

Public Abstract

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Title:THE INFLUENCE OF BANDS OF AMERICA ON ONE HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND: A SINGLE CASE STUDY

The purpose of this research study was to examine the influence of participation in Bands of America competitions (hereafter referred to as BOA) on one central Missouri high school marching band program. I chose to study a high school marching band that had been involved with BOA for a minimum of five years. Participants in this study were marching band members plus staff of the Camdenton High School marching band (N=22).

My goal was to produce a study that was descriptive of the influence, if any, that participation in BOA had on the Camdenton High School marching band. I sought to discover this through observations of their rehearsals and performances at their marching band contests. I chose to conduct a qualitative, single case study. Data were collected through structured and open-ended interviews, observations, field notes, and my participant researcher journal.

To date, there has been limited research on BOA participation by high school marching bands. BOA claims to be the largest and most prestigious national marching competition available to high school marching bands in the United States. BOA has grown nationally from eight contests in 1985 to 20 contests in 2015. When BOA expanded in 1997 to include the St. Louis, Missouri regional championship, only five Missouri bands participated in the event. The number had grown in 2015 to include 25 Missouri bands.

During my research, I assumed the role of an active participant and observed the band's music and marching drill preparation, and attended their competitions in order to observe their BOA performances. My research questions focused on the following areas: (a) the key motivators for a high school marching band to participate in BOA, (b) how BOA influences the practices of a high school marching band, and (c) what barriers a rural marching band faces in order to participate in BOA. Through my investigation, I discovered that there were several motivators for the Camdenton High School marching band staff to elect to participate in BOA. The standard of excellence that exists at BOA marching contests is consistent from state to state, and provides the staff and students with an adjudication rubric that serves as a guide for them to rehearse and perform at a higher musical level. Participation in BOA has led the staff to change the design practices of their marching show design. In addition to the planning of the show, the staff has improved their teaching process. This in turn has affected the students' attitude and approach toward their rehearsals. They have an increased work ethic and feel responsible for each other. All of these factors exist despite certain obstacles the band faces, including limited resources and an increased cost factor.

Other high school band directors who are considering BOA participation might consider the Camdenton High School marching band program as a model. By looking into the reasons why Camdenton chose to participate in BOA and some of the resultant influences, directors might be able to apply them to their own school marching band programs.