

A NARRATIVE OF K-12 RURAL TENURED MUSIC TEACHERS:  
STORIES OF THOSE WHO STAY THE COURSE

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the Faculty of the Graduate School  
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Doctor of Education

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by  
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HADDOCK STORIES OF RURAL K-12 MUSIC TEACHERS

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A NARRATIVE OF K-12 RURAL TENURED MUSIC TEACHERS:  
STORIES OF THOSE WHO STAY THE COURSE

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## HADDOCK STORIES OF RURAL K-12 MUSIC TEACHERS

### **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband, my daughter, and my son. In countless ways, you continually inspire and encourage me with a perfect mix of wisdom and humor. The gratitude I have for each of you overwhelms my soul. I love you.

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To every student, teacher, and administrator with whom I have walked the same school halls, thank you for shaping me. Special thanks to the participants of this study, your positivity and love of your students is a joy to behold. To the members of Cohort 11, you have changed me for the better, thank you. To all of my family, thank you for your listening ears and the love you freely give, I love you. To my dad through living out your love of teaching high school and to my father-in-law for inquiring of my research in our last conversation, I am thankful for your contributions that outlasted your earthly breath.

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**Abstract**

This qualitative study examined the stories of tenured rural K-12 music teachers in northwest Missouri. The study sought to determine the reasons tenured teachers remain in rural public settings. Guided by the conceptual underpinnings of retention, rural education, and rural music education, the researcher conducted interviews with teachers and administrators, analyzed documents, and analyzed field notes collected from the six school district building sites employing the participants.

Completed research helped to identify three emerging themes: (a) scheduling, (b) administration, and (c) culture. The six participating music teachers agreed the frustrations associated with scheduling could be overcome when transparent communication with administration was coupled with continual student rapport building over time. Recommendations for rural administrators, professors of pre-service music teachers at institutions of higher education, and implications for future research relevant in rural music education settings were included.

## SECTION ONE

Rural K-12 music teachers commonly have faced wide-ranging course preparation demands and difficulty creating balanced large ensembles (Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005). Such demands on rural music teaching positions have resulted in a high turnover rate (Bates, 2011). This research provides data to aid in a better understanding of the similarities between stories of tenured rural northwest Missouri music teachers. A clearer awareness of the positive phenomena of why tenured teachers have remained in rural settings was reached through first locating rural tenured teachers in northwest Missouri, followed by conducting interviews with willing participants, and finally, by analyzing transcripts and school webpages. This analysis includes interview data from volunteer participants who were tenured, K-12 rural music teachers who have self-selected to stay, along with interview data from participants' principals. This interview data from school districts who have employed tenured music teachers was triangulated with a document analysis of each school district website, and superintendent email interview data. The resulting findings encompassed the compilation of stories as told by retained rural music teachers a gap in the current literature. Conclusions from this research provided useful data for rural administrators who supervise music staff, scholars who continue to study the phenomenon of rural music teacher retention, and institutions of higher education preparing preservice music teachers.

### **Background of Music Education in the United States**

Music education has involved pre-kindergarten through high school music curriculum as addressed by the National Standards of Music developed by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) (NAfME, 2019). The topics addressed in

these standards included but were not limited to creating, performing, and responding to music (NAfME, 2019). Music teachers use the standards to measure student growth in the knowledge of music history, theory, and the practice of music making (NAfME, 2019). To better understand the value and orientation of these standards it was important to be aware of the background of the National Association for Music Teachers a national organization of music teachers (Mark & Gary, 2007).

The National Association for Music Teachers was developed in 1876 to help unite music teachers across the country and to encourage an exchange of ideas and brotherhood among its members (Mark & Gary, 2007). As this organization continued to grow during the late 1880's, the tradition of students providing live musical performances during meetings became established (Mark & Gary, 2007). Another product of the meetings was the establishment of a standardized certification process for music teachers (Mark & Gary, 2007). The National Education Association (NEA) established organizations within its association that helped to encourage sectors of music education, such as the Department of Vocal Music (Mark & Gary, 2007). During the 1970's, when the NEA took on the role of a labor union, the organization that was then titled Music Educators National Conference (MENC) moved from the family of the NEA's organizations to one of its own (Mark & Gary, 2007). Even though this change occurred, the NEA continued to support music education in the following decades by using their leverage to encourage school boards to hire music teachers and to help create preparation time for regular classroom teachers (NEA, 2019). Today MENC has been referred to as the National Association for Music Education (NAfME, 2019).

Isbell (2005) attributed musical festivals as being connected to the credibility of music education due to the tradition of these festivals. Music festivals enriched the lives of students in ways that could not be accomplished by directors alone (Isbell, 2005). Music education in the United States as further concluded by Isbell (2005) must have considered the needs of rural students. Rural music education settings tended to lack private teachers who may have coached students to more advanced skills, such as intonation and articulation skills, expected from students participating in music festivals (Isbell, 2005). Students living in rural settings who came from low-income families and were unable to afford quality instruments or music lessons had additional challenges (Bates, 2011). Music festival organization and regulation is a primary task of music education associations across the state of Missouri. In the next section, the continuation of the background of music education was further addressed through the lens of music associations in the state of Missouri as there has been a lack of literature regarding the stories of tenured rural music teachers in northwest Missouri.

### **Missouri Music Education Associations**

Music education associations in Missouri have guided and supported various professional aspects of music education such as vocal, instrumental, and elementary methods (Missouri Music Educators Association, 2019). The Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA) works in conjunction with NAfME to provide local support connecting teachers and their students across the state through district and state-wide meetings and conventions (MMEA, 2019). Rural Missouri educators recognized the need for rural students to be considered by organizations that governed educational opportunities (Byun, Meece & Irvin, 2012). In agreement with Byun et.al (2012), Brobst

(1938) found that rural settings needed to be included as part of NAfME's motto of "music for every child and have every child for music" (p. 23).

One finding regarding NAfME's motto was based around the challenges of rural Missouri music teachers in the first half of the 20th century, who fought for their students to have music education available to them (Brobst, 1938; Burmeister, 1955; Reimer, 1965; Rice, 1954). Many music teachers agreed with Brobst(1938) who stressed the importance of including rural schools in music education, "We must look to the rural school as being one portion of our national musical life which, in many respects, has been sadly neglected" (Brobst, 1938, p. 23). Burmeister (1955) also supported Brobst's findings that the NAfME motto must be used as a guide for evaluating music education practices. Burmeister's (1955) quantitative research of Missouri citizens from a wide range of community sizes overwhelmingly concluded that citizens felt that participation in music should have been open to all interested students. Meeting the demands of music education across the state, as supported by Brumeister's (1955) findings, has been challenging in rural Missouri settings where teacher retention often has been unsuccessful.

**Retention of rural Missouri music educators.** Teacher retention has involved the process of school offerings to renew teachers' contract and the teachers' decision to return before retirement (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, Darling-Hammond, 2016). According to the Missouri National Education Association, (MNEA), a teacher receives tenure in a K-12 Missouri school when approved by the school board for a sixth consecutive contract in their same district (MNEA, 2019). According to Podolsky et al. (2016), teachers who leave a position can be put into the following three categories: (a) relocation, (b)

changing of teaching emphasis, or (c) a complete abandonment from teaching. One teacher demographic used to describe those who left versus those who remain was teacher preparation (Podolsky et al., 2016). The preparation of rural K-12 Missouri music positions has demanded that teachers who applied must have proficiency in all areas of music as stated by the National Standards (Bates, 2011; NAfME, 2019). The relation of the retention of teachers who were proficient in teaching the National Standards is addressed next through the topic of student achievement.

The retention of rural Missouri music teachers, specifically, has not been addressed in recent literature. However, teacher retention in general has been linked to student achievement by (Podolsky, et al.'s (2019). Podolsky et. al (2019) findings include the results of a search for research articles written between 2003 and 2016 that link "student achievement with teacher experience" (p. 289). This search resulted in hundreds of references (Podolsky et al., 2019). More specifically, Ladd and Sorensen's (2017) findings support the idea that teacher experience not only contributes to higher standardized test scores but also in improved student behavior and higher attendance rates. Although a dated article, Riemer (1965) found that K-12 rural music teachers must maintain curriculum that was well aligned to the National Standards from grade to grade. Although the aforementioned heavy workload poses great challenges for the K-12 music teacher, Bates (2011) observed other variables that caused some to remain. One finding of Bates (2011) concluded that rural music teachers may have remained because of the small class sizes that allow for deeper understandings of students' interests and abilities. Therefore, tenured teachers who have had more time with students, may have built stronger relationships as they incorporate students' needs and interests into the

curriculum (Schein, 1992). This type of individual consideration in curriculum development would not be possible for a first-year probationary teacher (Schein, 1992).

More recently, according to Hughes (2012) there were conflicting findings regarding the enrollment number of schools and the retainment of teachers. Rural schools with fewer students have been found to have higher teacher turnover than similarly sized urban schools (Hughes, 2012). One reason for this rate of turnover was explained by Sawchuk (2018) who concluded that administrative support was vital in pairing teachers in small communities, “Because schools in such places are often the social center of the community” (para. 42). One of Sawchuk’s (2018) final conclusions regarding rural teacher retention found that it was important for administrators to be sensitive to the specific needs of each teacher rather than expecting one factor such as salary or workload to be the solution for retaining all teachers. While there was limited literature regarding the retention of rural music teachers, Hancock (2016) concluded that a lack of administrative support was a contributing factor for why music teachers in general transfer from one position to another. Schein (1992) further emphasized that it takes time to integrate oneself into the culture of communities. There was a gap in the research informing schools about why music teachers stay in rural positions long enough to impact culture. The untold stories of rural tenured music teachers had yet to be told and was an important factor for researchers and practitioners alike.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There was a lack of literature illustrating why rural K-12 music teachers stay in their rural school placements. These rural teachers teach both elementary and high school ages, currently the literature contains research and theories on music teacher retention for

elementary and secondary teaching experiences as two separate positions (Hancock, 2008; Lindman, 2004). Moreover, while Give a Note Foundation (2017) set out to better understand the status of music education the findings failed to include direct quotes from current teachers in rural K-12 music settings. Ingersoll (2001) established that first-year teachers were most likely to leave the profession in the first 5 years. While Isbell (2005) and Podolsky et al. (2016) both stress the importance rural administrators played in the retention of music teachers, Brobst (1938) further emphasized the importance of considering the needs of rural schools in music education. The warning to not neglect rural music education as per Brobst's (1938) findings is supported by Spring (2013) who agrees that there was a lack of research regarding the specific stories of rural music teachers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to inform scholars and practitioners of the shared experiences of tenured rural K-12 music teachers in the northwest region of Missouri. This research sought to find any emerging connections between the attributes of teachers, administrators, and the commonalities of school districts who have secured tenured music teachers in rural settings in northwest Missouri. This research further informed scholars from institutions of higher education of the types of preservice music teachers that will find satisfaction in rural settings long-term. Additionally, this research informed administrators in rural settings of supportive practices rural tenured music teachers have experienced from administration. Educators seeking to support tenured music staff in rural settings benefited from the qualitative interview data with K-12 rural northwest Missouri tenured music teachers found in this research. The data analysis informed

administrators, teachers, and scholars seeking to implement like methods in similar school settings.

### **Research Question**

This bounded multi-case study uses qualitative methods of research to study tenured rural K-12 northwest Missouri music teachers. There is a lack of research addressing the stories of rural tenured music teachers in northwest Missouri. The overarching question guiding this study is: What are the stories of K-12 tenured northwest Missouri music teachers who remain in the rural setting?

### **Conceptual Underpinnings**

Teacher retention, rural education, and rural music education were the conceptual underpinnings for the determination of the study's design and provided an interpretive lens to view the data.

#### **Teacher Retention**

Teacher retention encompasses both the offering of a renewed contract and the signing and return of a teacher to their previous position before retirement (Podolsky et al., 2016). The 2002 passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) required states to create policies that ensured schools had 100% highly qualified teachers by 2005-2006 (NCLB, 2002). During this time, to be a highly qualified teacher, educators were required to have a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution and had to pass a rigorous state test (NCLB, 2002). This act forced schools to track teacher certification making paperwork easier when retaining a teacher than for a new hire (NCLB, 2002). While new emphasis in policies have been less focused on teacher retention, Bland, Church, and Luo (2014), maintain that salary and location continued to be key factors in teacher retention,

while Boyd et al. (2011) concluded teachers were looking for settings that were familiar or like home.

Another lens of teacher retention was provided by Ronfeldt, Loeb, and Wyckoff, (2013) who researched the impact of high teacher turnover on student achievement. Podolsky et al. (2016) wrote a comprehensive review of teacher recruitment and retention and cited school leadership as a factor that influenced teachers' decisions to stay in the field. School districts with higher salaries were more successful in retaining teachers than those with similar demographics that offered comparatively lower salaries (Podolsky et al, 2016). Boyd et al. (2011) concluded that high teacher turnover was expensive for the local school districts as it costed more to hire new teacher than to retain teachers.

Gu and Day (2013) and Chiong, Menzies, and Paramesharan (2017) found that the struggle to retain a teacher was not only costly, but that it required a set of strong character traits, such as altruism and resilience. The process of receiving certification required a certain amount of resilience as pointed out by Darling-Hammond, Chung, R., and Frelow (2002), who made comparisons of teacher pathways to certification. There has been a lack in this type of resilience as is evidenced by the DESE (2019) Teacher Shortage Report. The December Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019) Teacher Shortage Report lists K-12 Instrumental as one of the content areas with a severe shortage of qualified full-time equivalency teachers. This report supported the notion that tenured music teachers have valuable stories (MODESE, 2019). While many studies have been conducted about teacher retention, there has been lack of research to understand why tenured, rural K-12 music teachers were retained.

## Rural Education

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), rural and remote school districts were more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and were also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster (NCES, 2013). Sher (2019) outlined various challenges facing education in rural settings in the United States and other similar highly urbanized nations in the world. Additionally, Sher (2019) found rural education often to include a shared sense of community. This sense of community is not without challenges as top administrators in sparsely populated settings frequently face issues that force them to consider school consolidation or closure (Sher, 2019). At the same time, Bauch (2001) agreed that student success could have been attributed to the rural students' deep sense of community that was found in these less populated settings. Other positive factors attributed to rural settings included positive school culture, active student to teacher engagement, healthy community to school bonding, and low dropout rates (Bauch, 2001). In the state of Missouri there was an abundance of schools that were considered rural (Missouri Association of Rural Education, 2019). Although research from Bauch (2001) has shown settings like these remote Missouri districts to often have positive school cultures, there has been pressure from state legislatures to consolidate rural schools to conserve funds (MARE, 2019).

***Rural Music Education.*** Building upon the refined notion of rural education in the state of Missouri, researchers have viewed the topic through the lens of the various content areas taught. The content of music education and more specifically performing in bands and choirs provided students with a sense of the world view outside of themselves (Kratus, 2019). While preparing to perform in these ensembles, students found meaning

through finding success when serving the greater good of the group (Kratus, 2019). At the same time, music education also helped students to develop a sense of independence and self-confidence, along with the character traits of cooperation and collaboration (Hallam, Creech, & McQueen, 2017). Unfortunately, professional development for music teachers was found to be lacking in rural settings (Give a Note Foundation (GNF), 2017). This lack of music teacher development conflicts with the emphasis found in Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that stated the need for a well-rounded education that included the arts (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

More than 25 rural school districts in northwest Missouri employed one teacher to teach all levels and contents of the music curriculum on their own (DESE, 2019). When one teacher was the sole K-12 music teacher for a school district there was no one to collaborate with and therefore one must be proficient in teaching every level from kindergarten through high school seniors and in every genre, including elementary, vocal, and instrumental music. Even with the enactment of ESSA there has continued to be a gap addressing the specific needs of rural music teacher development.

### **Design of the Study**

This study was a bounded, qualitative, multi-case study of rural, tenured K-12 northwest Missouri music teachers during the 2019-2020 school year. A bounded multi-case study is one that considers connections of an entity that was limited to a certain geographic region with many local settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study included multiple rural schools in northwest Missouri with tenured music K-12 teachers who have volunteered to participate. It was important for the protection of the participants that Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval be met before interviews and

documents were explored (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking was part of the ethical practice used to remain transparent; the IRB agreed to this method. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained the importance of creating an audit trail through member checking as part of the data collection phase. Following the example of Merriam and Tisdell (2016), this research used data collection methods that included offering all participants to review interview transcripts before analysis. The qualitative analysis included the connecting of direct quotations from transcripts and detailed descriptions of school webpages to tell the stories of the tenured K-12 music teachers who remain in rural settings. These methods were supported by Creswell (2014) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016).

### **Setting**

The setting for this study was determined by geographic location and size of school participating. The Missouri State High School Activity Association (MSHSAA, 2019) has divided the music activity schools into 20 Districts. The geographic region in the northwest corner of Missouri was the location of Music Activity District 20 and includes 16 counties: Andrew, Atchison, Buchanan, Caldwell, Clinton, Daviees, Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Holt, Livingston, Mercer, Nodaway, Platte, and Worth (MSHSAA, 2019). The MSHSAA divided high schools into five different music activity classes as determined by the number of students enrolled in the district (MSHSAA, 2019). For the 2019-2020 school year Music Activity District 20 was made up of at least 51 schools, each of the five class sizes were represented within the school districts. Class I was allocated to schools that had one through 107 students enrolled in grades nine through 11 (MSHSAA, 2019). Creswell (2014) emphasized the importance of selecting a

representative sampling of participants to be studied. At 29, District 20 has the greatest number of Class I schools compared to the other 19 districts (MSHSAA, 2019). Four of the remaining districts have between 11 and 14 schools in Class I, while the remaining 15 districts contain seven or less schools in the Class I category. As indicated in Figure 1 District 20 in northwest Missouri has the densest amount of Class I schools. For this research, the use of the word rural was used to describe schools by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) as a remote rural territory or one that was distanced from urban centers (NCES, 2006) and was also considered a Class 1 District under MSHSAA's Music Activity categorization (MSHSAA, 2019).

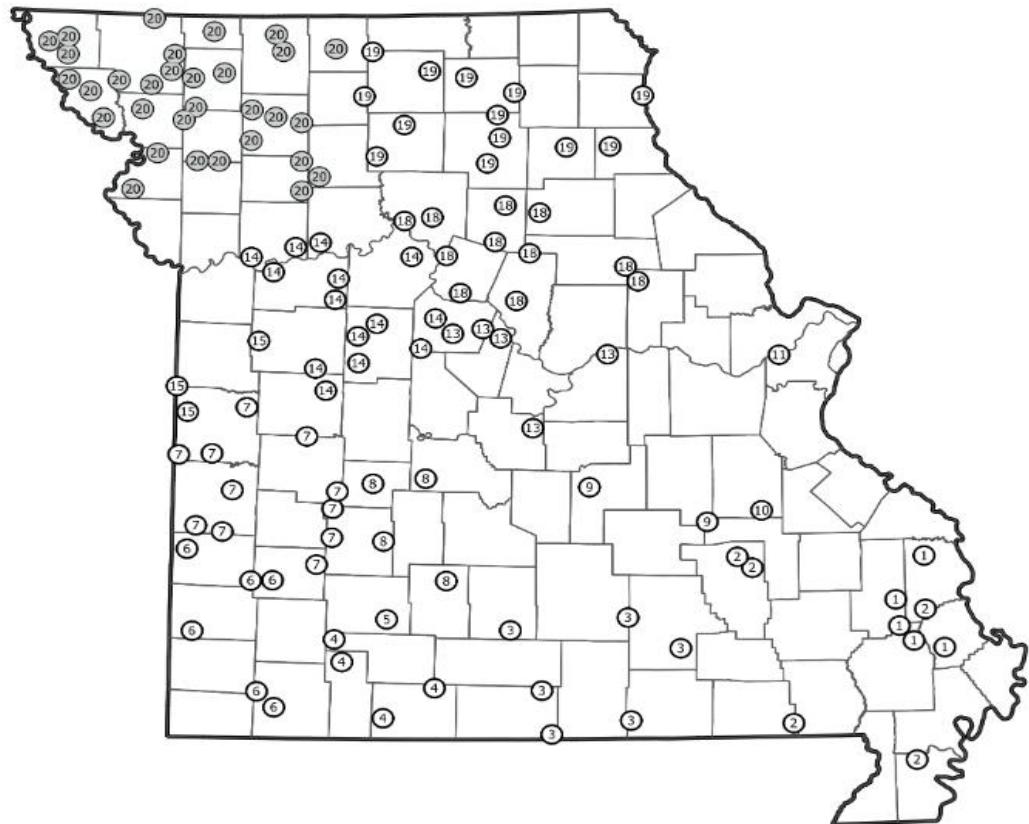


Figure 1. Number of Class 1 Schools by District Number (MSHSAA, 2019)

## Participants

The participants of this study who met the criteria of the three requirements: (a) tenured, (b) isolated K-12, and (c) located in a northwest rural Missouri were sent the recruitment email as shared in Appendix C. This e-mail explained the study and offered the opportunity to volunteer for interviews. The interviews lasted one hour or less and followed purposeful sampling, as outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). Next, the researcher read the scripted, oral Informed Consent Form (as seen in Appendix D). Two criteria were used to select music teachers, having tenure, and being employed by a Missouri rural school district in northwest Missouri. Northwest Missouri was defined by MSHSAA (2019) District 20, or MMEA (2019) Northwest District 1. Principals of the participating teachers were also interviewed; see Appendix B for interview question. Lastly, the participants' superintendents were asked questions via a focus group email that allowed all participants to see and to view all responses given (see Appendix E). As explained in Appendix E, by responding to the email the superintendent participants gave their informed consent.

According to the Missouri National Education Association (MNEA), upon receiving the sixth teaching contract in the same school district as a faculty member was determined to have received tenure status (MNEA, 2019). Tenure may have been acquired one year earlier for teachers who had taught in other districts for a specified length of time (MNEA, 2019). Part-time teachers may also have been be awarded tenure on a prorated basis (MNEA, 2019).

The data used in this research included interviews with teachers who had already met the determined criteria for tenure (MNEA, 2019). Additional interviews and e-mails

were set up with the participants' administrators. Using e-mails listed on school webpages the researcher contacted the music teachers at all the qualifying schools in northwest Missouri. Once it was determined if these teachers had tenure status, interviews were scheduled with six interested teachers and their administrators. Once all the interviews were completed, a focus group email was sent to all six participants' superintendents.

### **Data Collection**

This bounded, qualitative study followed the design outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and took into consideration the connections based on one limited geographic region with many local settings. The University of Missouri-Columbia IRB reviewed tools and methods used as an important practice in ethical research, such as being upfront with participants regarding the details of the research (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) warned against skewing results, allowing oneself to become a participant but instead clearly conveying the process used in selecting participants. In following Creswell's (2014) advice for this research, the sorting process was checked for areas of confirmation bias by a neutral researcher. A constant comparative analysis was used to help inform subsequent interview questions, which was a process informed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016). The constant comparative led the researcher to categorize participants' answers into broad themes. To further follow the advice of Creswell (2014), the use of pseudonyms was practiced to protect participants along with scheduling interviews at the convenience of the participants.

Once the rural schools in MSHSAA District 20, or MMEA District 1, with tenured K-12 music teachers were determined, each teacher was contacted for an

interview. Email addresses listed on each school's webpage were used to contact qualifying teachers to seek their willingness to volunteer for an interview. Purposeful sampling, as explained by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) involved analysis of collective data from various experts in the topic being studied. For this study, using purposeful sampling, participants were chosen based on having earned tenure as a rural music teacher teaching in the determined school districts. The following questions were used in the first teacher interview and adjusted when wording was unclear: (a) How long have you had tenure?, (b) What about your background has influenced your decision to remain in a rural setting?, (c) Have the reasons for your decision to remain been the same since your first year in this setting? Explain., (d) In considering each season of the year what are the specific academic challenges and rewards of the fall, winter, spring, and summer? (e)What and who are your biggest sources of encouragement and or discouragement throughout each day? Throughout each season? (f) What would you suggest to a school district struggling to retain a rural K-12 music teacher? (g) How do various sources of encouragement influence your decision to remain in a rural setting? (See Appendix A.)

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasized the need for trustworthiness. The document analysis included the deriving of social meaning from recorded contextual details as observed both of which aided in the creation of trustworthy data. Through rich descriptions from the document analysis, along with the use of direct quotations from the interviews and the e-mail interviews, themes were determined. Interviews with teachers and administrators, focus group with the superintendent, and the document analysis of school webpages provided additional data. Interviews were acquired at each school site.

The interviews lasted no more than one hour, and questions asked were included in Appendices A and B.

### ***Semi-Structured Questioning***

Interviews were conducted with participating music teachers using semi-structured questions. Interviews with the teacher's principals involved a semi-structured questioning method that included a combination of both structured and flexible questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Open-ended questions (See Appendix A) allowed for flexibility in the participants' answers (Seidman, 2013). Questions with the principals were semi-structured, open-ended, and probing to discover the stories of why teachers decide to remain in the district (see Appendix B).

Adding to the data were the responses of the superintendents regarding the threaded discussion e-mail sent to all as a group with open-ended questions as seen in Appendix E. Appendix E contained the email sent to all the superintendents whose tenured K-12 music teacher and principal were interviewed. As stated in the email, by responding to one or all emailed questions, or by responding to other participants permission was granted and could be used in the data analysis. The use of a threaded discussion focus group was supported by Krueger and Casey (2015) who reported the importance of flexibility in academic focus groups. In designing the logistics of a focus group, it was important to consider the needs of the participants, and the flexibility of the online location gave participants time and maximized the likelihood of responses (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Triangulation required at least three data sources to justify emerging themes (Creswell, 2014). Teacher interviews, principal interviews, superintendent focus group e-

mail, field notes, and document analysis data were analyzed until saturation as defined by Creswell (2014) as, “fresh [qualitative] data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties” (p. 248).

### **Data Analysis**

Open axial coding involved sorting and grouping assigned pieces of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Constant comparative and open axial coding were used to inform subsequent interview questions and interview data analysis (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) recommends taking various approaches to coding the data “into chunks or segments of texts” (p. 241). Volunteer participants were asked for permission to record interviews. These interviews were transcribed verbatim using Trint.com software. As recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), member checking was utilized by contacting participants via email to provide an opportunity to check for accuracy. Commonalities in the teachers’ backgrounds based on the interview results informed the development of the questions. Coding and analysis formulated during data collection included the use of rich descriptions, as discussed by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), as the descriptions were collected from teacher interview transcripts, principal interview transcripts, superintendent emails, document analysis, and the second literature review.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), it required reviews of the data to ensure a valid coding process. Saturation of ideas exposed through triangulation was achieved in the analysis of data from teacher interview, principal interviews, superintendent emails, and document analysis of school documents. This triangulation utilized thematic coding. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) indicated that the use of triangulation provided analysis that

results in trustworthy conclusions potentially transferable to other rural schools in the northwest region of Missouri.

### **Design Controls**

Creswell (2014) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) pointed out that when researchers were members of the respondent group being studied, the avoidance of confirmation bias needed to be taken into consideration. Informing the study of the potential for bias was important, therefore transparency regarding the experience of the position of the researcher was a vital part of the design of this study. A researcher from outside of the field of rural music education was asked to check for potential bias that may have occurred as the interviewer was an insider to rural music education. This type of checking for confirmation bias was an example of what Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained as a factor of all research and was not to be eliminated. Instead, data analysis should have been informed of potential biases, and the researcher needed to “monitor them” (p. 16). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also explained that as an “insider” (p. 13) it was important the interviewer did not foster any preferences regarding the respondents’ answers. Bias an important factor to clarify therefore the researcher needs to continue to reflect on the conceptual underpinnings of the study rather than any established prior beliefs (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). During the analysis, the data was checked for confirmation bias by noting verbatim how each participant answered the questions and by not inserting any preconceived ideas or opinions. Data collection from one regional setting was one limitation of this research. The transferability of applying results from one setting to all rural educational music settings was an assumption of this research.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

This study utilized terminology specific to rural music teaching. The following terms were defined for clarification purposes.

*Band:* A performance group consisting of wind and percussion instruments under the direction of a conductor, the MSHSAA 2019-20 Music Manual used the term “large instrumental ensemble” (MSHSAA, 2019, p. 6).

*Choir:* A vocal performance group under the direction of a conductor, the MSHSAA 2019-20 Music Manual uses the term “large vocal ensemble” (MSHSAA, 2019, p. 6).

*Class I:* Missouri schools with total enrollment for ninth through 11<sup>th</sup> grades falling between one to 107 students (MSHSAA, 2019).

*K-12 Music Teacher:* Sole music teacher for the district.

*MARE:* Missouri Association of Rural Education Association (MARE, 2019).

*MMEA:* Missouri Music Educators Association the state level of NAfME (MMEA, 2019).

*MNEA:* Missouri National Education Association (MNEA, 2019).

*MSSBDA:* Missouri Small School Band Directors Association (MSSBDA, 2020).

*MSHSAA:* Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA, 2019).

*MSBA:* Missouri School Board Association (MSBA, 2019).

*MSTA:* Missouri Schools Teacher Association (MSTA, 2019).

*MENC:* Music Educations National Conference the former name of NAfME (MENC, 2019).

*Music Festivals:* Evaluative festivals in band, orchestra and vocal music are organized for solos and ensembles as approved by MSHSAA. Trained adjudicators, often retired music teachers, evaluated the events from each participating school (MSHSAA, 2019).

*NAfME:* National Association for Music Educators the national level of MMEA (MMEA, 2019).

*Probationary Teachers:* Non-tenured teachers (MODESE, 2019).

*Public School:* A school financially supported by taxes levied for community purposes.

*Rural School District:* School districts with *Class I* Music Activity School high schools, as assigned by MSHSAA (2019). The MSHSAA (2019) Music Activity Class 1 high schools had an enrollment between one and 107 students in grades nine, 10, and 11, and were considered rural remote settings as defined by NCES (2013). Rural remote settings are a set distance from urban centers (NCES, 2013).

*Rural Music Teacher:* Music teachers who prepared and taught a wide variety of music curriculum rather than focusing on one specialty, such as elementary, band, or chorus (Isbell, 2005).

*Tenured Teacher:* Teachers approved by their school boards for a sixth consecutive contract in the same district or one year earlier for teachers who have taught in other districts for a specified length of time. Part-time teachers may also have been awarded tenure on a prorated basis (MNEA, 2019).

### **Significance of the Study**

The impact of this research was significant in both scholarship and practice. The resulting data will increase scholarship for rural music teachers in need of supportive practices. Helpful administrative practices that have been observed in settings with tenured K-12 districts may have been transferred to similar settings, while also giving insights to those at universities preparing students in teacher preparation programs. Importantly, the impact of teacher retention has been linked to student achievement in both raising test scores and developing better student behavior (Ladd & Sorensen, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2019). While these findings were not focused on the retention of rural music teacher specifically, there was literature supporting the idea that music education is an important content for overall student development. For example, students enrolled in music education had not only been impacted by the content, but also had developed character traits, such as organization, perseverance, motivation, and cooperation (Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2017; Kratus, 2019).

### **Scholarship**

The increased data regarding the stories of tenured rural music teachers impacted scholarly literature. The stories of music teachers who remained in rural settings for long-term periods benefited students from other school districts seeking similar staffing continuity. This data resulted in supportive measures that may have been incorporated by rural school administrators to support music staff. The provisions incorporated by rural administrators may have led to an increase in long-term music teacher placements.

### **Practice**

This research provided insights for rural administrators who had experienced frequent music teacher turnover. Administrators may have gained a better understanding of how to support future hires. In the researcher's institution, the concluded data may have provided insights on how to better support the students performing in yearly festivals. Students who participated in high school band or choir classes have an increased awareness of perseverance in contributing to the greater good of the group (Kratus, 2019). Johnson (2018) stressed the importance of teaching students to include marginalized population groups. In rural northwest Missouri settings, at first glance, the populations appeared to have little variety. Due to the lack of diversity in rural settings, the importance of supporting music students who participated in high school choirs and band was vital as this content supported the idea of viewing the contribution of the individual to the greater good of the group (Kratus, 2019).

### **Summary**

From the first half of the 20th century until present times, rural music education has experienced growth. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, a clear direction of growth was prescribed by rural music research (Brobst, 1938; Burmeister, 1955; Reimer, 1965; Rice, 1954). Although there was not much recent literature on rural music education, Hallam et al. (2017) along with Kratus (2019, maintained that music education contributed to the development of students' character and worldview. Teachers who remain in the same setting for more than a year had more time to build relationships with students than those who only stayed for one year. Music teachers who remained long enough to receive tenure had stories to share that may have provided insights into what

has led them to remain in rural settings. The sharing of the connections between stories from one location to another was transferable to other similar settings. These connections increased understanding of how to improve the retention of rural K-12 music teachers. In the following two sections, the setting of this research, along with review of related literature will be presented.

## **SECTION TWO: Practitioner Setting for the Study**

### **Introduction**

The geographic location of the research area used in this study was northwest Missouri. Socially and culturally the schools studied in this area were defined as rural, as they are not urban or suburban (U.S. Department of Commerce, 1992). Researching tenured K-12 music teachers' stories and why they remain in rural northwest Missouri was valuable. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) point out that qualitative data adds explanation to the meaning behind the numbers. While quantitatively the retention of rural music teachers was not high, choosing to collect stories of those who stayed provided insight for scholars who studied the phenomena of practitioners in the field. The history of the organization began with clarifying the definition of rural school.

### **Rural Public School Defined**

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) used four categories to classify schools' closeness to an urban center: city, suburban, town, and rural (U.S. Department of Ed, 2016). Rural schools were those defined as "nonurban, found in less dense, sparsely populated, not built up and at a distance" (Ratcliffe, Burd, Holder, & Fields, 2016, p. 4). Public schools were those that received public funds. For the purposes of this research, rural public schools were further narrowed down to include the MSHSAA Music Activity Class I school districts in northwest Missouri (MSHSAA, 2019; MMEA, 2019). The determination of what districts were included was based on the region of Music Activity District 20, as defined by MSHSAA (2019) and the region of Northwest District 1 as defined by MMEA (2019). The following Missouri counties were included in this research: Andrew, Atchison, Buchanan, Caldwell, Clinton, Daviess,

Gentry, Grundy, Harrison, Holt, Livingston, Mercer, Nodaway, Platte, and Worth (MSHSAA, 2019). Furthermore, the term rural used in this study was limited to schools classified as MSHSAA Music Activity Class I (MSHSAA, 2019). MSHSAA Class I Music Activity schools are those with between one and 107 students in grades nine, 10, and 11 (MSHSAA, 2019). In the following section, Bolman and Deal's (2013) method of organizational analysis was used as a tool to explore the impact of three groups on rural music education through their histories in Missouri.

### **Historical Background**

To provide understanding of the setting of the study, three organizations that impacted rural music teachers was analyzed. To begin, a historical background of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MODESE) was included, followed by specific policies and programs currently administrated by the state of Missouri (MODESE, 2019). Next, an organizational analysis, which was presented by Bolman and Deal (2013), was utilized to explore two groups that largely impacted music education in Missouri. The first organization to be analyzed was the Missouri High School Activity Association (MHSAA, 2019) followed by the Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA) as part of NAfME (MSHSAA, 2019; MMEA, 2019; NAfME, 2019). To begin, a summary of the history of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education followed, starting with the United States and then moving to the State of Missouri.

### **Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**

The 1791 United States Bill of Rights made no mention of education, therefore establishing, in accordance with the 10<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the government's role in schooling

to be a function of the state L WVUS (2011). Furthermore, the 1868 14th Amendment under the U.S. Constitution established that no state may “deprive any person of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law” (US Const. Amend. XIV, 1868, sec. 1). The absence of the mention of education in 14th Amendment, along with the details regarding the protection of U.S. citizens’ rights, determined that state and local governments should control education while at the same time, states were not permitted to neglect the education of citizens (L WVUS, 2011).

The 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), in alignment with the 14th amendment’s parameters, established a form of accountability for states by mandating that local government “fund(s) primary and secondary education, while explicitly forbidding the establishment of a national curriculum. As mandated in the Act, the funds are authorized for professional development, instructional materials and resources to support educational programs and parental involvement promotion” (L WVUS, 2011, para. 12).

Two years following the enactment of ESEA, the Office of Education was created with the purpose to collect data on schools and teaching (L WVUS, 2011). Later in 1980, the United States Congress elevated the Office of Education to a Cabinet level agency, creating the current Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) (L WVUS, 2011). The state of Missouri DESE must have followed the functions required of MO DESE, and, thus, has had an office for the reporting of data of each school district within the state boundary (DESE, 2019). In the next section, specific Missouri reporting policies will be presented.

Missouri DESE has tracked school competency through their Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) (DESE, 2019). The MSIP included a list of standards of which each school was held to by the state as part of the process of accreditation decreed by the State Board of Education (MODESE, 2019). The Department (2019) documented each district's accreditation status in the Annual Performance Report (APR). The DESE further requires schools to distinguish between probationary and permanent teachers in their evaluations of teachers, as was discussed further below.

The Law of Missouri, as referenced by Missouri State Teacher Association (MSTA) (2019), outlined teacher tenure and how was to be regulated to ensure each school uses equal measures within the state of Missouri. Schools were required to tenure to full-time teachers as their sixth consecutive contract (MSTA, 2019). School administrators and school boards had fewer formalities in renewing the contracts of tenured teachers and thus the process to rehire them was more streamlined than that of probationary or non-tenured teachers (MSBA, 2019).

While MODESE (2019) did not require schools to report the number of teachers with tenure, in 2019, DESE implemented the Educator Workforce Outreach Plan that included the collection of survey data from school administrators (MODESE, 2019). The 2019 Teacher Shortage Report, as published by DESE (2019) included the mention of K-12 Instrumental music positions as a content area with common vacancies. While a list of tenured K-12 instrumental music positions was not available on DESE, the mention of this content area in the list of shortages outlined the need for growth in the number of tenured K-12 music teachers. The importance of teacher tenure was further shown by the word choice used in MODESE's Summative Evaluation forms that distinguished whether

teachers were probationary or permanent (MODESE, 2019). On DESE's Summative Evaluation form tenured teachers were referred to as permanent. This positive qualifier was an important distinction when considering content areas, such as K-12 Instrumental Music, where DESE (2019) found teacher shortages to be common. In the following section, the need of state level reporting combined with the research topic of music education was presented. An analysis of two organizations that regulated and supported music education in Missouri also ensued.

### **Organizational Analysis**

The following two sections included details surrounding the history and organization of the Missouri State High School Association (MSHSAA) and the Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA). The MMEA's role was to provide support and collaborative opportunities to music educators and their students from preschool through higher education (MMEA, 2019). The MSHSAA's role of monitoring guidelines and services for sports and activities, including music, across the state of Missouri, was not available to those serving in higher education (MSHSAA, 2019). In the next section a brief history of MSHSAA was presented.

### **Missouri State High School Activity Association**

In 1825, the Missouri General Assembly passed a law that gave the county courts control of the schools in each township (Missouri Office Secretary of State, 2007). Cooper and Howard counties, two rural counties in Missouri, also had established schools during this time (Missouri Office Secretary of State, 2007). The number of public schools increased from 48,000 in 1867 to 75,000 in 1870. In 1925, Missouri high schools had grown to the point of needing state-wide regulation of activities, which led to the

establishment of the Missouri State High School Athletic Association (MSHSAA, 2019).

In 1949, the name of the organization was changed from Athletics to Activities, and, with this change, the inclusion of music began (MSHSAA, 2019).

Bolman and Deal's (2013) method of organizational analysis incorporated the determining of the make-up of a group's structural frame. One focus of the structural frame was defining how the goals of organizations served their members (Bolman and Deal, 2013). A primary goal of MSHSAA has been to supply schools with catastrophic insurance coverage for their participating students. Another objective for joining was found in the following MSHSAA's (2019) mission statement: "MSHSAA promotes the value of participation, sportsmanship, team play, and personal excellence to develop citizens who make positive contributions to their community and support the democratic principles of our state and nation" (p. 17).

The 2019-2020 MSHSAA Handbook listed 10 board members and 19 staff members (MSHSAA, 2019). The human resource frame was a lens of Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational analysis. One faction of the human resource frame was understanding the strengths of its staff and members (Bolman & Deal, 2013). One staff member, a former music educator, held the title of assistant executive director to oversee music, volleyball, spirit, foreign exchange, eligibility, and event sanctions (MSHSAA, 2019). As noted in Figure 2, this MSHSAA staff member also was assigned to the MMEA Advisory Council (MMEA, 2019; MSHSAA, 2019).

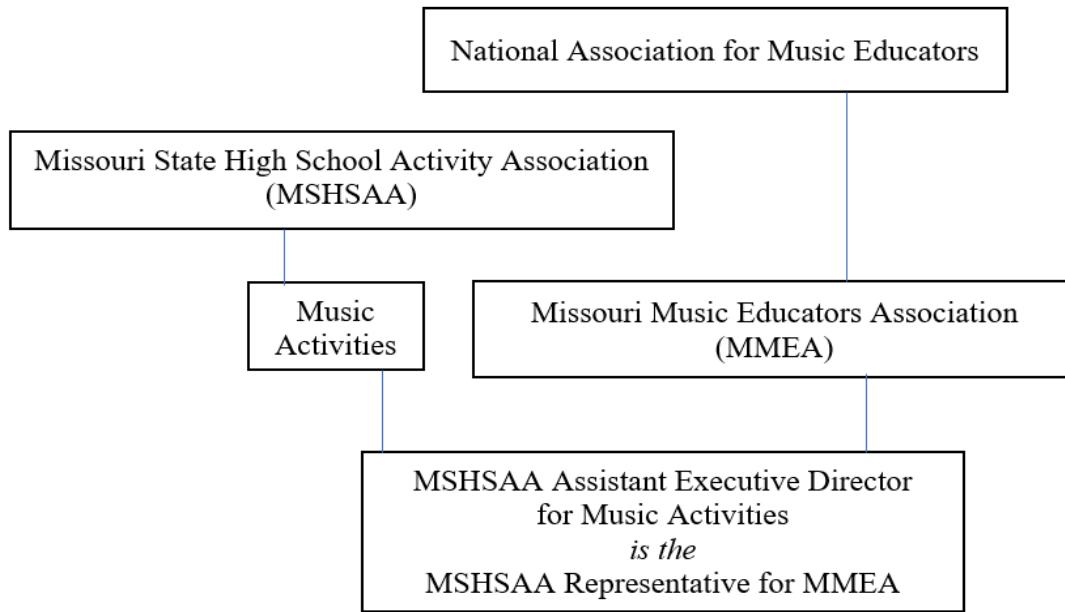


Figure 2. Organizational Chart connecting MSHSAA and MMEA (MMEA, 2019; MSHSAA, 2019)

The overlapping use of staff in these two organizations was structured to serve the needs of individuals and may have been viewed as part of the human resource frame, as outlined by Bolman and Deal (2013). As illustrated by the development of the Missouri Small Schools Band Directors Association (MSSBDA), at times, this structure fell short in serving the needs of rural music (MSSBDA, 2019). The 2016 ruling made by MSHSAA stated large instrumental ensembles must include at least 50% ninth through 12th graders (MSHSAA, 2019). With the enactment of this rule, large instrumental ensembles that did not meet this requirement were no longer allowed to perform at the state music festival (MSHSAA, 2019). The implementation of this rule resulted in teachers from rural schools without a festival to attend which caused the teachers to come together to discuss possibilities for the future (MSSBDA, 2020). The discussion of possibilities laid the foundation of MSSBDA, which currently organized festivals across

the state (MSSBDA, 2020). Festivals that did not adhere to the MSHSAA 50% ruling (MSSBDA, 2020). The MMEA was a music education organization in the state of Missouri that encouraged collaborations, such as the forming of MSSBDA. As a branch of the National Association of Music Educators (NAfME), the MMEA supplies a variety of assistance to music educators who taught students from early elementary through higher education.

### **Missouri Music Educators Association**

A Missouri music educator seeking membership in Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA) first paid their annual dues to the National Association for Music Educators (NAfME) (MMEA, 2019; NAfME, 2019). The dues required for joining NAfME enrolled Missouri music educators into the MMEA (NAfME, 2019; MMEA, 2019). Once enrolled, the benefits of both the national and state organizations were comprehensive. According to the MMEA website: “Missouri Music Educators Association is a federated association of the NAfME: The National Association for Music Education which includes nearly 80,000 Music Educators dedicated to providing a comprehensive, well-balanced, sequential, and quality education to every child in America” (MMEA, 2019, para. 1).

Bolman and Deal’s (2013) symbolic frame was applied to the MMEA organization, as each year music educators and their students from across the state gathered at the annual conference, where among the many resources provided, workshops were held that involve educators and their students making music together (MMEA, 2019). This time of sharing the passion of teaching and enjoying music together was an example of what Bolman and Deal (2013) described as developing a culture through

shared interests. The success of the workshop, exhibits, meetings and performance held during this annual event would not have been successful and far reaching without the supporting structure of the organization (MMEA, 2019).

Bolman and Deal (2013) described the structural frame as one that was strengthened when organizations provided places for collaboration and networking. In agreement with Bolman and Deal's (2013) conclusions regarding the structural frame, the MMEA provided music educators with times and places to collaborate and network. The MMEA provided support to members in their collective and individual goals as educators (MMEA, 2019). The organization of MMEA, as viewed through the structural frame, followed Bolman and Deal's (2013) advice of strengthening the architecture of the group by assigning roles according to the members' responsibilities, positions, and goals within the group. The MMEA tasks were distributed into various music content areas, such as (a) elementary, (b) vocal, (c) instrumental, and (d) higher education (MMEA, 2019). This division of assignments continued locally within each MMEA geographic region where each had their own presidents and officers assigned to the specific needs, such as vocal and instrumental groups (MMEA, 2019).

The MMEA was divided into 11 geographic districts (MMEA, 2019). These geographic districts each served music educators in the following seven divisions: (a) Band, (b) Choral, (c) Elementary, (d) General Music, (e) Jazz, (f) Orchestra, and (g) College/University. The local districts within MMEA allowed teachers who were teaching music in the same geographic region of the state to meet. Each year, during the MMEA annual workshop, the agenda included a time when all 11 geographic districts held their business meetings simultaneously (MMEA, 2019). These meetings were held

during a timeslot that had no conflicting events scheduled. The agendas of these meetings include each district's members, nominating and voting on their local officers.

Additionally, locally governed policies and upcoming area events were discussed (MMEA, 2019).

Similarly to the structure of MSHSAA, the leadership of MMEA was well-defined and included a president, president-elect, past-president, seven vice-presidents (one for each of the seven divisions listed above), 11 district presidents (one for each geographic district listed above), 15 members of the advisory council (one of these, as stated earlier, was the named Assistant Executive Director for music employed by MSHSAA), four affiliate organization representatives (one each for band, orchestra, strings, and jazz), and six MMEA administrative personnel. Moreover, as mentioned above, MMEA organized an annual conference and workshop. At this conference auditioned ensembles performed from each division, representing each geographic region along with professional workshops and vendors who catered to a variety of music education topics were available (MMEA, 2019). One way that MMEA provides support to rural music teachers was through their new teacher mentoring program (MMEA, 2019). This mentoring branch of MMEA both schedules workshops for new teachers and matched new teachers with more seasoned teachers across the state (MMEA, 2019). In the next section, the local implications of this research were considered through the view of a leadership analysis.

### **Leadership Analysis**

Authentic leaders, as defined by Northouse (2016), formulated decisions based on their own values and views within organizations, using their own leverages to suit their

agendas. The students in rural school settings were limited resources that directly impacted decisions regarding class scheduling conflicts and the distribution of funds. Capitalizing on resources created leverage that may have been used so that one group within the organization had power over another (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In the next section, topics related to leadership were further addressed; in addition to implications this research may have had on the decisions made by leaders in the practitioners' settings.

### **Authentic Leadership**

Integrity was a vital part of what Datnow and Park (2014) pointed out as the core of responsible data reporting. This type of data reporting was an important trait of an authentic leader and showed that the researching was not letting personal passions get in the way of reporting accurate data, an important trait of an authentic leader (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer 2007; Northouse, 2016). Another way this research supported authentic leadership was that the data was checked for bias by an outside researcher, a method suggested by Creswell (2014) to check for bias. Finally, authentic leadership was shown when music teachers maintained open communication, Mintzberg (2005) revealed that effectively leading an organization required that the leader be a figurehead and a spokesperson.

The administrators and music teachers serving in rural schools have been careful to not base decisions on misunderstandings regarding differing views of events as this may have created tensions that led to a lack of teacher retention (Isbell, 2005; Bates, 2011). When these types of tensions occurred, the culture of an organization, as discussed by Bolman and Deal (2013), may have been compromised. Furthermore, as explained by French and Raven (2005), there was a direct relationship between reward and power,

which may have been applied to how school districts determined the value of sports versus music, which also may have been viewed as part of the culture of a school. Levi (2017) warned against letting conflicts over differing values turn into grudges that broke down communication. When new K-12 rural music teachers had breakdowns in communication with their principals they had no one in their departments to turn to, because they were the only music educators in their districts. It was important that rural K-12 music teachers had supportive administrators who were authentic leaders, as outlined by Northouse (2016). Principals who portrayed the qualities of authentic leaders strived to make informed decisions that best advocated for each department, which was a common struggle for music departments that had high teacher turnover according to Bates (2011).

### **Implications for Scholarship**

Implications for Scholarship included the prompting of interest in rural music education from scholars in institutions of higher education such as professors in college music programs. The narrative of rural, tenured K-12 music teachers may have stimulated the informing of language used in higher education such as referring to rural positions as “starter jobs”, which was pointed out by Bates (2011, p. 91). Creating a culture of inclusion that notified teachers in higher music education was a possible outcome of this research. The use of equitable language when presenting rural music settings to preservice teachers may have encouraged individuals to consider rural positions long-term.

### **Implications for Practice**

To have an impact on practice, the stakeholders needed to have buy-in (Merriam & Bierema 2014). Increased empathy by administrators may have impacted their willingness to enact new policies (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Levi, 2017). The empathy formed in these key roles was a first step in what Bardach and Patashnik (2016) refer to as confronting the trade-offs. The data from this research may impact rural administrator discussions when creating policies that aid in making decisions regarding when high school band and choir festivals should be prioritized over sporting events scheduled on the same day. An informed administrator may create a policy that supports music students to attend state-level music festivals over non-state level conflicting athletic events.

### **Summary**

Organization and leadership analysis provide important views of teacher retention, rural education, and music education. The delineation of education to the states creates a need for organizations that serve educators throughout the state (DESE, 2019; MSHSAA, 2019). The MHSAA (2019) and MMEA (2019) were organizations that serve and governed rural school tenured music teachers. Faculty in small school settings that have had more time to acquire tenure were well acquainted with the rules, protocols, and policies of these organizations as compared to new hires (Podolsky ed al., 2019). Newly hired teachers often lacked the experience necessary to know how to best advocate for their students regarding topics such as scheduling conflicts and funding needs (Isbell, 2005). An implication of this research was for school principals, superintendents, and scholars of shared experiences to gain a greater understanding of the needs of teachers in

rural music education. In the next section, a deeper explanation was shared regarding the scholarly review of related topics to teacher retention, rural education, and music education.

## **SECTION THREE: Scholarly Review**

### **Introduction**

There were consistent findings regarding the challenges of rural education and teacher retention (Bates, 2011; Brobst, 1938; Isbell, 2005; Robinson, 2012). The demand for music teachers were evidenced by Missouri K-12 music teacher positions that were filled by instructors lacking credentials (MODESE, 2019). The importance of teacher retention on student achievement was supported by Ronfeldt ed al. (2013), Ladd and Sorensen (2017), and Podolsky et al. (2019), who all linked the retention of teachers to increased student test scores and attendance rates. While Bates (2011) and Give a Note Foundation (GNF) (2017) also both found that in many rural settings school officials required a generalist music educator background because K-12 positions expect teachers to be proficient in teaching music classes from elementary through secondary. The high course loads commonly required of K-12 music postings limited the number of teachers who have remained in these settings (Bates, 2011). The commonalities of the stories of teachers who remain in these positions provided insightful data into the culture necessary to support new teachers in similar positions. This research used qualitative interview data from tenured, rural high school music teachers asking what prepared them to remain rural settings. The following literature review will begin with the topic of teacher retention followed by rural education and music education.

### **Teacher Retention**

Teacher retention was the offering and accepting of new contracts resulting in the return of teachers to their currently held positions, as defined by Podolsky et al. (2016). Bland et al. (2014), as previously stated, found salary and location to be a contributing

factor in teacher retention. Retention has been important, because it not only contributed to student achievement, but it also was fiscally responsible. According to Louisiana State University Shreveport (LSUS) (2017), retaining a teacher was much less costly to a school district than hiring a new teacher. New teachers must learn curriculum and policies, while their veteran counterparts have acquired these skills (LSUS, 2017). Many teachers who remained in rural settings were willing to overlook the difficulty in remaining in a position with financial challenges (LSUS, 2017). Additionally, often new teachers paid for supplies out of pocket, which was often a hardship for recent college graduates or geographic transfers (LSUS, 2017). Moreover, the high demands of accountability assessments also created stress for teachers, a challenge addressed in the next section (LSUS, 2017).

Another factor, teacher retention has been attributed to favorable locations and high access to funding (Podolsky et al., 2016). Ingersoll (2001) reported high percentages of loss of beginning teachers within the first three years along with increasing rates of departure of new teachers up through the first five years. Ingersoll's (2001) findings reported that both the content being taught, and the age of the teacher were among the reasons why teachers left the profession. Ingersoll (2001) additionally found the most impactful factor as to why teachers left the position was "because they are dissatisfied with their jobs or in order to seek better jobs or other career opportunities" (p. 523). In the next section, the impact of new hires on student success is discussed.

### **Student Success**

According to Podolsky et al. (2016) and the ESSA (2015) teacher retention has been linked to student success. Student success has been measured in many ways, and for

the purposes of this study, it was defined as growth in student learning from before to after a unit of lessons were taught as displayed in teachers' student learning objectives (MODESE, 2019). In the Every Student Succeeds Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2019), it was stated that the law must hold schools accountable regarding student learning (DESE, 2019). One goal of the ESSA was to send financial aid to low-income school districts to be used to help retain high-quality teachers (ESSA, 2015). Beginning in 2009, the Race to the Top, established during President Obama's administration, placed emphasis on annual student academic growth (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). This emphasis connected student success with the retention of effective teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Ingersoll (2001) described certain school settings as hard to staff. The following section includes characteristics that were common of teachers who remained in challenging settings.

### ***Teacher Traits***

According to Chiong et al. (2017), a characteristic of teachers who maintained the same teaching position in typically high turnover setting was altruism. Gu and Day (2013) found that many teachers maintained positions due to personality traits that included inward strength and resilience. In contrast, Chiong et al. (2017) also stated it was important to consider many factors when categorizing what may have contributed to teacher retention as some factors may have been intrinsic, while others were extrinsic. The importance of administrative support on teacher retention was addressed in the following section.

### *Administrative Support*

A supportive administrator was another characteristic of a school setting that was found to be a factor that influenced teacher retention (Darling-Hammond, Chung & Frelow, 2002). Administrative support included effectively listening to the needs of teachers and their students in such a way that policies and procedures were implemented to aid in their teaching and learning (Marcoux, 2012). Wieczorek and Manard (2018) described the importance administrative support, emphasizing the significance of relationship development both within the districts and in the communities. When relationship building had not occurred, a common factor that has been attributed to teachers seeking other employment, is feelings of isolation (Abril & Gault, 2008; Gu & Day, 2013; Hancock, 2008; Podolsky et al., 2016). Administrative support, teacher traits, and student success were supporting factors regarding teacher retention in all settings. In the next section, the distinctive challenges felt by teachers who were the sole music educator for a rural school districts were discussed.

### **Rural Education**

Rural education included the schools found in remote communities with less dense populations separated geographically from urban centers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013). For the purposes of this stud, rural school district is any Class I Music Activity School high schools as assigned by MSHSAA (2019). The MSHSAA (2019) Music Activity Class I high schools had an enrollment between one and 107 students in grades nine, 10, and 11 and were considered rural remote settings as defined by NCES (2013). Rural remote settings were a set distance from urban centers (NCES, 2013). Stapel and DeYoung (2011) reported the rich history of rural education as being

greatly associated with the agriculture community. According to the Missouri Rural School Association, rural education involved meeting the unique needs and concerns of students in remote settings (MARE, 2019). Sher (2019) pointed out that throughout the United States rural education is often in need of advocacy as education in rural settings tended to be overlooked when government policies were made. Although politicians may have had little control over the fact that rural education involved schools located more than an hour away from a town, these remote locations endured certain obstacles that empathetic legislature may have aided (Sher, 2019). Local rural areas depended on having schools in their own neighborhoods, in fact, the Community Economic Impact (2004) linked the loss of a school in a rural community to the decline of the general population. As previously stated, administrators impacted teacher retention. In rural settings, a supervisors' understanding of the challenges their staffs faced impacted the success of rural students.

### ***Rural Administration***

A rural administrator has had many responsibilities that included but were not limited to, (a) teacher hiring, (b) teacher evaluation, (c) daily and yearly scheduling, and (d) student supervision both within and outside of the school day (Missouri Teaching Jobs, 2020). Some rural administrators also had the responsibility of activities director, an additional job that includes the scheduling and supervision of sports and activities (Missouri Teaching Jobs, 2020). A lack of administrative support in rural settings was concluded by Podolsky et al. (2016) and Garner (2010) to negatively impact rural education. To combat this, the MARE provided access to multiple services for school leaders in rural Missouri (MARE, 2019). One such service provided by MARE has been

a registry of job vacancies across the state (MARE, 2019). Furthermore, MARE administrated an annual convention as an outlet for keeping rural Missouri educators aware of current challenges rural settings faced (MARE, 2019).

Rural administrators oversaw the building-wide course scheduling as it impacted each teacher individually. When core topics were scheduled against co-curricular content, such as music ensemble courses, students were no longer be able to continue to perform. Another issue of scheduling was presented by Abril and Gault (2008) who found rural teaching positions often require heavy teacher course loads, and thus rural teachers had limited time to prepare. According to Gardner (2010), rural settings that require teachers to travel from one building to another also may have led to enhanced complications. Rural K-12 positions that required teachers to report to more than one principal and to travel from one building to another have increased scheduling limitations (Gardner, 2010). These multi-location positions required the administrators from each location coordinate the schedules with the other, so when one music schedule changed it may impact the other location schedule (Gardner, 2010). The high course loads and scheduling challenges common to rural K-12 music teachers pointed to the value of increasing the understanding of administrators of K-12 music teachers. To further refine the understanding of rural education as it pertained to this study, an examination of the history of music education in the United States followed. Specific obstacles of rural music education, the importance of administrative support, teacher evaluation, and, finally, the needs in rural northwest Missouri were each addressed.

## Music Education

The first United States singing school was created in 1717 in Boston, MA (Glavin, 2014). One agenda item of this meeting was to benefit the accuracy of performing as part of Sunday worship services (Glavin, 2014). In 1832, Mason and Webb formed the Boston Academy of Music where they arranged courses for teaching singing, theory, and methods in teaching music (Glavin, 2014). Mason later created a handbook that eventually was used as a resource for other vocal instructors (Glavin, 2014). Lowell Mason is regarded as the first person to introduce music education into the public school setting when he led demonstrations in music in 1837 and 1838 in Boston (Glavin, 2014).

As stated earlier, in 1955, Burmeister (1955) noted that the NAfME's motto, "music for every child, and have every child for music" (p. 23), was a helpful guide for evaluating music education practices as well as a reminder that music courses should be equally available to students from every type of community. To guide the process of music education, in 1994, the National Standards of Music education were developed and distributed through NAfME (NAfME, 2019). More recently from 2005-2007 the association set out to encourage a greater pursuit of vocal music by encouraging the singing and performing of the National Anthem (NAfME, 2019). This effort by NAfME (2019) illustrated how the organization supported music education at both the local and national level. Though the motto of NAfME (2019) was inclusive in its goal to reach every child with music, some obstacles to this objective have been identified in rural school settings.

### ***Rural Music Education***

In the early 1990's, rural music education was part of a reform movement that encouraged non-city school officials to embrace a wider acceptance of music (Lee, 1997). This reform moved to allow music education to be considered a necessary part of education (Lee, 1997). For this research, rural music education was defined as isolated K-12 teachers who served their non-urban students in MSHSAA Class I schools. The need for this research was outlined below.

Isbell (2005) emphasized the need for more research in rural music settings, making the argument that rural schools encompassed a large portion of the overall types of settings in the country. Isbell (2005) and Bates (2011) both stated specific challenges unique to music teachers in rural settings, such as directing bands and choirs with low enrollments. Low enrollment made creating a balanced ensemble and choosing pieces to perform challenging (Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005). Bates (2011) further elaborated that adjudicators at large ensemble festivals had expectations that were often unattainable when performing with few students. Hancock (2009) stated that music teachers often preferred settings with larger ensembles that had been recognized for achievements across the state, thus increasing concern for the rural student success rate where smaller ensembles existed.

Music teachers in rural settings were often well known by district families due to having taught students from the time they entered school (Boylan & McSwan, 1998). Another observation in rural settings, according to Moller, Moller, and Schmidt (2015), was that becoming accepted by the community may not have come quickly and often may not have been enjoyed until after one or two years in the same school district.

Connecting to the community was an important part of the retention of a rural music teacher (Sawchuk, 2018). While community and teacher connections may have taken time to develop, performances may have provided by public music education could have connected its local citizens in meaningful ways (Ehly, 2014). Ehly (2014) continued that conversely these performances may have provided wedges between the communities and schools, if positive connections were not made.

Isbell (2005) and Brobst (1938) found a lack of reasons for first-year teachers to stay in rural settings. The expectations of rural music teachers to teach a wide variety of music curriculum rather than focusing on one specialty, such as band or chorus, as often was for new teachers to undertake (Isbell, 2005). Preparing heavy course loads takes a lot of time and support from administration as is explained further in the next section.

**Administrative Support.** In some northwest Missouri rural schools, the principals' duties included the role of activity directors who make and communicate the sports schedules (Missouri Teaching Jobs, 2020). Supportive administrators provided mentoring and guided teachers to set limits to their workload (Whitaker, Good, & Whitaker, 2019). The value Isbell (2005) and Podolsky et al. (2016) both placed on the importance of administrative support to the rural music setting was compounded in settings where administrators carried this dual role. An activity director and principal combined who was well-informed regarding the needs and values of music students was more prepared to consider music performance dates when scheduling sporting events (Abril & Gault, 2008).

Administrators also played a key role in the setting of the course schedules. Teachers in K-12 positions had limited flexibility in the scheduling of their courses due to

the high number of courses they taught throughout the day. When high school students had core classes that conflicted with large ensemble music classes, it becomes increasing challenging to create a balanced group or one where the voicings within the group can each were clearly heard. According to Bates (2011) and Isbell (2005), a balanced ensemble was a challenge that was related to scheduling classes and prioritizing events. Isbell (2005) wrote, "In addition, because students in rural communities are often involved in many different activities, pep-band commitments and over-scheduling have the potential to wear everybody out" (p.33). The nature of this overextending often led to diminished success when rural ensembles faced scheduling conflicts with other activities and were forced to perform at festivals with missing parts (Isbell, 2005). Band and choir enrollment have been shown to be a valuable part of students' character development and of enlarging students' worldviews (Kratus, 2019). Nevertheless, rural students who were involved in both sports and music, at times, were forced to decide between the two.

Administrators seeking to support music teachers needed to understand the challenges music staff faced such as two types scheduling conflict types. One scheduling type related to evening and weekend music events that conflicted with other activities like sports. As outlined by Latten (1998), when music directors face volatile sports schedules and other activities being scheduled at the same time as large ensemble performances, many music students chose sports. The second scheduling challenge was rooted in the fact that K-12 rural, music teachers had a high number of class preparations. This comprehensive demand from the school district on the single K-12 rural music teacher result frequently in limited flexibility when setting the daily course schedule

(Latten, 1998). This struggle was particularly challenging for the isolated rural K-12 music teachers when core classes conflicted with ensemble rehearsals.

Some music teachers may have left rural settings that had low enrollments in their ensembles, “Low enrollment can place strains on the performance abilities of instrumental and choral groups and force rural teachers to be creative with instrumentation, repertoire choices, and scheduling conflicts.” Isbell (2005) explained (p. 30). There has been a gap in understanding as to the reasons why music teachers remained in rural settings. Rural schools have limited flexibility in the daily scheduling of classes that has created a barrier for students to both meet their core graduation requirements, while, at the same time, enrolling in large ensemble classes (Abril & Gault, 2008; Block, 2009; GNF, 2017). While ensembles have faced challenges due to scheduling conflicts, these groups could have, at the same time, determined the rating that teachers received on their administrators’ yearly evaluation (Hash, 2013).

**Teacher Evaluations.** Principals may have used music festival scores as a tool to evaluate teacher effectiveness and this could cause some unique challenges for the rural teacher with small ensembles (Hash, 2013). The recent emphasis of student achievement data on teacher evaluation has led to some schools using adjudicated music festival results for teacher evaluation with “third-party evaluations consisting of numerical scores that can be used to compare the achievement of one director to that of another” (Hash, 2013, p. 163). Forbes (1994) shared arguments that challenged the merit of music festivals and yet, at the same time, maintained the usefulness of festival scores in evaluating whether directors were meeting expectations. Issues facing rural Missouri music education was the focus of the next section.

### **Missouri Teacher Evaluation**

Missouri teacher evaluation has been overseen through MO DESE and has involved formative and summative reports from each school's principal (MODESE, 2019). Missouri evaluations as noted in the DESE (2019), teacher evaluation protocol includes a cycle of identifying indicators, monitoring growth, and evaluating students. It has been noted that most states have moved to the evaluation of teacher quality through analysis of student data (Will, 2019). Missouri's use of measuring a cycle of student growth was in-line with this national trend.

**Rural Missouri Music Education.** One way that Missouri educators have measured student growth was in the form of a music education survey, which began in 1955 and was authored by Burmeister. Burmeister's (1955) quantitative research of Missouri citizens from a wide range of community sizes concluded that citizens felt that participation in music should have been open to all interested students in every setting. Missouri music education has been supported by the Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA, 2019). The literature on rural Missouri music contains a gap as to the stories behind why some teachers remained in their rural classrooms. Another categorization has been established by MSHSAA that included 20 music activity districts. In Music Activity District 20, one school has had more than over 10 different music teachers since 2008, while another similar sized school has retained the same teacher for last 18 years (MSHSAA, 2019; DESE, 2019).

According to Bates, (2011), it was important to recognize the specific challenges teachers in rural settings faced. Bates (2011) wrote "Large, balanced ensembles are easier to develop in larger schools simply because of the number of students who may likely

participate and from whom the appropriate number and array of instrumental or vocal parts can be chosen.” (p. 90). Bates (2011) also stated that “beginning teachers, less accomplished teachers, and teachers who lack a long-term commitment to the school and community” (p. 91), which described the types of teachers often hired in rural settings. Hancock (2008) found that beginning music teachers left rural schools at a higher rate, while Bates (2011) emphasized that rural schools needed music generalists to fill their K-12 rural positions. These K-12 positions often have required wide-ranging course loads (GNF, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2016). There was a lack of literature addressing the reasons why some teachers remained in rural Missouri settings. In the following section, some specific needs of the northwest region were presented.

**Rural Northwest Missouri Music Education.** A need for research in northwest Missouri was evidenced by the lack of data for this location. As previously illustrated, while researchers have posited the difficulties of the rural music teacher, there has been a lack of research on why some teachers remained in rural schools (Isbell, 2005). While studies about northwest Missouri rural teachers' reasons for remaining in rural settings was limited, data from various teacher retention studies have concluded that administrative supports were a key factor in retaining teachers (Abril & Gault, 2008; Gu & Day, 2013; Podolsky et al., 2016; Hancock, 2008). Regarding the reasons why music teachers left was addressed by Gardner (2010). Gardner's, (2010) research found that music teachers who left positions often did so when better suited positions were found or when current positions were dissatisfying. Robinson (2012) confirmed that teachers' workloads and limited job recognition were two ways the setting of school districts directly impacted music teachers' decisions to leave. Being overworked was a possible feeling to be encountered among K-12 northwest rural teachers who are the sole music educator for the district.

Another reason for leaving a position was found by Madsen and Hancock (2002), who indicated out that more music teachers were relocating than were remaining in the same positions due to being interested in positions with larger salaries and in locations with better resources. The telling of the stories of tenured, rural northwest Missouri music teachers was one way to find out why certain individuals remained. Interview data gleaned from tenured rural, K-12 music teachers in northwest Missouri established the stories regarding why certain individuals remained in northwest Missouri.

### **Summary**

Isbell (2005) and Bates (2011) reported issues regarding rural music education. There has been a gap in the research regarding why high school rural music teachers in northwest Missouri remained in rural schools. This researcher set out to gain a better understanding through the lenses of rural education, teacher retention, and rural music education. Rural settings often have placed music teachers in schedules with large class loads and many preparations (GNF, 2017). With heavier course loads, scheduling conflicts often occurred for the rural teachers giving them less flexibility than teachers with fewer classes to coordinate and, thus, creating reasons that students were unable to register for elective music courses (Abril & Gault, 2008). Also research was presented on the qualities of teachers who retained positions in elementary or secondary positions (Gardner, 2010; Madsen & Hancock, 2002), but there still was a need for research regarding the retention of those who taught music at all levels. Madsen and Hancock (2002) confirmed that music teachers were among the disciplines with higher teacher attrition than other disciplines. The following sections will address how this research contributed to the practice and scholarship of music education, along with reflections regarding the personal practice of the researcher.

## **SECTION FOUR: Contribution to Practice**

In contribution to practice, this research was scheduled to be presented as part of the research session during the 2021 Missouri Music Educators In-Service Workshop/Conference in Osage Beach, MO. The conference is organized by the Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA) and was selected because it is highly regarded by music educators from within the state and throughout the nation. Research will be presented in an informal setting, where anyone attending the conference will have opportunities to engage in conversation with the researcher.

The MMEA annual In-Service Workshop impacts every level and genre of music education. Attendees of this conference include those currently employed in rural settings, preservice music teachers, and professors from institutions of higher education. Presenting at this conference will allow data and implications regarding K-12 tenured music teachers reasons for choosing to remain in rural settings to be widely shared. Once chosen to report at this conference, the presentation will include a description of the research along with 20 copies of the dissertation's abstract to be distributed personally by the researcher. The presentation also will include the opportunity to personally respond to inquiries about the research and to supply copies of the completed dissertation upon request.

Following are the requirements of the presentation and the presentation: (a) a copy of the abstract plan, as part of the completion of the dissertation, (b) a copy of the document's title page, (c) a copy of the scanned signature page, which indicated that the paper was accepted in partial fulfillment of degree requirements, and (d) the name of the

degree-granting institution and the author's full name and email were included on at least one of the above pages.

A Narrative of K-12 Rural Tenured Music Teachers:  
Stories of Those Who Stay the Course

Presentation 2021 MMEA In-Service Workshop

- 
- Description of Research
  - Research Question
  - Historical Context
  - Literature Overview
  - Qualitative Data Collection & Analysis
  - Themes, Findings, and Application
  - Contribution to Practice

## Description of Research

- Sole K-12 Music Teachers
- Gap in the literature
- Analysis

Rural K-12 music teachers commonly have faced wide-ranging course preparation demands and difficulty creating balanced large ensembles (Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005). Such demands on rural music teaching positions have resulted in a high turnover rate (Bates, 2011).

The literature did not address retention of teachers who taught at all levels K-12. This research provided data to aid in a better understanding of the similarities between stories of tenured rural northwest Missouri music teachers.

An awareness of the positive phenomena of why tenured teachers have remained in rural settings was reached through first locating rural tenured teachers in northwest Missouri, followed by conducting interviews with willing participants, and, finally, by analyzing transcripts, field notes, and school webpages.

### Research Question

What are the stories of K-12 tenured northwest Missouri music teachers who remain in the public rural setting?

This bounded multi-case study used qualitative methods of research to study tenured rural K-12 northwest Missouri music teachers. There was a lack of research addressing the stories of rural, tenured music teachers in northwest Missouri.

K-12  
Rural  
Music

MSHSAA Class 1 as rural?  
What about Class 2 and 3?

How do K-12 music positions compare to K-12 teachers in general?

How do K-12 music positions compare to K-12 PE and K-12 Art?

MSHSAA (2019) Class II and III schools had larger student enrollments than Class I. Smaller school enrollment numbers spread active students' class time thin. Students enrolled in large music ensembles often not only participated in multiple extra-curricular activities, but often they also were the leaders of several organizations. It was common for students to be deeply involved in the following: agriculture, business, FACS, sports, and music. Additionally, smaller towns were less likely to value and to have practical access to private music lessons (Isbell, 2005).

A strength of all K-12 positions was the prospect for teachers to create and to execute well-aligned curriculums from one grade level to the next. A challenge of K-12 positions was that each teacher was isolated, leaving few chances for content collaboration.

Communities have had expectations on the length and content of music concerts, while the same demands not found in physical education or art. When students exhibited their art works, it was rarely group work that was expected. Art shows were presented collectively with artists' works displayed and labeled individually. While athletics endured high expectations from communities, PE courses generally did not generate end of year summative performances.

Music was unique in that it built creativity while challenged performers to adapt in real time. Ensemble and solo performances were fluid, so therefore students had to be prepared to adapt to others in the moment.

## Context

- Background of Music Education
- Missouri Music Education Associations
- Retention of rural Missouri music educators

Music teachers use standards to measure student growth in the knowledge of music history, theory, and the practice of music making (NAfME, 2019).

The Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA) works in conjunction with the National Association of Music Educators (NAfME) to provide local support connecting teachers and their students across the state through district and statewide meetings and conventions (MMEA, 2019). Byun et.al (2012) and Brobst (1938) found rural settings needed to be included as part of NAfME's motto of "music for every child and have every child for music" (p. 23).

The retention of rural Missouri music teachers specifically has not been addressed in recent literature. Teacher retention, in general, has been linked to student achievement by Podolsky, Kini, and Darling-Hammond (2019). Music education in the United States, as further concluded by Isbell (2005), must consider the needs of rural students. Rural music education settings tend to lack private teachers to coach students' skills such as intonation and articulation both expectations when participating in music festivals (Isbell, 2005). Students living in rural settings from low-income families who cannot afford quality instruments or music lessons have additional challenges and, therefore, depend greatly on the skills of the K-12 teacher. (Bates, 2011).

## Literature Overview

### Conceptual Underpinnings

Teacher Retention

Rural Education

Rural Music Education

- Administrative support
- Teacher Evaluation

While new emphasis in policies have been less focused on teacher retention, Bland, Church, and Luo (2014) maintained that salary and location continue to be key factors in teacher retention, while Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2011) concluded that teachers were looking for settings that were familiar or like their home. Bauch (2001) agreed that student success could be attributed to the rural students' deep senses of community that was found in these less populated setting. Other positive factors attributed to rural settings included positive school culture, active student to teacher engagement, healthy community to school bonding, and low dropout rates (Bauch, 2001). While the challenges faced by elementary music teachers and secondary music teachers were addressed, there was no mention regarding the trials of teachers instructing all levels K-12 (Hancock, 2008; Lindman, 2004). The lack of research that mentioned teachers, who taught all levels to include elementary through high school, affirmed the gap in the literature as to why tenured rural K-12 music teachers decided to remain in these isolated settings. One of Sawchuk's (2018) final conclusions regarding rural teacher retention found that it was important for administrators to be pragmatic rather than expecting one factor such as salary or work-load, to be the solution for retaining all teachers. Hancock (2016) concluded that a lack of administrative support was vital contributing factor for why music teachers in general transfer from one position to another. Schein (1992) further emphasized that it took time to integrate oneself into the culture of communities.

## Bounded Multi-Case Qualitative Study

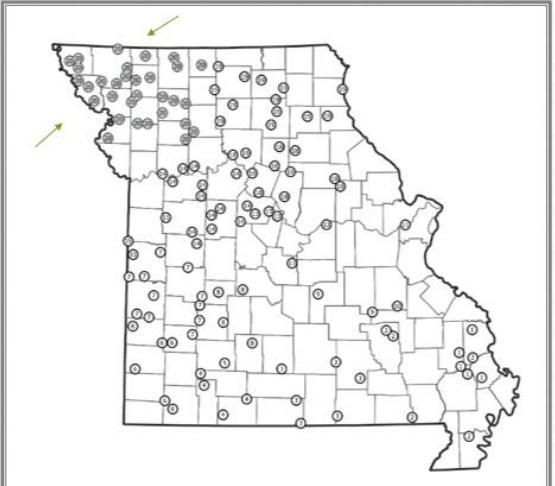
- Recruiting E-mail
- Six volunteer teachers and four principals were interviewed
- All teachers and one principal were interviewed, recorded, and transcribed
- Three principals opted to answer questions via email
- Two superintendents responded via e-mail
- Field notes were created at each school site
- Document analysis of schools' webpages

This study was a bounded qualitative multi-case study of rural tenured K-12 northwest Missouri music teachers during the 2019-2020 school year. A bounded multi-case study was one that considered connections of an entity that was limited to certain geographic regions with many local settings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

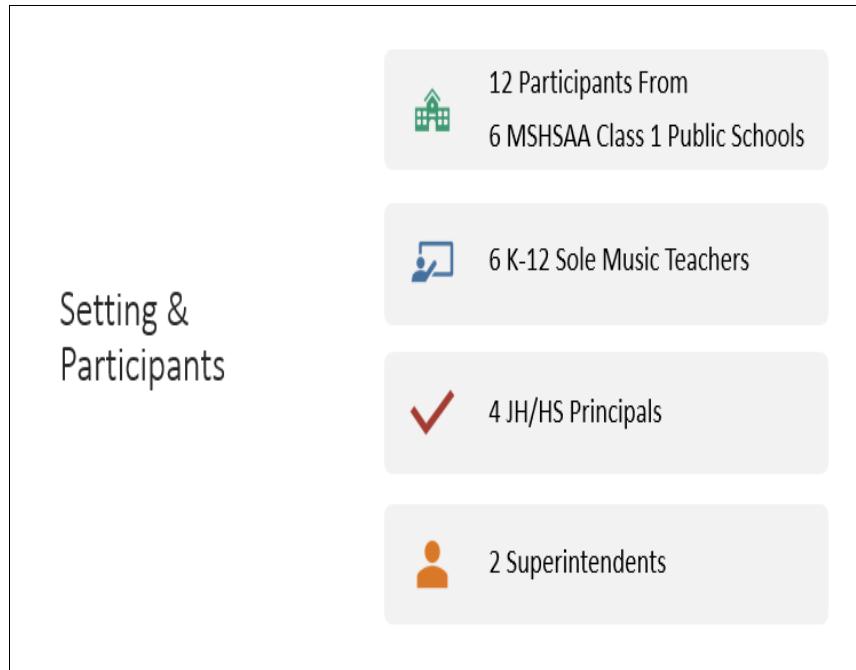
Why Northwest Missouri?

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- District 20 had the most Cass 1 schools in Missouri (MSHSAA, 2019)
- The researcher taught at a Class I school in District 20



This bounded qualitative study followed the design outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and took into consideration the connections based on one limited geographic region with many local settings. The University of Missouri-Columbia IRB reviewed tools and methods used as an important practice in ethical research as discussed by Creswell (2014). Creswell (2014) warned against skewing results when allowing oneself to become a participant.



School districts with Class I Music Activity School high schools as assigned by MSHSAA (2019). MSHSAA (2019) Music Rural School District: School districts with Class 1 Music Activity status for MSHSAA had enrollments between one and 107 students in grades nine, 10, and 11 and were considered rural, remote settings as defined by National Center Educational Statistics (NCES)(2013). Rural remote settings were a set distance from an urban setting (NCES, 2013). Northwest Missouri was one or both of the following: District 20 MSHSAA and/or District 1 MMEA.

All six school districts held K-12 classes in one building. Rural K-12 positions that required teachers to report to more than one principal and to travel from one building to another had increased scheduling limitations (Gardner, 2010). These multi-location positions required that the administrators from each location to collaborate the schedules with the other, as when one music schedule changed it may have impacted the other location schedule (Gardner, 2010). When observing a playground next to a football field it was noted all levels, K-12, were being taught at one location. The majority of the six districts had a high percentage of faculty/staff who were being taught within the school district. Five of the six districts were within 20 miles of a Division II University with music education programs.

K-12 Music Teacher Longevity	<b>District #</b>	<b># of Years</b>
	1	8
	2	18
	3	8
(All 6 districts: K-12 at 1 location)	4	17
	5	6
	6	18

Each district was given a number as a pseudonym; the number was based on the order in which the teachers were interviewed. Five of the six teachers identified as female with one identifying as male. Ages range from 20's (one teacher) to 60's (one teacher). Three of the six were currently raising their own children in the districts where they served. One teacher brought their offspring from outside of the district. Two of the six teachers graduated from a suburban or urban setting, while the other four all graduated from similar settings to their current setting. Teachers' length of tenure ranged from six years to 18 years. Three teachers had acquired less than 10 years employed, while the remaining three had more than 15 years of experience. Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2011) concluded that teachers were looking for settings that were familiar or like their home's which was confirmed with four of six having graduated from similar high school settings.

All four principals identified as male with two in their 30's and two in their 40's. One serves K-12, while the other three are over both junior high and high schools only. Two principals had served well over five years, while the younger two, had just finished their first and third years with the districts. One superintendent identified as female, was finishing her first year in the district, grew-up in the district, and was in her 40's. The second superintendent identifies as male, was in his late 50's, and had served the district 30 years.

What are the stories of K-12 tenured northwest Missouri music teachers who remain in the public rural setting?

### Emerging Themes

District #	Scheduling	Administration	Culture
1	X	X	X
2	X	X	X
3	X	X	X
4	X	X	X
5	X	X	X
6	X	X	X

This analysis included interview data from volunteer participants. Tenured K-12 rural, music teachers who had self-selected to stay, along with interview data from participants' administrators. The interview data was triangulated with field notes, a document analysis of school district websites, and superintendent, e-mail interview data. Findings include commonalities of rural K-12 music teachers.

## Scheduling

- High number of course preparations
- Only 1 music teacher for the district means less flexibility in coordinating all the courses necessary
- Core classes conflicting with large ensemble classes
- Large ensemble classes being scheduled at the end of the day –when students leave for sports
- Athletics and various student organizations compete for students' time

Newly hired teachers often lacked the experience necessary to know how to best advocate for their students regarding topics, such as scheduling conflicts and funding needs (Isbell, 2005). Students in rural schools were limited resource. Capitalizing on resources created leverage that may have been used so that one group within the organization had power over another (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Another issue of scheduling is presented by Abril and Gault (2008), who found rural teaching positions often require heavy teacher course loads and thus had limited time to prepare. According to Bates (2011) and Isbell (2005), a balanced ensemble was a challenge that was related to scheduling classes and prioritizing events. "In addition, because students in rural communities are often involved in many different activities, pep-band commitments and over-scheduling have the potential to wear everybody out" (Isbell, 2005, p. 33).

## Scheduling

"My most frustration...come from scheduling and sometimes it's out of the control of everyone" -Music Teacher District 1

"the biggest challenge for me all year long is having to work around everybody's schedules" -Music Teacher District 2

"there's a last period at our school...if I have kids that can't fit into the band ...and choir, we actually do that during seminar time" -Music Teacher District 3

"...it's a very rare individual than can do it all" (the varied ages/course load as demanded by K-12 music teacher's schedule)  
-Music Teacher District 4

"my drum major, he's student council president... I can't even list how many things he's in...that's just one person...scheduling is just a beast" -Music Teacher District 5

"5 years ago I had 200 minutes a week with each 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade band...last year I had 70...it's hard to keep doing what you're doing" -Music Teacher District 6

Every teacher interviewed both acknowledged the challenges and complexities of the schedule.

## Administration

- Setting goals with Administration at the beginning of the year
- Communication
- Setting the schedule
- Making music a priority whenever possible

A rural administrator had many responsibilities that included but were not limited to teacher hiring, teacher evaluation, daily and yearly scheduling, along with student supervision both within and outside of the school day. A lack of administrative support in rural settings was concluded by Podolsky et al., (2019) and Garner (2010) to negatively impact rural education. Administrators who made time to observe teachers in the classroom while also guiding educators to learn to set limits on their outside commitments have been defined as supportive (Whitaker, Good, & Whitaker, 2019).

## Administration

"we do our best to schedule classes in ways that protect these electives" –Principal District 1

"Help when you can...encourage the teacher, make it (music program) a priority" –Principal District 2

"We switched to the district providing most of our band instruments" –Superintendent District 3

"...listen to ideas....Keep an open mind." –Principal District 4

"[If] you're not developing that person into being that type of teacher, then your program's dead in less than 3 years"  
–Principal District 5

"I was told basically...you're gonna have a successful marching season and a successful concert season or else you're not gonna be here"  
–Teacher District 6

The music teacher from District 6 stated the importance that teacher and administrator use the same definition of success. The teacher said, "I would think first the district needs to establish what they want from a program. So I think it's easier to be able to pick the right person to fulfill that goal. And then once they have that vision of what they want, you know, try to be very open with the person saying, 'here's what we're looking for....' and, you know, try to find someone that, that has that desire and that can inspire kids and can help meet that mutual goal..."

## Culture

- The values of the Administration, Staff, and Community
- Communication
- Staff: working together for the betterment of the students
- Community: attending events, lending a hand, encouraging words
- Sharing students with athletics, a highly valued aspect of culture

Sharing the passion of teaching and enjoying music together was an example of what Bolman and Deal (2013) described as developing a culture through shared interests.

Though research from Bauch (2001) has shown settings like these remote Missouri districts to often have a positive school culture, there was pressure from state legislatures to consolidate rural schools to conserve funds (Missouri Association of Rural Educators (MARE), 2019). Furthermore, as explained by French and Raven (2005), there was a direct relationship between reward and power, which may be applied to how a school district determines the value of sports versus music which may also be viewed as part of the culture of a school. Levi (2017) warned against letting conflicts over differing values turn into grudges that breakdown communication.

## Culture

"I've learned a lot from the other teachers..."  
-Music Teacher District 1

"...music is a priority at our school"  
-Principal District 2

"parents come in full force to concerts...they're willing to get their kids to places"  
-Music Teacher District 3

-Links to District Social Media pages  
-Document Analysis District 4

"I've never sewn in my life. And two of the parents taught me how to sew"  
-Music Teacher District 5

Mascot prints leading from town to school and large band trailer in the lot  
-Field Notes District 6

"I get to teach them for 13 years"  
(paraphrased direct quote)  
-All 6 teachers

Note that all six district teachers stated that they loved teaching their students all 13 years. The students were "their kids."

## New Home Construction

Landscapers

The contractors hire subcontractors

Subcontractors work together

A landscaper is someone who designs and plants new flowers and plants.

The landscaper is a subcontractor hired by the contractor.

The landscaper is one of many subcontractors hired by the contractor.

Subcontractors		K-12 Subject	
Landscaper/Grounds Keeper		Music/Band	
Electrical		Core Classes	
Plumbing/HVAC		FACS/AG/BUS	
Concrete/Tile/Masonry		PE: Athletics	

As shown in the table, the subcontractors include landscaping, electrical, plumbing/HVAC and concrete

Similarly, K-12 music/band coordinates with other disciplines

## Building A Home: Scheduling, Contractor, Communication

### Transparency



A	B	C	D
Schedule			
Two Story Home with a Basement			
Activity	Duration(days)	Date	
Clear Lot	1	25-Oct	
Stake Lot	1	26-Oct	
Excavation	1	29-Oct	
Soil Check	1	30-Oct	
Form Footings	1	31-Oct	
Footing Inspection	1	1-Nov	
Pour Footings	1	2-Nov	
Pour Foundation Walls	3	11-5 thru 11-7	
Strip Foundation Walls	1	8-Nov	
Waterproofing & Foundation Drainage System	1	9-Nov	
Sample Foundation Construction Schedule			



### Home Building Scheduling (Scheduling)

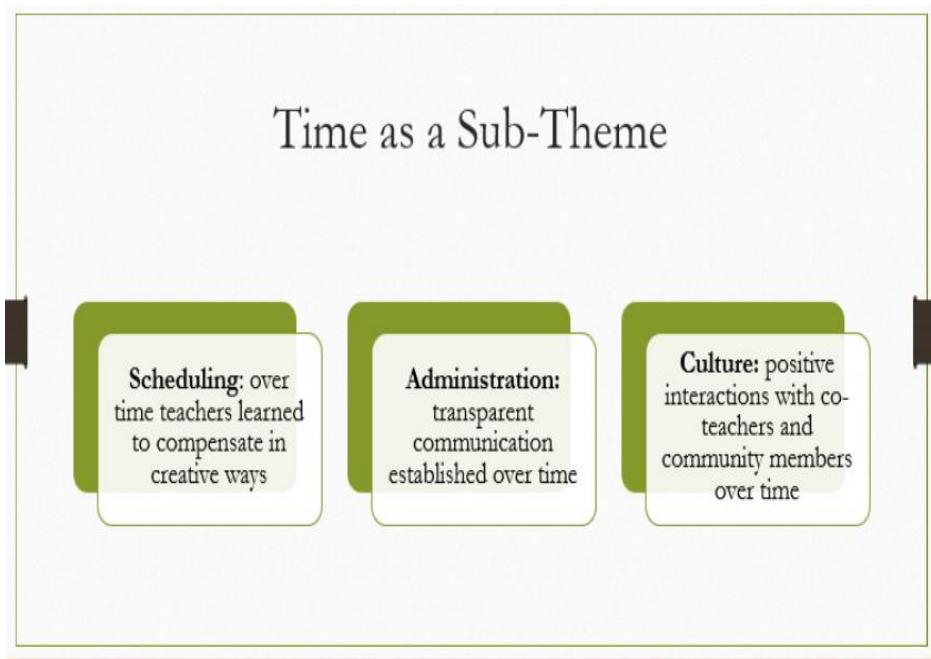
The landscaper needs to make the plan early in the home's construction when the soil is first being excavated and then continue to monitor the conditions throughout the busy construction planning and executing. Likewise, the K-12 music teacher must make plans that work within the setting.

### Contractor (Administration)

Successful contractors understand and communicate what is best for the home regarding the schedules of each subcontractor. School administrators who understand and communicate plans well with all areas of rural education encourage cohesion between departments.

### Effective Communication (Culture)

Effective communication creates opportunities for the planting of flower beds to not conflict with electrical, plumbing, or concrete pouring that may destroy the young plants. Similarly, the K-12 music teacher should make plans that best serves student growth by communicating with all areas and levels of education.



All six teachers viewed the schedule as frustrating but also noted that with time it got easier and that they now had a clearer understanding of why it was so challenging. Working with the other teachers and coaches, in a positive culture, over time, is the most successful way each teacher combats the scheduling challenges that are woven in every rural district studied. Administrators who set the school schedules with understanding and who listen over time, to the needs of the K-12 music teacher result in K-12 music teachers who felt valued and heard and want to remain. The K-12 music teachers shared feelings of being part of a culture where requests were heard. Teachers wanted to remain because of administration who listened every time.

What are the stories of K-12 tenured northwest Missouri music teachers who remain in the public rural setting?

**Scheduling** is frustrating

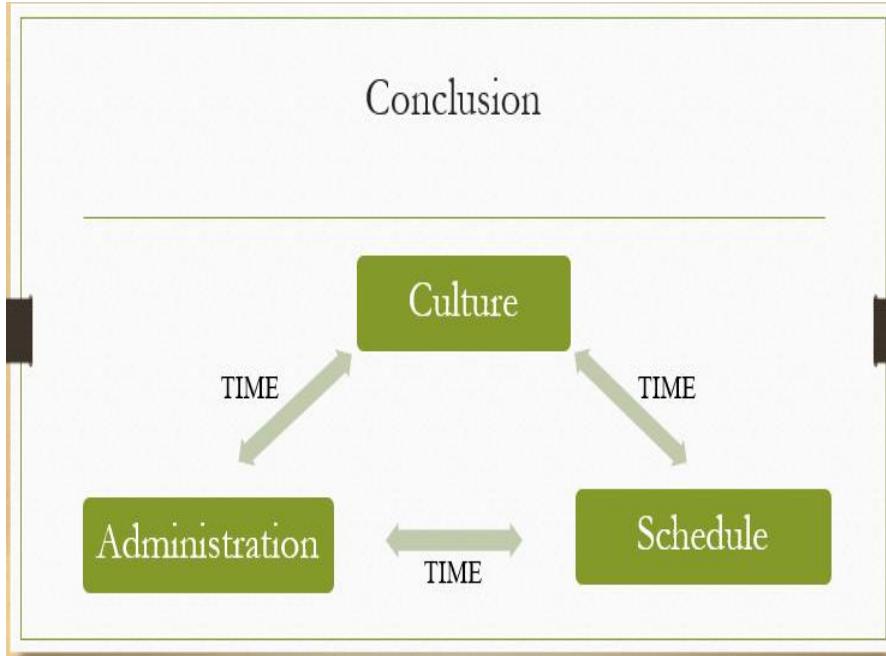
**Administration** listen

**Culture** transparent communication & rapport building

Scheduling is a frustration of the rural K-12 music teacher. Transparent communication, a subset of a healthy culture, eases the challenges associated with scheduling.

Administrators who listen to and set goals with your K-12 teacher encourage teachers to remain in the rural settings.

Rapport building nurtures culture. When culture is healthy everyone (parents, teachers, students) prioritize what is best for students and are willing to share the students.



All six teachers believed that although the schedule was discouraging, over time it was possible to find ways to compensate. Rapport building over time nurtures culture. The longer the K-12 rural music teacher remained in the same setting, the stronger the rapport created an important bond between fellow teachers and students (Schein, 1992). The bond created over time impacted the culture positively, while turnover caused culture to disintegrate. Administration that used transparent communication and listened to the needs of the K-12 rural music teacher encouraged the vision of the program, allowing students to be nurtured into mature musicians.

## So what? Why do they choose to stay?

- Healthy cultures
- Overlook frustrating scheduling
- Supportive nearby university

The healthy cultures included rapport building between students, staff, and administration and aids in building curriculum that addressed students' needs (Schein, 1992).

All six rural music teachers overlooked frustrating scheduling issues and instead focused on the longstanding rapport that had been built with students, as watching students grow for 13 years was rewarding.

All six districts were within 33 miles of a university with supportive music faculty opening opportunities for collaboration with current university students, staff, and alumni.

## What can I do?

Themes	K-12 Teachers & Administrators	Professors in Higher Education
Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use time 8-3</li> <li>• Creative course titles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College students with broad talents</li> <li>• Pay attention to good fits</li> </ul>
Administrators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and mentor relationships</li> <li>• Realistic and agreed upon goal setting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice maturity/flexibility</li> <li>• Prepare students for politics</li> </ul>
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make changes slowly</li> <li>• Lean into what is working</li> <li>• Ask ‘old timers’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People skills &gt; Musical mastery</li> <li>• Recruit from/for rural settings</li> <li>• Consider non-traditional students</li> </ul>

### K-12 Teachers and Administrators

Be creative and resourceful with the time you can ‘grab’ with students from eight to three. Administrators allowed music teachers to be free of extra duties during lunch to allow for time with music students. Rural K-12 teachers often use plan time to work with students.

Get to know your administrator/teacher and other teachers early in the year, notice when they arrive, when they leave, and how they like to communicate (face to face or by email etc.). Administrators and teachers should agree about goals for the program.

Notice what is working. Ask students and non-music teachers who have been around what they love most about the music program and be sure to keep those traditions initially.

### Professors in Higher Education

Pre-service music teachers who enjoy people and have a broad interest in music could be a good fit for K-12 positions.

Recruit pre-service teachers for rural settings intentionally, develop students with organizational skills and political savvy. Encourage pre-service teachers to consider K-12 positions long-term.

A lot of musical skills can be developed, people skills are vital in small communities.

## Who cares?

- Rural school districts
- Music professors from Institutions of Higher Education
- Researchers interested in issues facing rural school settings

Rural school districts wanting to maintain a K-12 music teacher should consider how their administration impacts the culture and schedule. Administrators seeking to engage in transparent communication aid in K-12 rural music teacher satisfaction.

Music professors from institutions of higher education implementing mindful plans to identify, prepare, and equip well suited pre-service teachers to remain in rural K-12 music settings.

Rural researchers interested in issues of rural K-12 music teachers could start by investigating the frequency of the use of language such as starter job when announcing open positions. Stepping-stone terminology should be avoided when creating or discussing rural K-12 music positions (Missouri Small-School Band Directors, 2020; Bates, 2011). This type of labeling contributes to the way a new teacher views the length of time to remain in the rural setting.

## Future Research: The stories and statistics of rural K-12 non-tenured Music Teachers

- Quantitative studies
- Collaborating with other K-12 music teachers
- K-12 music positions job descriptions

Future quantitative research should include distance to supportive university, number of building teacher teaches, and access to other K-12 music teachers.

The six districts studied are connected by the annual professional development organized by the 275 Conference superintendents. Each year the music teachers attending this conference have a chance to collaborate and help each other navigate difficulties.

Rural settings need teachers who will remain long-term and become the cornerstones of the music programs. The long-term view of K-12 positions becomes skewed when other teachers, job listings, or college professors refer to K-12 positions as starter jobs.

## Related Future Research

- Proximity to private lessons
- Preservice music teachers
- Turnover

Research is needed to explore the possible correlation between limited access to private lessons in rural schools and limited student success at music festivals and honor ensemble auditions.

Future data should be collected regarding the percentage of Missouri preservice music teachers' success in music festivals and honor ensembles during high school. Related data would support the idea that the possible marginalization of rural students is a factor in the lack of teacher retention as research suggests teachers seek employment in settings that are like home (Boyd, Grossman, Ing, Landkford, Loed & Wyckoff, 2011).

Administrators and K-12 music teachers' methods of creating continuity during position turnovers. Each of the six K-12 music teachers had someone that aided in the continuity. For District 5 and 6 this continuity involved what not to do. For District 1 the past teacher continued to work with the students and guided the new teachers into the positions. Districts 2, 3, and 4 each worked in the district before taking on the full-time K-12 position.

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## **SECTION FIVE: Contribution to Scholarship**

In seeking contribution to scholarship, the following research will be included in *The Rural Educator*, the official journal of the National Rural Education Association (National Rural Education Association, 2020). *The Rural Educator* staff seeks to explore rural education and to highlight both the assets and areas in need of improvement. The research articles commonly found in *The Rural Educator* addressed the challenges facing rural education. The findings of the research project focused on and provided a contribution to the topic of the retention of K-12 rural music teachers, which was a topic needing further research. *The Educational Leadership Journal* will be pursued, if the need for a second research journal becomes necessary.

### **National Rural Education Association Research Journal**

The purpose of the qualitative study was to answer the question, What are the stories of K-12 tenured northwest Missouri music teachers who remain in the public rural setting? The researcher, a rural tenured music teacher in northwest Missouri, implemented bias checking to allow for credibility and transferability of the results. Six school districts in northwest Missouri were studied as determined by the volunteers who responded to an email invitation. Conceptual underpinnings included teacher retention, rural education, and rural music education. Six teachers, four principals, and two superintendents were interviewed. Zoom interviews were transcribed, coded, analyzed and triangulated with school webpage document analysis, and field notes from each location. Emerging triangulated themes from all six districts included: (a) scheduling frustrations, (b) administrative support, and (c) healthy culture. The conclusion included

limitations and assumptions, along with the need for future research based on less occurring meaningful themes.

### **Introduction**

There was a need for research in rural education addressing the retention of K-12 music teachers. The stories of tenured K-12 music teachers from northwest Missouri provided insights into why teachers remained in rural settings. The state of Missouri has utilized the Missouri State High School Activities Association (MSHSAA) to both regulate and to serve students throughout the state (MSHSAA, 2019). Although MSHSAA (2019) has not specifically defined rural schools, the association has distinguished Five Class divisions for music activities based on the number of students enrolled (MSHSAA, 2019). Class I included schools with the smallest enrollments in the state (MSHSAA, 2019). The distinction of rural school was matter of both enrollment numbers and distance from urban areas National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (NCES, 2013). In northwest Missouri, the densest amount of Class I school districts that have been located and were away from urban settings (MSHSAA, 2019). For the purposes of this study, the term *rural music teacher* referred to MSHSAA Music Activity Class I districts in the northwest region of the state. The term K-12 teacher referred to districts with one music instructor.

Rural Missouri K-12 music teachers have been required to teach a wide-range of content (Missouri Teaching Jobs, 2020). Although rural K-12 music teaching positions navigated heavy course loads, music teachers in institutions of higher educations and fellow music colleagues frequently described the positions as stepping stone or starter positions (Bates, 2011; Simms, 2020). Scheduling demands in rural settings with K-12

music positions experienced challenges when high school band or choir classes were held at the same time as core classes. A similar issue arose when music classes were scheduled at the end of the day, when students left early for sporting events (Isbell, 2005).

Rural administrators have sought K-12 music teachers with the broad skill sets necessary for success (Bates, 2011). Thoughtful administrators utilizing transparent communication support teachers tasked with the challenges of the K-12 music setting (Hancock, 2016; Levi, 2017). Navigating heavy course loads demanding a broad sense of musicianship was a requirement of rural K-12 music teachers (Missouri Teaching Jobs, 2020). The transparent communication of supportive administration assisted teachers in isolation to create the wide curriculum requirements of the K-12 music position (Abril & Gault, 2008; Hancock, 2016; Marcoux, 2012). During times of K-12 music teacher turnover, continuity of curriculum and culture became vulnerable at the expense of music student success (Schein, 1992). Building relationships with new employees was one way an administrator shows support to new teachers (Whitaker et al., 2019). Studies have addressed the retention of teachers in elementary settings or high school settings (Hancock, 2008; Lindman, 2004). However, there was a lack of scholarly research support addressing teachers educating all levels, K-12. The state of Missouri required districts to award tenure to teachers in the sixth consecutive year under contract (Missouri State Teachers Association, 2019). When a K-12 rural music teacher received tenure, the teacher had spent years getting to know the same students. This time spent in one place provided opportunities to build rapport between the teachers and the students. Rapport building aided in the creation of curriculum that incorporates students' needs and interests and resulted in stronger programs and cultures (Boyd et al., 2011; Schein, 1992).

## Literature Review

The high turnover rate of rural K-12 music teachers may have been attributed to the wide-ranging course preparation demands and difficulty creating balanced high school bands and choirs (Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005). Principal support increased teacher retention by implementing policies that alleviated some of the issues related to the frustrating scheduling matters in rural K-12 music positions (Marcoux, 2012). The conceptual underpinnings of teacher retention, rural education, and rural music education were the foundation utilized when processing the stories of tenured rural K-12 music teachers.

## Teacher Retention

Teacher retention can be attributed to a favorable location and high access to funding (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop & Darling-Hammond, 2016). Furthermore, Ingersoll (2001) reported a high percentage of loss of beginning teachers within the first three years, along with an increasing rate of departure up through the first five years. The age of the teacher and the content being taught were among the reasons why teachers left the profession (Ingersoll, 2001). Additionally, teacher retention was linked to student success (Podolsky et al., 2016; United States Department of Education, 2015). Moreover, teachers were looking for settings that were familiar or like home (Boyd et al., 2011). Teachers that maintained positions were found to present personality traits that included altruism, inward strength, and resilience (Chiong, Menzies, & Parameshwaran, 2017; Gu & Day, 2013). Factors attributing to teacher retention included examples of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Chiong et al., 2017).

### Rural Education

Rural educators' course loads vary from location to the next but are commonly overwhelmed with high course load demands (Robinson, 2012; Missouri Teaching Jobs, 2020). One distinction was found in the numbers of teachers in one content area. In rural settings with one district-wide music instructor, teachers often traveled from one building to another. When a teacher moved between sites, scheduling limitations increased due to the requirement that traveling teachers reported to more than one administrator (Gardner, 2010). When administrators created policies based on decisions to allow for coupling with each content area teacher, the culture was nurtured (Weick, 1978/1983). Coupling allowed rural principals to engage in transparent communication regarding a wide range of issues throughout the day. Transparent communication was the foundation of supportive culture (Schein, 1992). Retaining a rural K-12 music teacher was often problematic without supportive cultures (Ingersoll, 2001).

### Rural Music Education

Rural administrators who understood the connection between avoiding conflicts between ensemble courses and core courses contributed to building their music program (Isbell, 2005; Latten, 1998). In doing so, students were able to continue to enroll in high school ensembles year after year and took part in well-balanced group (Bates, 2005). Participation in high school choir and band encouraged students to establish world views that valued the contribution of the individual to the greater good of the group (Kratus, 2019). Furthermore, students enrolled in music education were impacted by the content and while doing so, developed character traits, such as organization, perseverance, motivation, and cooperation (Hallam, Creech & McQueen, 2017; Kratus, 2019). The

highly valued pursuit of award driven athletics along with the lack of access to private music teachers found in remote settings often prevented students from achieving the advanced skills expected when participating in music festivals (Isbell, 2005). Lack of access to private lessons experienced by music students in rural settings also has led to marginalization when the tasks required of students appeared to be impossible (Johnson, 2018).

The risk of the marginalization of rural high school students further occurred when scheduling conflicts resulting from having only one music teacher prevented a student from enrolling in music (Johnson, 2018). Demanding course loads of the K-12 music teachers required coordination with both elementary and secondary classrooms. Sometimes students were eliminated from music courses due to scheduling limitation causing the shrinkage of class size (Isbell, 2005). The students who remained in band or choir experience lowered scores at music festivals because of the limited participation in high school (Isbell, 2005). Teachers who built a rapport with the continuing students, impacted school culture (Schein, 1992).

For the established K-12 music teachers, rapport building grew with students from one year to the next. Boyd et al. (2011) wrote, “newly hired teachers initially lack essential knowledge and skills to implement an unfamiliar instructional program...The result in settings with persistent turnover then is that schools are continuously starting over” (para 12). Persistent teacher turnover resulted in “relational patterns are [being] altered...turnover disrupts the formation and maintenance of staff cohesion and community, it may also affect student achievement” (Boyd et al., 2011, para. 11). A

strong culture, built over time, was noted as the basis for a successful organization (Schein, 1992).

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study was to address the lack of research addressing the stories of rural tenured music teachers in northwest Missouri and to inform practitioners serving and contributing to rural K-12 education. The research question used to guide analysis was: *What are the stories of K-12 tenured northwest Missouri music teachers who remain in the public rural settings?* Northwest Missouri provided a helpful educational setting for research because this region had the highest density of remote, rural public school districts in the state of Missouri (MSHSAA, 2019).

### **Conceptual Underpinnings**

Teacher retention, rural education, and rural music education provided the conceptual underpinnings of this study. As illustrated in Figure 3, teacher retention provided the foundation of the study and was linked to student success (Chiong et. al, 2017; Podolsky et al., 2016 & USDOE, 2015). Rural education provides the center point of the research. Transparent communication led by supportive administration was fundamental in developing strong cultures in rural education (Marcoux, 2012). The top tier of this study focused on rural music education. Tenured, rural K-12 music teachers taught students to contribute to the greater good of the group, a trait gained and taught when directing and participating in high school band or choir (Kratus, 2019).

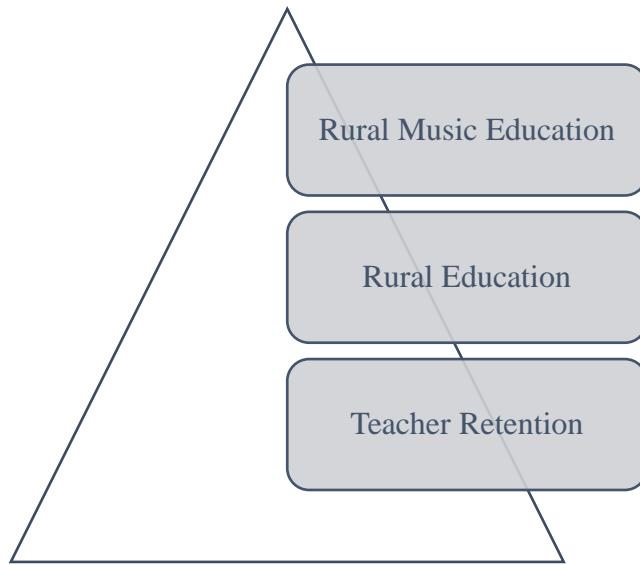


Figure 3. Conceptual Underpinnings Pyramid.

### Methodology

This bounded multi-case study, as supported by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), engaged in qualitative methods of research to study the stories of tenured rural K-12 northwest Missouri music teachers. Recruitment emails were individually sent to 27 K-12 music teachers from MSHSAA Class 1 school districts with one music teacher listed on the school webpage (MSHSAA, 2019). The same day all 27 high school principals at the same sites were also contacted via email. Principals and teachers were asked, if interested in the described study, to respond via email provided. The one music teacher had acquired tenure. Six teachers responded and were willing to be interviewed via Zoom and to have the interview recorded and transcribed. One principal also participated via Zoom. Later, all six superintendents were contacted via email. In the end, three additional principals and two superintendents from the same districts as the six teachers elected to participate via email interviews rather than Zoom.

In total, the participants included six teachers, four principals, and two superintendents. Five of the six teachers identified as female with one identified as male. To preserve anonymity, each district was assigned a number based on the order in which the music teacher was interviewed (Creswell, 2014). Teacher ages ranged from approximately 27 to 60 with four of the six being in their 30's and 40's. Three of the six teachers personally were raising children who attended classes in their districts where the instructor was employed. One teacher enrolled personal children, even though this participant's residence was outside of the district. Two of the six teachers graduated from a suburban or urban setting while the other four all graduated from high schools like the settings being studied. Over half of the teachers graduated from rural schools. The teachers' lengths of tenure ranged from six years to 18 years with half being under ten years and the remaining over 15 years (see Table 1). The teachers from Districts 1 and 5 were in positions gained right out of college.

Table 1

*Participants' Number of Years in School Districts*

School District	Teachers	Principals	Superintendents
1	8	5+	0
2	18	5+	0
3	8	0	30
4	17	5+	0
5	6	1	1
6	18	0	0

*Note.* Data collected in study.

All four principals identified as males with two in their 30's and two in their 40's.

One administers for K-12 while the other three are over seventh through 12th grades.

Two principals have served well over five years while the younger two have served one and three years as principal. One superintendent identified as female and was finishing her first year in the district, and had grown-up in the district, and was in her forties. The second superintendent identified as male, and was in his late 50's, and his 30 years of service included roles as teacher, coach, and principal.

### ***Data Collection***

Using the MSHSAA (2019) list of District 20 school webpages the researcher noted what school districts revealed only one music teacher. From this, each principal and music teacher were contacted to reveal if the music teacher had been tenure and, if so, was willing to participate. Once interviews were set up, the answer to open-ended questions were recorded.

**Document Analysis and Field Notes.** Data from all six school webpages was collected to include links to each home page. Field notes were also collected at each site noting signs and structures related to the district once in the surrounding town and on school grounds. Field notes and document analysis aided in the understanding of the issues being studied surrounding rural music education (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Interviews.** Interview lengths ranged from 20 to 58 minutes with questions that were open-ended. The use of open-ended questioning allowed stories to emerge naturally from the participants, decreasing the risk of the interviewer creating bias from the wording used (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). All participants were asked what advice would be appropriate to give a school struggling to maintain a K-12 music teacher. Interview commonalities emerged and informed the ongoing analysis. Three of the four principals along with both superintendents opted to have the interview questions and answers sent via email. Principals and superintendents, were asked about the background's and personalities of the K-12 music teacher participants and how the district had provided encouragement to them.

A constant comparative data collection approach allowed the researcher to restate questions in a way that was clear to each participant (Creswell, 2014). The use of open axial coding informed subsequent interview questions and interview data analysis (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, the researcher used open axial coding to sort and to group data to inform the wording of questions from one interview to the next (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Commonalities in the responses informed the development of the wording of interview questions moving forward.

Three dominant themes emerged from the coding of quotes, as described by participants. The data from the first interview informed the researcher of how to best word and formulate questions for subsequent interviews. Prior to analysis member checking was utilized by contacting participants via email to provide an opportunity to check for accuracy of edited verbatim interview transcriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

### **Data Analysis**

The coding of themes from participant interviews were triangulated with field notes and webpage document analysis of each participant's location. Once each site was triangulated, emerging themes were cross referenced from one site to the next. New data from the final teacher interviews further confirmed the themes of the first five. The resulting emerging themes provided trustworthy transferable findings useful to other rural schools (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The sharing of the data coding results with an outside researcher was utilized to compensate for any bias caused by the fact that the researcher was an insider in rural education and knew the participants (Creswell, 2014).

### **Results**

The resulting findings encompassed the compilation of stories as told by retained rural music teachers. As shown in Table 2, three themes emerged in all six school districts scheduling, administration, and culture. Time emerged as a sub-theme of all three major themes.

Table 2

*X's Denote Emerging Themes from All Six Districts*

District #	Scheduling	Administration	Culture
1	X	X	X
2	X	X	X
3	X	X	X
4	X	X	X
5	X	X	X
6	X	X	X

### ***Theme 1: Scheduling***

Participants remarked on ways each have found to compensate for the common frustrations due to the complications of scheduling. Teacher 1 stated, “If there is ever an issue with a student or a scheduling issue or anything like that I feel comfortable going to anybody in the district.” Similarly teacher 2 observed:

The biggest challenge for me all year long is having to work around everybody’s schedules...But the longer you do this, the more understanding...you just need to be more understanding...in the end, the positive is that the kids that are serious about what they do are willing to figure out the time to put in.

The high number of course preparations for each teacher often was due to there being only one music teacher for the district limited flexibility of course offerings (Isbell, 2005). Teacher 3 confirmed this challenge when the music teacher said:

So when you get in trouble a few times, you know with superintendents and with coaches and with principals and all kinds of things, you just back off. You’re like it’s just not worth it...I’m going to focus on the kids and the families that value the music program.

Having to coordinate with both elementary and high school timing of courses created less flexibility in the timing of high school ensemble meeting times.

Teacher 5 discussed the fact that a core class conflicted with high school band class, affecting her enrollment numbers. Teachers 4 and 5 both had high school choir or band classes being scheduled at the end of the day and, therefore, frequently coped with band students being gone for sporting events. The obstacle of dealing with students being repeatedly called out during high school ensemble courses was a common problem in the rural music setting (Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005). This quotation from Teacher 5 explained one reason why it was challenging to have students leaving during ensemble rehearsal. Teacher 5 said, “And in a small school a lot of the kids are just one to a part...so if I don’t have that part it changes the complete dynamics.”

At the same time, she also noted, “the support [just] from the community in rural areas seems to be a lot higher.” Music teachers shared the need to be flexible with athletics, agriculture, and other various student organizations as many of the high school music students led these organizations as well (see Table 3). The scheduling issues facing rural K-12 settings were summarized by the principal from District 1 who said, “There is a finite number of students to participate in a large number of activities.”

District 1 principal also stated, “We do our best to schedule classes in ways that protect these electives.”

**Time.** Teachers revealed a deep understanding of the complexity of the schedule, from Teacher 1 said, “The biggest challenge in small schools is scheduling, in spring you have FFA...and track and scholar bowl.” The tenured teachers shared how over time ways to compensate for student absences for missed instructional time were learned. This

type of discovery requiring creativity and familiarity developed through experience an idea that researchers also support (Boyd et al., 2011). One example of this was found in District 4, where a class was developed for anyone in high school who wanted individual music study. The District 4 teacher said, “Whoever walks in the door we will teach you what you want to know...it didn’t even look the same from one semester to the next.”

In this class, a trombone student decided to learn how to play percussion, while others worked on piano and guitar skills. In district 3, the elementary staff encouraged students to spend free time after lunch learning vocal parts in the music room. The District 3 teacher explained, “Trying to fit as much as you possibly can between 8:00 in the morning and 3:01 without getting in the way of sports...if it doesn’t happen between 8 and 3 it just doesn’t happen and that’s ok.”

Additionally, the tenured music teachers shared how the district staff camaraderie built over time aided in working within the boundaries of the schedule. While, at times, K-12 music teachers felt frustrated by the constraints of the schedule and that the music program was not as high a priority as athletics, they learned through experience how to balance out the obstacles.

Table 1

*Coding Quotes: Scheduling*

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Quotations</u>
Teacher 1	“The biggest challenge in the spring with a small school is scheduling...just making sure that you plan way ahead so that they’re [the students] prepared for those festivals.”
Teacher 2	“you just gotta find a time to be able to work for [with] everybody...sports practices, you’ve got to work around that”
Teacher 3	“there’s a last period at our school...if I have kids that can’t fit into the band ...and choir, we actually do that during seminar time.”
Teacher 4	“...it’s a very rare individual than can do it all” and “teaching to the personality of the class...maybe girls want to sing trio music and the boys aren’t interested at all...we [the boys] would work on guitar or ukulele.”
Teacher 5	“my drum major, he’s student council president...I can’t even list how many things he’s in...that’s just one person...scheduling is just a beast” and “I learn best when I fail and I try to pick up the pieces...I’m not afraid of failure.”
Teacher 6	“5 years ago I had 200 minutes a week with each 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> grade band...last year I had 70...it’s hard to keep doing what you’re doing” and “I also do a music performance class where we set goals and practice and do solos.”

***Theme 2: Administration***

It was documented that leaders who provided two-way communication created the foundation of well-supported communities (Levi, 2017). Supportive administration was vital to maintaining teachers (Hancock, 2016). More so than salary or equipment for the

classroom, all six teachers discussed the importance of administrators who listened. Transparent communication was commonly valued. Teacher 4 said of administrators, “very transparent...open communication is what’s helped us this year,” and “they’re also hands-off. They don’t make decisions on what music I pick, on how I set up my program.” Teachers from districts 1 and 5 mentioned the importance of setting goals with administration at the beginning of the year. Teacher 1 said, “The administration is transparent and communicates with the teachers and also they make the teacher feel communicating what they need.” The teacher from District 6 pointed out the importance of agreement between the teacher and the administrator regarding definition of achievement in the music room. “If they want strictly a band to only play at basketball games...well then the metrics of success would be different than...having a K-12 fully institutionalized program that creates musicians,” District 6 teacher said. See Table 4 for quotations from each district supporting the administration as an emerging theme.

**Time.** Through time and experience, each teacher had learned that the schedule required each of them to remain flexible and that there was no perfect solution. When creating the complicated schedule it was agreed that teachers need to talk to the administrators so that all understand what changes were needed long-term and what was not presently working. The teachers shared a common understanding that all their requests could not have been met but, because they felt the administration was listening and making the music program a priority.

Table 4

*Coding Quotes: Administration*

<u>Participants</u>	<u>Quotes</u>
Principal District 1	“we do our best to schedule classes in ways that protect these electives”
Principal District 2	“Help when you can...encourage the teacher, make it (music program) a priority”
Superintendent District 3	“We switched to the district providing most of our band instruments.”
Principal District 4	“...listen to ideas...keep an open mind.”
Principal District 5	“[if] you’re not developing that person into being that [rapport builder] type of teacher, then your program is dead in less than 3 years”
Teacher District 6	“I was told basically...you’re gonna have a successful marching season and a successful concert season or else you’re not gonna be here.”

**Theme 3: Culture**

Learning to work with a staff that agreed to prioritize what was best for students was a key factor in establishing a healthy culture. Building a positive culture involved having a rapport with people both within the building and outside in the community (Bauch, 2001). The six teachers shared that many of the families of the students and graduates from long ago still attended events and show appreciation for the work being done. This established positive culture was enough to offset the discouraging aspects involved in the rural K-12 setting, such as the ongoing struggle of keeping athletic and agriculture music students enrolled through graduation. When administration, other staff,

and the community had a hand in supporting the music program a positive culture can resulted (Bauch, 2001). Teacher 4 stated, “The majority of them (staff) are parents. We have a lot on staff who grew up in the community.”

Teachers commonly expressed that they had learned from mistakes of the past and from other staff and administrators. Teacher 1 commented, “I've learned a lot from the other teachers in the school.”.

**Time.** As time continued with the same rural K-12 teacher remaining, rapport was built as students and teachers established long-term relationships with one another. Teacher 1 explained:

The fact that I teach pre-K through 12...clear from when they're 5 years old to when they turn 18. So that makes it a lot easier to stay because you feel like...they're your family. They are your kids.

Teacher 2 said, “I've watched them grow up, and I watched them succeed at so many things and I want to be a part of that success.” Teacher 3 said, “They [the students] want to go to music, and they really want to learn from you.” Teacher 4 agreed, “You get all of those kids together for the grand finale and the community just loves it. The kids love it.” Another participant, Teacher 5 said, “I love the opportunity to really just teach the entire, like the entire student body...I love seeing the kids start...in preschool...I get to see them graduate...that's...the biggest motivator.”

Teacher 6 shared, “One reason I stay is that I can create bonds between the kids and I, you know I'm lucky I have 13 years potentially to be able to teach those kids.”

Rural K-12 music teachers value watching students grow and learn from kindergarten through grade 12 (see Table 5). It takes time to integrate oneself into the

culture of communities (Schein, 1992). The continuity established by tenured rural K-12 music teachers contributes to and benefits from the resulting positive culture.

Table 5

Coding Quotes: Culture

<u>District</u>	<u>Quotes</u>
All 6 Teachers	“I <i>get to</i> teach them for 13 years” [direct or paraphrased]
All 6 Webpages	Links to District Social Media pages
Teacher District 1	“I’ve learned a lot from the other teachers”
Principal District 2	“...music is a priority at our school.”
Teacher District 3	“parents come in full force to concerts...they’re willing to get their kids to places.”
Teacher District 4	“...and they [other teachers] just let me take the kids out for extra rehearsals”
Teacher District 5	“I’ve never sewn in my life. And two of the parents taught me how to sew”
Field Notes District 6	“Mascot prints leading from town to school” and “large band trailer parked in the lot”

**Building a New Home**

The building of a new home will be used to illustrate the stories of rural K-12 music teachers. Imagine that each new, entering kindergarten student is a new home at the beginning of the building process. The work on all the new homes is overseen by a team of contractors, the administration. The contractors hire subcontractors, cement work (athletics), plumbers (agriculture), heating/air conditioning (family and consumer science), electricians (core classes), and landscaping (music). From kindergarten through

12th grade, families and community entrusted the K-12 rural music teacher with the development of students. Likewise, the experienced landscaper understands both how to work with young budding plants (elementary students) and well-established trees (senior band and choir members).

### Scheduling

As noted on ConstructConnect's webpage one way to keep contractors to their promised deadlines is to create and coordinate the master schedule (Jones, 2020).

Struggling to stay on schedule is understandably challenging when considering factors such as weather and subcontractor availability. Landscapers, like K-12 rural music teachers, understand the big picture and are willing to be flexible.

**Time.** First year landscapers who only plan to work on the home for one year may create plans with little regard for the long-term. It takes time to make the many observations necessary to assess the state of the landscaping. Like the long-term K-12 music teacher decides over time what to keep and to revise.

### Administration

Successful contractors communicate what is best for the home regarding the schedules of each subcontractor. Because the contractor understands the skills and needs of each subcontractor, the two-way communication with the subcontractors has realistic yet rigorous expectations. Like a contractor, the supportive administrator listens to all the teachers, communicating and developing plans that works towards what is best for the students.

**Time.** Thoughtless sudden changes destroy the yard. Conversely, transparent communication with the contractor, along with careful goal setting results in fruitful

landscaping. With time and patience, supportive administrators who valued the music program listen to the K-12 music teacher and were open to new ideas and clear about the decision-making process.

### Culture

Building a music program takes years of planning with persistent adjustments being made as students leave or enter the program. Landscapers oversee the process necessary to execute their design. The long-term rural K-12 music teacher can create a shift in culture by building a rapport with community and students over time. Positive culture is developed when the K-12 music teachers and administrators communicate regularly and move forward together with agreed upon goals.

**Time.** It takes time for the new landscaper to assess the state of the grounds, soil, and climate. Similarly the K-12 music teacher builds culture over time by both assessing what has been done in the past and by building a rapport with students, staff, and the community.

### Conclusion

Conclusions from this research provided information for rural administrators who supervised music staff, scholars who studied the phenomenon of rural music teacher retention, and institutions of higher education that prepared preservice music teachers. The stories of tenured K-12 music teachers in northwest Missouri revealed that one reason for remaining in rural settings was because there was a bond between the students and the teachers. All six teachers endured frustrations of the schedule because of the administrative support and the rapport built with the students and the communities over time that has added to the positive culture.

Starter jobs and stepping-stones were stereotypical descriptions of rural K-12 music positions (Bates, 2011; Simms, 2020). Negative stereotypes may have contributed to the way a new teacher viewed the length of time to remain in the rural setting. Rapport building nurtured culture over time as the K-12 rural music teacher remains in the same setting the bond between fellow teachers and students was strengthened (Schein, 1992). Bonds created over time impact the culture positively while conversely turnover can cause culture to disintegrate (Boyd et. al, 2011). While scheduling was a frustration of the rural K-12 music teacher, administrators who maintained transparent communication aid in building a healthy culture, easing the challenges associated with scheduling (Hancock, 2016).

Rural settings with healthy culture contained administrators and teachers prioritizing what was best for students and were willing to communicate with flexibility and transparency (Bauch, 2001). Transparent communication by leaders impacted culture in ways that set the tone for all in their communities (Levi, 2071). The longevity of the K-12 music teacher positively impacted the culture of the school when the teacher worked to create a strong rapport with their students from year to year (Boyd et al., 2011). As illustrated below in Figure 4, over time all three, (a) schedule, (b) administration, and (c) culture impact one another over time.

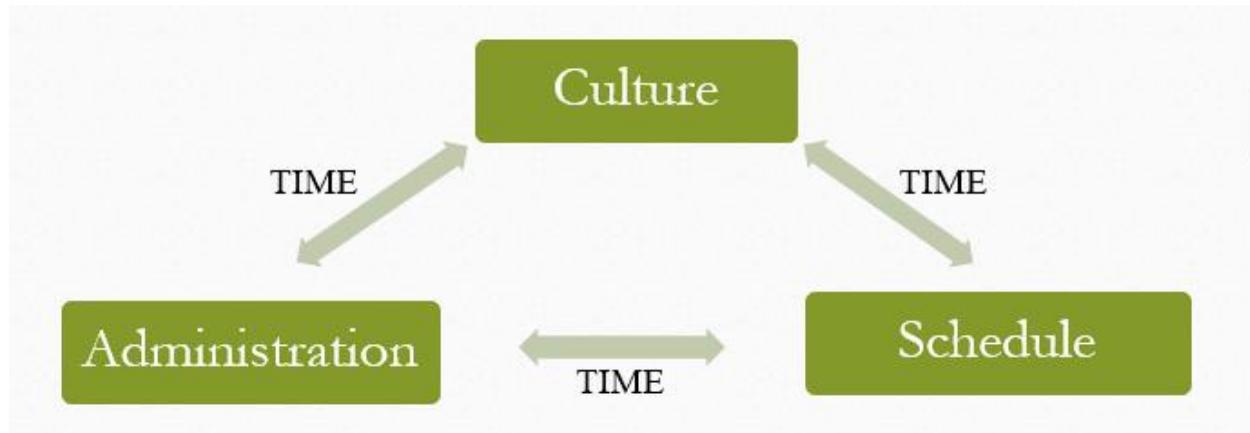


Figure 4. Time Schedule Time Administration Time Culture

There was a need for professors in higher education and fellow music educators to change the language used, such as starter position, when presenting open positions in rural K-12 music settings (MSSBD, 2020; Bates, 2011). Rural settings needed teachers willing to be the cornerstones of their music programs long term. New teachers entering challenging rural positions viewing the job as a steppingstone, put students at a disadvantage. Successful music curriculum takes years to execute when there is only one music teacher (Boyd et al., 2011). The building of rapport with students required time and was the basis for creating effective curriculum that matched the needs dictated by the school's culture (Boyd et al., 2011). Effective curriculum was necessary to build strong bands and choirs. The tenured rural K-12 music teacher uses knowledge of the culture when developing courses, basing lessons on the rapport built with students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

All six teachers viewed the schedule as frustrating, while also noting how over time creative lessons had been learned and used to compensate for the limitations caused by time restraints. All six teachers admitted that working with their staff and coaches in a positive culture helped to combat the scheduling challenges. Learning to give and to take

was a lesson each learned over time. Feeling valued also took time, as each were given chances to express the needs of the music department to administration each year. To the K-12 music teacher, being heard was equated to being valued and was more important than money.

The significance of the results informed rural school districts struggling to maintain a K-12 music teacher. Supportive rural administrators recognized how transparent leadership impacted the culture of the district and encouraged the rural K-12 rural music teacher to remain. It was recommended that K-12 teachers and administrators be creative and resourceful with the time allotted during the school day. For example, administrators could have freed K-12 music teachers from lunch supervision allowing time to work with students on music skills. Teachers could volunteer to help administrators develop the class schedule each year and consider non-traditional classes that allowed non-band and non-choir students to be involved with music.

Administrators and teachers should get to know each other. Begin each year by discussing and defining goals for the year. Administrators should convey to first year teachers what has been working well in the past and encourage first-year music teachers to make changes slowly. First-year teachers should seek out conversations with students during ball games and between classes. Seeking out details about what the community has loved most about the music programs of the past is an important step to make before developing new traditions.

Professors in higher education should seek out pre-service music teachers who have an interest in both instrumental and vocal music as potentially future rural K-12 music teachers. College professors who recruit pre-service teachers for rural settings

intentionally should consider college students with organizational skills and political savvy. Pre-service teachers enlisting for K-12 positions should remember that people skills will be vital to success in a rural setting long-term. Limitations to this study included lack of interview participants. While all six teachers participated only one principal was interviewed interactively. The fact that the remaining administrators declined to be interviewed or chose to be interviewed by e-mail limited the data.

### **Future Research**

Certain valuable themes not occurring in all six locations did not materialize from the coding process. Proximity to universities, professional development with other remote music teachers, lack of access to private lessons, and the MSHSAA's 50% rule were four such themes that enhanced student success with further research. Related areas in need of future research included the exploration into the backgrounds of pre-service music teachers regarding access to private lessons during high school. Questions regarding the percentage of preservice music teacher who had success in high school honor ensembles and festivals were two topics lacking research. Such data when compared to statistics of rural high school graduates pursuing a degree music education may be linked to data that suggests teachers were looking for job settings that are familiar or like home (Boyd et. al, 2011). Finally, less than 10 of the over 20 districts invited to participate revealed the tenure status of the K-12 music teacher. Quantitative and mixed-methods studies addressing the number of non-tenured rural K-12 music teachers and the stories of why they chose a rural music setting was a topic needing future research.

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## SECTION SIX: REFLECTION

### **Impact from Coursework on Current and Future Professional Practice**

The following reflection related to how my graduate coursework has impacted me through the lens of the following five topics, (a) leadership theory and practice, (b) organizational analysis, (c) policy analysis, (d) content and context of learning, and (e) ethics and diversity. These subjects related to my current and future practice as a rural music educator, a position that allowed me to impact students, staff, and administrators, both directly and indirectly. How the coursework topics have and continue to guide me as a practitioner were the basis of my reflections.

#### **Leadership Theory and Practice**

The traits approach to leadership, as presented by Northouse (2016), enlightened me to reflect on my own personality characteristics and how they impacted my leadership style. Fellow members of Cohort 11 confirmed what the Northouse (2016) Traits Survey distributed to my colleagues in the Fall of 2017 revealed, I am dependable and friendly, but I lack self-confidence. Knowing my own strengths from the StrengthsQuest (2006) to be shown in areas of relationships and executing, I started leading with these traits. I made a point to keep my cohort groups organized and on-task by keeping a schedule and restating the research question when we needed to refocus. I resisted stating my short comings and instead embraced opportunities to reveal authentic leadership (Northouse, 2016).

Authentic leaders can be trusted to reflect what they genuinely believed without trying to replicate others (George et al., 2007). Janis (2005) warned against letting silence from others be mistaken as agreement by rationalizing and ignoring warning signs. To

avoid this type of omission, I communicate with other staff members when what we are doing is not necessarily what is best for students. By having a common goal of keeping students safe and letting their learning come before our own conveniences, my staff and I have experienced a type of what Levi (2017) defined as team building through problem-solving. As a member of Cohort 11, I learned through experience and coursework what it meant to problem-solve as a team. Each semester, we worked in a different team of three-five members, forcing us to learn how to work with differing schedules and time restraints. To complete the group assignment, each member contributed to the group's success by authentically revealing what they could have added to the group. The groups learned from both failures and successes through problem-solving. Understanding the structure of an organization was a first step in nurturing leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2013). In the following section I will share examples of how application of the coursework concepts surrounding the topic of organizational analysis impact my current and future practice.

### **Organizational Analysis**

Bolman and Deal's (2013) organizational analysis through the structure, human resource, political, and symbolic frames have greatly influenced my practice as a teacher leader. The topics covered in this coursework led me to value the aspect of my practice involving the bonding with students. These bonds established an important foundation for me as I frequently teach the same students for several years. The importance of bonding with students like one does with a family member falls under Bolman and Deal's (2013) human resource frame.

The coursework also led me to make the connection between the symbolic frame and the political frame and how these two may be used to build culture in a rural teaching setting. The political frame was applicable to my role as a rural music teacher. Bolman and Deal (2013) explained that certain political decisions, such as budget setting, were made within an organization depending on the priorities of subgroups within the organization. The symbolic frame incorporated the parts of an organization, such as mottos, high school mascots, school colors, school pledges, and fight songs (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Levi (2017) acknowledges the symbolic frame in less tangible examples such as the culture expressed through the ways the group runs its meetings. As a music teacher, I encounter both political and symbolic frames often. For example, I direct the pep band in playing the school song at football games, while also asking for high ticket items, such as new instruments, choir risers, and sound systems costing the district thousands of dollars.

### **Policy Analysis**

When considering best practice for policy analysis, intentionality regarding data reporting has been vital. Decision making regarding what data to collect was a consideration that Bardach and Patashnik (2016) discussed as one that may have been influenced by thinking through the implications for the organization. Similarly, Datnow and Park (2014) provided guidance on how educational data may have been used to determine when certain practices need revising. Loss and McGuinn (2016) discussed newly enacted policies that have increased the need for accountability in higher education. Understanding the importance of how policy revisions have impacted colleagues of mine who no longer met the requirements to teach dual credit has allowed me to guide

conversations. This seemingly arbitrary rule led to some frustration and confusion. This coursework has widened my view of such policies in higher education and prepared me to clear up misunderstandings that could have led to resentment from those who had been denied dual-credit teaching credentials.

### **Content and Context of Learning**

It was important that in my current role as a high school band and choir director that I continually evaluated the policies and procedures used to administrate the music program. When the principal at my school implemented a policy that required each teacher to openly share data that informed students of learning, the doctoral coursework helped me to know how to invest in the process. Some teachers resisted this mandate as is common for adults to do when they do not agree with the reasons for change (Gill, 2010). Datnow and Park (2014) emphasized the importance of student data collection in their examples of data transparency and this applied well. Program analysis was an important part of teaching effectively and was efficient when it included data analysis, as explained by Caffarella and Daffron (2013). I have admired the way the science teacher in my building had developed data notebooks in her experiential classroom and so I asked her to assist me. This type of instruction was what Gill (2010) referred to as “individual coaching” (p. 65) to correct a “performance deficit” (p. 65). With her help, I created assessments that took into consideration the importance of student involvement, were available for students, and work in the experiential settings at all stages of my music courses.

**Ethics and Diversity**

The coursework has added to my vocabulary and understanding of how to better articulate the needs of my students. I apply Bolman and Deal's (2013) political frame as an advocate for what Johnson (2018) defined as a marginalized group. One example of when I have advocated for my students as rural music performers was when rural students were compared to suburban students in audition or festival settings. Many suburban students have had the privilege of certain opportunities, such as private lessons, that my rural students have not (Isbell, 2005). Within the limitations of school setting, the advocacy I have embraced for my students had a certain appearance. One way this advocacy played out was by speaking up when scheduling conflicts arose. It was important to navigate the different values of those in my organization. I commonly navigated two sources, those who govern the Missouri Music Educator Association (MMEA) and those within my district, such as my school administrators. From my experience, MMEA put a lot more value in music excellence than my school administration did. These different values contributed to opinions that fall under the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Applying the coursework to my practice has led me to design a research dissertation that better informed scholars and practitioners of the potential for marginalization in K-12 music settings.

**Impact from Dissertation on Current and Future Professional Practice**

The stories of K-12 rural music teachers impacted my future practice as both a teacher and researcher. First, the research and writing of this dissertation impacted my approach to leadership when I realized I serve a greater than span of rural music students than merely those in the school district that employed me. I now view my role as one who

is part of a team of rural music educators. The importance of redefining myself as a voice of change for rural music students has also been realized in both the discovery process and the writing of the dissertation.

### **Leadership Theory and Practice**

The process of writing a dissertation was one that was perceived by many to be unachievable. When speaking to participants from this research, all were surprised to hear that I was working on a doctoral degree. Path-goal leaders guided followers to create goals through discovering their motivations (Northouse, 2016). Through conversations with other rural music teachers regarding the research process, I plan to encourage other practicing teachers to consider topics of their own to explore. The organization I lead included other tenured, rural music teachers with experiences that can further add to the gap in rural music education.

### **Organizational Analysis**

Another one of my leadership goals was related to my dissertation as it included data collected from tenured music teachers. The structural frame as presented by Bolman and Deal (2013) may have applied to how rural administrators show support for the needs of rural music teachers. My hope was that by presenting my dissertation data in front of conferences attended by rural administrators, they were better equipped to structure their organizations in ways that supported and retained their music teachers.

This research has further implications regarding the topic of higher education's approach to rural music teacher job placement. In my observation, there was a disparity between what types of teachers were needed in rural settings and how rural schools were being framed in some music teaching programs. Bates (2011) confirmed my observation

by stating that higher education music professors qualified positions in rural schools as “starter jobs” (p. 91). Weick (1978/1983) pointed out the value in the parts of an organization to have the ability to make decisions independently. Additionally, Weick (1978/1983) advised that this independent thinking also created imbalances when one group’s intentions conflicted with another’s (Weick, 1978/1983).

Levi (2017) addressed this, making a connection between conflict resolution and the acknowledging of an imbalance of power. As a future leader, I hope to impact institutions of higher education by helping to better inform them of what practices they can incorporate in recruiting future long-term rural music teachers. Institutions of higher education utilized dashboards to organize data, such as graduate job placement (Cardoza & Gold, 2018). Bates (2011) found music educators who presented suburban settings as better job placements than rural settings. Bolman and Deal (2013) stated the goals of an organization, as part of the structural frame, must be continually assessed and revised. In higher education, enrollment numbers were a key factor in their success (Cardoza & Gold, 2018). Prioritizing recruitment from suburban over rural areas were a natural way for recruiters to focus their efforts to have the greatest numbers of enrollments. My plans as a leader included the presenting of data to institutional researchers recruiting for pre-service music teacher programs. My rural music teacher data may lead these recruiters to consider new strategies that will increase the likelihood for certain college students to remain in rural job settings long-term.

### **Policy Analysis**

Bardach and Patashnik’s (2016) Eight-Fold Path served as a roadmap to effectively leading organizations to continual improvement through policy analysis.

Divisions in an organization may have occurred when decision-makers create policies based on their own assumptions (Manning, 2013). The research required for my dissertation addressed a gap in the literature regarding the reasons some music teachers remained in rural settings. The importance of understanding why certain policies were in place with an example of when it was time to consider policy revisions follows.

### **Content and Context of Learning**

Newcomer, Hatry, and Wholey (2015) provided insights for developing effective practices for assessing that utilize an adequate number of indicators. In keeping with the Newcomer et al. (2015) model, I have chosen two considerations for what may have impacted music teachers to remain in rural settings: (a) teacher preparation and (b) administrative support. Generalizable data was an effective aspect of creating results that can be applied to other similar settings (Newcomer et al., 2015). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) addressed the complexities of generalizability in what they referred to as external validity. Transferability required that the research sample was carefully chosen and included both “maximum variation and typical nuances” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257). I chose to study the stories of rural music teachers from District 20, as defined by the Missouri State High School Activity Association (MSHSAA) (MSHSAA, 2019). This district contained the densest number of Class 1 schools, the smallest population category, in the state (MSHSAA, 2019). The expertise I have gained regarding the reasons why rural northwest K-12 music teachers remained will contribute to my ability to guide and to encourage teachers and administrators. Explaining to administrators and teachers the importance of listening to each other while also encouraging them to build rapport with students, will be a guiding force in my practice moving forward.

### Ethics and Diversity

Policies have been driven by those with the greatest influence (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016; Levi, 2017; Bolman & Deal, 2013). Increasing understanding of how certain groups have been favored by policies was an important task when striving to be inclusive (Bardach & Patashnik, 2016; Johnson, 2017). As Bardach and Patashnik (2016) wrote, “people’s private troubles … [are being] ameliorate by…well-intentioned governmental interventions” (p.3). The lack of understanding of the stories of rural music teachers contained some potential of what Johnson (2018) referred to as conferred dominance. Conferred dominance may have taken form in settings where one group has unearned power over another (Johnson, 2018). As a rural music teacher, I have seen examples of this type of dominance. I have observed college programs who only initiated performance collaborations with ensembles from suburban schools, and I have witnessed rural administrators choosing to support sports over music events. It was important that ethically I stay aware of how my experiences as a rural music teacher may create what Johnson (2018) defined as implicit bias. I must stay aware of the ways I might favor rural settings over suburban ones. I also believed it was important to take a stand, an act that embodies ethical leadership, as researched by Mihelic, Lipicnik, and Tekavcic (2010).

While coding the transcripts created from interviews in my research, I applied methods as outlined by Merriam and Tisdell (2016), who advised researchers to allow for drawing both “detailed and wide-ranging conclusions” (p. 208). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advised that one should include steps of analysis that involved self-checking for bias. Reporting it openly allows me to inform others of the potential of unequal considerations of students in rural compared to those in suburban settings.

In conclusion, being knowledgeable about how politics impacted rural music programs and specifically how tenured teachers have withstood the challenges associated with these politics drove my research and has enriched my goals as a leader and practitioner. I continually check myself for bias, which has been an ethical decision that involved keeping oneself from creating data from emotion (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My authentic leadership, as discussed by Northouse (2016), will be the sharing of data with rural administrators and researchers studying rural music education. Finally, my future leadership and practice was impacted by the dissertation as I now pursue authentic leadership that works to balance the representation of what Johnson (2018) referred to as considering the needs of underrepresented populations.

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## **Appendices Pages**

### **Appendix A Teacher Interview Questions:**

- 1) How long have you had tenure?
- 2) What about your background has influenced your decision to remain in a rural setting?
- 3) Have the reasons for your decision to remain been the same since your first year in this setting? Explain
- 4) In considering each season of the year what are the specific academic challenges and rewards of the fall, winter, spring, and summer?
- 5) What and who are your biggest sources of encouragement and or discouragement throughout each day? Throughout each season?
- 6) What would you suggest to a school district struggling to retain a rural K-12 music teacher?
- 7) How do various sources of encouragement influence your decision to remain in a rural setting?

**Appendix B Principal Interview Questions:**

1) How has Mr./Ms. X influenced the success of high school music at XHS?

Success at K-8?

2) What types of support does this setting provide him/her?

3) What do you believe best helped to prepare Mr./Mrs. X for the rural setting?

What about Mr./Ms. X's personality and or approach to the classroom do you perceive as important aspects of the music program?

4) What insights can you offer the leadership at a school struggling to maintain a K-12 music teacher?

5) Mr./Ms. X has remained here for X years; do you feel this length of time with one teacher has played a part in the success of the music program here at XHS?

Why or why not?

### Appendix C: Email Recruitment

Dear Rural Principal or K-12 Music Teacher,

My name is Amy Haddock and I am both a 5-12 Music teacher at Tarkio High School and a doctoral student at the University of Missouri, Columbia. My dissertation title is: *A Narrative of K-12 Rural Tenured Music Teachers: Stories of Those Who Stay the Course*. As the title suggests I am seeking interviews with both tenured K-12 rural music teachers (teachers who are the sole music teacher for the district) and their administrators.

If you are a tenured K-12 music teacher or their principal, I am interested in your point of view of how your district has successfully retained a K-12 music teacher. For those who volunteer to participate, the interview will be 1 hour or less with each one separately. The design of this study includes a qualitative analysis of interview transcripts. This analysis will be shared to inform interested educators.

If you are willing to participate, please respond to this email so that we may set an interview time. By responding positively to this request you are giving permission for your responses to be used in this research. Interview transcripts will be offered to you to proofread for accuracy prior to analysis. All names and other identifiers will be changed to pseudonyms.

Thank you for your consideration,

Amy Haddock  
[hadamy@tarkio.k12.mo.us](mailto:hadamy@tarkio.k12.mo.us) and [amyhaddock@outlook.com](mailto:amyhaddock@outlook.com)  
660 528-0539

**Appendix D: Oral Consent Script (Exempt Research)**

This interview activity involves research regarding tenured rural K-12 Music teachers and why they remain in these settings. Upon your permission, this interview will be recorded and transcribed. Transcriptions will use pseudonyms to replace any personal information and will be offered to you for approval before analysis.

You will be interviewed for one hour or less.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw participation at any time.

You may contact me, Amy Haddock, at [amyhaddock@outlook.com](mailto:amyhaddock@outlook.com) and 660 528-0539.

You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Nissa Ingraham at [nissai@nwmissouri.edu](mailto:nissai@nwmissouri.edu)

Do you agree to participate?

Do you agree to having the interview recorded and transcribed?

**Appendix E Superintendent Focus Group Email Questions:**

Dear Superintendents:

I am the 5-12 music teacher at Tarkio school district and a doctoral student at University of Missouri, Columbia. My dissertation title is: *A Narrative of K-12 Rural Tenured Music Teachers: Stories of Those Who Stay the Course*. The K-12 tenure music teacher and the building principal from your district have allowed me to interview them as part of the doctoral research.

I am seeking your voluntary participation in this email threaded discussion focus group. Please Reply All to any or all the questions below. I encourage you to also Reply All to other participants' replies that I may use this discussion in my qualitative analysis.

- 1) What insights can you offer the superintendent and other leadership at a school struggling to maintain a K-12 Music teacher?
- 2) Has the length of time your district's K-12 Music teacher has remained in your district impacted your school district? The School Board? School community at large?
- 3) Do you believe your school and community shows support to your K-12 music teacher and the music department as a whole? Explain.

By responding to this email you are giving your permission for your responses to be included in the data analysis for this University of Missouri dissertation. All names and identifying aspects of your answer(s) will be replaced with pseudonyms.

Thank you for your consideration.

Amy Haddock

Questions may be addressed to the contact information below.  
660 528-0539 or hadam@tarkio.k12.mo.us or amyhaddock@outlook.com  
My advisor is Dr. Nissa Ingraham nissai@nwmissouri.edu

**Amy Haddock Vita**

Amy Haddock was raised in Charlottesville, Virginia and earned her B.A. in Flute Performance in 1990 at Mary Washington College, Fredericksburg, Virginia. After spending time in Moscow, Idaho Amy settled in Maryville, Missouri where she currently resides. Amy earned K-12 certification in both instrumental and vocal music along with an M.S. Ed. in Teaching Music in 2005 at Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, Missouri. The next 15 years were spent teaching various K-12 music courses in rural northwest Missouri. While teaching band and music in Tarkio, Missouri, Amy was able to finish her Ed. D in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at the University of Missouri.