it simple. Therefore, having the drum major conduct in 2/4 seemed most appropriate. But I found it difficult to find an appropriate song in my library. Finally, instead of having the drum major conduct a song in 2/4 that was too challenging for the band, or a song in 4/4 that would be a little more challenging for her, but too easy for the group, I decided to arrange my own composition. I did not want the composition to be complicated. I needed something that would be relatively easy to teach so that I could get my drum major to conduct as soon as possible. Therefore, I chose to arrange a composition that incorporated two familiar tunes that the students would recognize instantly, Jingle Bells and Jolly Old St. Nick. I wrote

most of the parts in unison for simplicity, with occasional counterpoint melodies in the low brass section. By the time I had chosen Jackie to be my drum major, the band could already play through most of the selection with relative ease. This made Jackie's experience far more pleasant and enjoyable. Had I chosen a selection that was too difficult, it may have caused Jackie to think that the band's struggling was a reflection on her conducting. My goal was to make both her and band's first experience to be a positive one that would encourage greater success in the future.

Overall, I feel that I handled the obstacles well. I am especially humbled that I was not always alone in overcoming obstacles. My band's suggestion to come to the band room earlier helped me overcome the obstacle of time. It was yet another moment when my students were schooling me.

### **Emerging Questions**

I still have questions about student leadership. I never truly knew what to expect going into this teacher research. I did understand that I would not only learn a great deal about my students, but that I would also learn a great deal about myself. Now that I am becoming more comfortable as a facilitative band director as opposed to a teacher-centered one, I am beginning to brainstorm ways of improving what I consider to be an incredibly effective student leadership program. For example, how can I better prepare my students for leadership? It never occurred to me until mid-November after trying to help Katy, who was turning off her section by being too negative, that I needed to discuss with my section leaders something as simple as giving positive feedback and to not always focus on the negatives. I wish that I would have discovered this sooner so that I could have avoided conflict within the trombone section. How can I better model leadership skills so that future student leaders will meet greater success from the beginning?

Overall, I had a great set of student leaders. With the exception of Katy, I found that the students comfortably fell into their roles, and all of them, including Katy, have started to blossom each in their own way. But I often wonder if I will see another Jackie who was so well prepared for drum major even before I started working with her. For example, she already took piano lessons and even plays in her church orchestra. She seemed to understand the responsibility of student conductor well in advance of her audition. How will I handle choosing a drum major who is less prepared and may need a little more time to understand the role of conductor? And speaking of drum major, Jackie will be conducting in the Spring concert as well. How will she handle conducting in 4/4 time instead of 2/4 time? I would like to see her learn 4/4 time because

it is the most common time signature in elementary band literature. Hopefully it will just be a matter of teaching her the new pattern and allowing her time to practice.

I am sure that the success of student leader groups depends on the group's' chemistry. Again, I had a great set of student leaders, and this particular group worked well together. But how will future groups respond with one another? Are there characteristics that I should have been looking for and if so what were they? Also, would pre-training help make them more successful? I would like to set aside time for new student leaders to sit down with old student leaders to review proper ways of dealing with certain situations that have arisen in the past.

Every year will present itself with its own new set of challenges. My schedule may change and, as mentioned, the chemistry of my elementary band will undoubtedly change as well. Depending on these circumstances, I may need to amend my expectations. But no matter what, I will not change my belief in the value of student leadership in the elementary band.

## Conclusion

As I reflect on the journey I traveled these past three months, I cannot help but think of myself all those years ago in ninth grade. As I think about Rebecca who was close to quitting band, and was then inspired by her section leader to try harder and give the band a second chance, I think of myself. I may have quit band if it were not for the community of friends I found in the high school band. I fervently believe that I was successful in motivating my students to work closer together, and to see themselves as more of a community, and not just an extracurricular club.

The purpose of my study was to transition from a teacher-centered band program to a constructivist one in which students were given a voice. Before I began this exciting and life-changing journey, I was perhaps apprehensive and nervous about relinquishing complete control and sharing it with my young students. First and foremost on my mind was swaying uncommitted members, like Rebecca, to staying in the band and aspiring higher than what dreamed possible. I also wanted to know how the experience would change me, and how I could better reach out to my students. Additionally, how will my students interact? Lastly, how will the experience better prepare my students for middle school and beyond?

I got answers to the aforementioned sub-questions. While her future is not clear, I found success with Rebecca who was within inches of quitting band. I am confident that student leadership has had a profound impact on uncommitted members. At this point, it is impossible to know if there were other students thinking of quitting, but what is clear is that the vast majority of my band students feel that the band is a community. Not only did student leadership reshape my students' perspective of band, but it also reshaped mine. For years I was under the impression that a band director must run things from the top-down. Instead, I am learning that it

is far more valuable to run things from the bottom-up. Listening to my section leaders and reading their brief reports has helped me pinpoint problem areas more promptly, and has even re-energized me. It was both informative and humbling to read comments from the student leaders, and I feel that through these interactions I was able to better hear the beating heart of my band.

In the past, I was anxious about running rehearsals in preparation for the next big concert. But now, I am excited, and even reinvigorated, about preparing for the winter concert. The difference is that I have heard my students' thoughts and concerns, their aspirations for the future of the program, of which there were several. What did my students want to accomplish? The student leaders worked together to determine a new behavioral system that would best suit *their* band. In addition, they are in the process of fulfilling their dream of including solos, duets, and trios at the Spring concert. I will continue to work closely with them to reach that dream.

While it is impossible to predict the future, I am confident that Jackie has a great, musical future ahead of her. I had hoped to better prepare my students for middle school and beyond, and I can confidently say that I have provided her with a unique experience that she would not have experienced until high school, if she were to become a drum major then. Now, Jackie has and will continue to have experience conducting an ensemble, and at times, to my great surprise and excitement, even rehearse the band. I never expected an elementary band student to have the ambition, or better yet, guts, to stand in front of her peers and address them musically. I am truly excited for her and look forward to watching her blossom further throughout the school year, and into the future.

I often daydream about the winter concert. I imagine handing my baton over to Jackie and seeing the surprised look on the audience's' faces. I will retreat to the percussion section and await her preparatory cue and experience for the first time a band that can truly run itself, if only



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for those precious 56 measures of music. What will my students be thinking? Will they be aware of just how remarkable they really are? Will they be aware of how much of an impact they have had on each other? Regardless, I will know, and I am sure that it will be an experience that none of them will forget.

## Epilogue

It was the day after the concert. I was doing my normal hall duty at the end of the school day. I found myself reflecting on the amazing journey my band students and I had undertaken these past four months. My thoughts were interrupted when two of my former band students approached me. Both of these students were in the band last year and quit just before my student leadership program got underway. Since quitting, both students, who I considered to be very bright and dependable, have gained a reputation for being unruly and your classic 'class clowns' by the teachers in the building. In a sense, I feel they lost their way. I poured my heart and soul into making them competent musicians, and when they decided to quit, I was heartbroken. I believe one of them would have made a fine section leader.

Finally, one of them broke the silence. "We just wanted to tell you we thought the band concert was really cool." The other student continued by saying that he thought having Jackie conduct was really awesome. For a moment, there was an awkward silence. I did not know what to make of the conversation, since I never expected either student to approach me about band, as it had become a sore subject with them, at least to me. But I said thank you and told them that the band misses them and that if they ever wanted to rejoin, the door is always open. I never predicted that students who quit would actually be moved by the band's performance. Deep down, I hope that at least one of those students will take me up on my offer to rejoin.

Indeed, the concert was a great success. For starters, Jackie gave what I considered to be her finest performance. Before the concert, she had the opportunity to conduct at four separate functions when the band toured the district and played at our annual senior citizens program. At first, she would tremble and lose the beat, but with each performance she seemed to give more and more of herself, with great attention and determination. In a conversation, Jackie told me

that she now understands what it is like to be a band director. She noted that my job is difficult, and she feels like a better musician because of the experience. By the concert for friends and family, she conducted with great finesse. I retreated to the percussion section and was able to follow her easily, and the band firmly held it together. The reaction from the audience was absolutely wonderful. It was truly something special and a moment that I certainly will never forget.

My section leaders were as dependable as ever at the concert. Rebecca approached me beforehand and requested that Linda sit with her during the performance. She wanted to remain focused, and she found great comfort in knowing that her section leader was there for her. Linda happily agreed to sit with her.

A teacher emailed me within an hour after the conclusion of the concert. She told me how impressed she was with Leah. At the concert, despite having her own parts to worry about, she would be there for Kevin making sure that he was prepared and knew when to come in. As a band director, I was deeply heartened by her willingness to get down and dirty with her section, ensuring that everyone was happy and comfortable, ready to do their best. And under her leadership and influence, the percussion section earned the least amount of Xs in the new student leader-created behavior plan. If you ask most band directors, they will tell you that the percussion section is not always the best behaved section. But I suspect having an excellent influence like Leah in the percussion section, and a new student-driven behavior plan, made an impact.

Katy is still struggling to adapt to her new role as section leader. However, on a few occasions, I have spotted her trying to make a positive influence on the rest of the band. Whether it was simply holding onto one of her section members' trombones to make sure it is

safe, or quietly telling a band member to stop talking at the concert, she has made progress. As the concert got closer and I spent more time running through music and seeing my group under pressure, I could more clearly see how my trombone section operates. Taylor was complaining of a sore throat at dress rehearsal and refused to play. When he did play, he purposely played wrong by puffing out his cheeks. Katy is trying her best, and we need to find a way to inspire Taylor to be more of a team player. It is another emerging question, and I am learning that there will always be emerging questions. Such is the life of a music teacher researcher!

My faith in the band has never been stronger, and I cannot help but think about the future in a positive light. For me, this is a big deal. I have always been pessimistic about everything in life! I am currently looking through music for the Spring concert, looking for ways to incorporate solos, duets, and trios into the program, which my student leaders decided to implement. I am excited to see my student leaders grow. Jamie, Beth, Jessica, Samantha, Linda, Katy, Leah, and Jackie have been instrumental in helping make the band better. I honestly believe that the band could not have been as successful without their influence.

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## **Appendix A: Subjectivity**

This study was based from the beginning on my experience as a band student. I believe that student leadership can empower students and give them a greater sense of community. Section leaders in my high school band inspired me to stick with band at a time when I was seriously considering leaving it behind. Seeing my older peers represent the band was truly empowering. Though I cannot remember specifically the words spoken to me by my section leaders, I can certainly remember the feeling of encouragement they provided me, a feeling that has stayed with me for nine years. I aspired to be just like them, and eventually became one of them in my senior year. Band was no longer just band. Band became a second home. A community of friends that was more like a family.

I chose this study because it had deep meaning for me. It is based on subjectivity. I had experience with it in high school and became exceedingly curious if and how it would help my elementary band students. My question was “What happens when I create and encourage student leadership within the elementary band?” Even my sub-questions were based on what I hoped to discover or wanted to unearth as a result.

I did not have any preconceived notions on how it would go, because I had never seen or heard any colleagues do it before. In my research, I found no band directors writing about student leadership specifically for elementary band. I was on uncharted territory. But what I did know was my students. I have known my sixth grade band members since they were in second grade. I have watched them learn and grow, and in doing so I felt well informed in knowing which of my students would probably make the best student leaders. Leah, for example, is one student that I would often see helping out Kevin during band rehearsals. Initially, she showed only minimal interest in applying for percussion section leader, but I prodded her along and told

her she should definitely think about applying. Jackie is a pianist as well as my finest clarinetist, and is far more advanced in music theory compared to her bandmates. She is a remarkable student that I felt very strongly about. She would make the perfect candidate for drum major. My knowledge of the students from years past certainly played a role in encouraging certain students to assert themselves and apply.

In addition, everyone's definition of what makes a good leader is different. I tried to keep to things that seemed universal, but I am sure others would disagree with some of my qualifiers. For example, I value passion, partly because I am a very passionate person. My student leaders and drum major needed to show passion in some form toward music in general or the band itself. Certain students like Katy would often find their way to my room early just to hang out or to spend a little extra time with their bandmates. These students were dedicated to the band and probably would feel a little more empty without it. They had a real drive and ambition, a loyalty to the group that I deemed very valuable.

The opening and closing surveys were anonymous and therefore allowed my students the complete freedom to express their true feelings toward community in the band. The results were far more accurate than if I had required them to write their name. Though the method of data collection was objective, the questions themselves were subjective; the students had to draw on their own personal feelings toward me and the band.

Writing about my experiences in my personal journal is another example of subjectivity. My journals were based entirely on my perceptions of the day. Even my decision to include certain events and leave others out was entirely subjective. I found myself focusing on the negative events, which reflects *my* personality. I tend to dwell on the negative and wonder how I could have done things better. My journal entries were often a conversation with myself,



conversations that usually are in my head, but in this case, ended up on paper. While I celebrated the positive events, the negative events were more significant, in my opinion, to further developing my research.

Subjectivity also arose from my students both in conversation and in their written responses. My students brought with them both different experiences and perspectives to solve problems. Our student leader group meetings were perhaps the most dynamic moments in my research in which I witnessed all of these young, brilliant minds clashing with one another and coming together as a unit. It was their recognition that the band was talking too much that brought them to the conclusion the group needed some kind of extrinsic motivation. It was even more wonderful to witness the band react positively to their new extrinsic strategy, and even better when rehearsals were running far more efficiently because of their new idea. I am convinced that because they came up with these ideas on their own, that the band was more willing to respond and cooperate together.

As I stand at my podium, raise my baton, take a deep breath, and start the music, I bring with me all of my prior experiences, dating as far back as when my own section leaders inspired me to commit myself to the band. It is my own subjectivity that colors the lens through which I see not only my students, but also the way I interpret the day's successes and failures, as well as the way in which I interpret my findings. Subjectivity even influenced who I did not choose to be section leaders and drum major. If someone else had done an identical study, the results of my study would be uniquely their own. This study would not have been possible without subjectivity.

## **Appendix B: Implementation**

As a music teacher-researcher, I feel it is my obligation to reach out to as many other music teachers as possible. I strongly believe that my experience can have a positive effect on my fellow colleagues. In a way, I have already shared my experience with colleagues. Recently, I went to a music education workshop, and in one of the classes we were asked to share the ways in which we develop ourselves to become better educators. Some of the teachers mentioned playing under great conductors and using their wisdom and technique in their own instruction, while others mentioned going to similar workshops. As I listened, I noticed that none of them were mentioning their students as a source for further development. I nervously raised my hand and shared my research with the room of some twenty or so music educators. The professor, a well renowned composer and arranger of music for young student ensembles, and a fellow music educator, said to me, "You're very brave." He was surprised to hear that I was actively listening and working with my students. Sometimes the truth can be scary, and for me to face that head on was apparently admirable.

I plan on submitting my research to several publications. I could not find a vast knowledge base on student leadership specifically in relation to an elementary ensemble, and would like to help expand this literature so that other music teachers will be inspired and hopefully put more trust into their students. I am interested in reaching out to NAFME *Music Educators Journal* and *Journal of Research in Music Education*. I will need to consolidate my research, but beyond that it is up to the publications to deem my work relevant enough. I have absolutely no doubt that they will see the value in my work.

In addition to the aforementioned, I will be reaching out to the other music educators in my district. I think it is important, and particularly exciting, to share with them all that I have

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learned about student leadership and how it will hopefully help them in the future when they meet my students for the first time. But furthermore, perhaps it will inspire them to incorporate many of my new strategies, such as holding frequent meetings with student leaders, encouraging student leaders to provide feedback on rehearsals, and perhaps even encouraging journal prompts from their students.

I will also be eager to share the results of this study with my principal, who gave me his blessing before implementing the new student leadership program. It will be a great way to advocate for my band program. I have made great strides in the short time that I have been the elementary band director, but I would like to show him that my students are learning more than just music. In fact, they are learning leadership skills that they can carry with them throughout their lives.

**Appendix C: Student Leader Application/Interview Questions**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

What position are you applying for? Circle one or both: Section Leader or Drum Major

1. Why do you want to be drum major and/or section leader?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why do you like being in band? Is there anything you dislike about being in band?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why do you think you would make a good leader?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Scenario: You hear members of the band/of your section gossiping about another band member's poor playing. What do you do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What do you think makes a good section leader and/or drum major?

**Appendix D: Section Leader Report**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1) Circle the overall mood of your section during rehearsal.



2) Please describe areas of the music that you think the section did very well with.

Please provide song titles, measures, and why you think it went well.

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3) Please describe areas of the music that you think the section struggled with. Please provide song titles, measures, and why you think it didn't go well. How can we fix this problem?

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4) Do you have any suggestions to help make the band better? If so, please explain.

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**Appendix E: Drum Major Report**

1) How did you feel about your conducting performance? Circle one.



What did you do well? What do you think you need to work on?

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2) How did you feel about the band's performance? Circle one.



What did the band do well? What do you think the band needs to work on?

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3) Do you have any suggestions to help make the band better? If so, please explain.

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**Appendix F: Journal Questions Sample**  
**Due on September 26, 2016**

Please select one of the following questions. If you don't like any of these questions, but have something else you would like to share, you may write about that instead. When you are finished, you can either put this paper in the exchange box (which may be included on the band bulletin board) or you can put this paper in the private box (which only Mr. Jonkman will read). Remember, there are no wrong answers! Just be honest. 😊

Put an X next to the question you want to answer.

- \_\_\_ 1) Which band song are you most excited about for the concert?
- \_\_\_ 2) What are you looking forward to the most in band?
- \_\_\_ 3) What was your favorite thing about band last year?
- \_\_\_ 4) Other. Write your question here:

\_\_\_\_\_

Write your answer here:

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Need more room? That's OK! Just write on the back! 😊

**Appendix G: Band Survey**

**What grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Please read the following statements and circle the response you most agree with. There are no wrong answers! Be honest!**

**1. I feel like my opinion matters in the band.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**

**2. I feel a sense of community in the band.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**

**3. I feel that other students can help me.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**

**4. I feel that Mr. Jonkman is able to meet all my needs.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**



**Appendix H: Closing Survey**

**What grade are you in? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Please read the following statements and circle the response you most agree with. There are no wrong answers! Be honest!**

**1. I feel like my opinion matters in the band.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**

**2. I feel a sense of community in the band.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**

**3. I feel that other students can help me.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**

**4. I feel that Mr. Jonkman is able to meet all my needs.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**

**5. I feel that continuing student leadership in the future is a good idea.**

**Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly Agree**

**6. If you have any comments, please add them below.**

### Appendix I: Permission Form

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am working on a study this year of how I can use student leadership to enhance student participation and performance. I will be selecting a few students to have leadership responsibilities, such as helping with attendance, helping other students, and I'll even select one lucky student to conduct the band at the winter concert. Although the project is in the early stages of development, I anticipate that I'll be collecting student journal prompts as well as recording both conversations and rehearsals. The purpose of this documentation is to give me a chance to examine closely the relations between student leaders and their peers and how this affects the band's performance. I hope that this study will help me better understand how to implement student leadership effectively so that I may build a stronger and more cohesive band program.

Although I do not know what exactly I will or will not include in my study, I would like to have your permission to use the information I learn from your child as well as any of his or her writings. I do not anticipate any risks to your child from participating in this study. Please be assured that a pseudonym will be used to protect your child's privacy.

Please sign this form and return it to me by **Friday, September 9, 2016**. If you decide that you do not want your child to participate, your decision will not be held against you or your child in any way. If you agree to participate but change your mind later, your wish will be respected.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Mr. Jonkman

I give permission for my child to participate in the study of student leadership.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_