

**It Takes a Team: A Case Study on Overcoming Challenges
and Cultivating an Excellent Band Program in Urban Education**

by

Marvin Lewis Griffin

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Approved by

Jane M. Kuehne, Chair, Associate Professor of Music Education
Guy Harrison, Associate Professor of Music and Music Education
Khari Allen Lee, Professor of Practice, Director of Commercial Music
Christopher Clemons, Associate Professor of Agriscience Education and Leadership

Abstract

Urban school band programs function in educational contexts characterized by unequal funding, shifting administrative priorities, high rates of teacher turnover, and diverse community needs. While facing these challenges, many urban band programs are nonetheless resilient, growing, and even reaching artistic excellence. *It Takes a Team: A Case Study on Overcoming Challenges and Cultivating Excellence in Urban School Band Programs* is a qualitative case study which explores the leadership structures, cultural conditions, and teaming practices that can make success possible in urban music education settings. This case study is guided by the following five questions:

1. What variables are associated with successful band programs in urban school districts?
2. How do band directors define and measure success?
3. How do administrators support band programs and how does their level of support impact success?
4. What are the challenges directors and administrators face and how are they overcome?
5. How does school culture and leadership impact program achievement?

This study seeks to fill several gaps in the literature that includes studies of school music programming have generalized to or about urban contexts or have focused on barriers without giving adequate attention to factors which can cultivate success. Research has not explored how teaming between band directors and school administrators, the impact of culturally responsive practices, or the sustainability of

excellence over time. The current study uses interview, observation, and document analysis methods to show that shared leadership, persistent administrative advocacy, community engagement, intentional school culture-building, and alignment with a student-centered mission are among the factors which contribute to program success. This study's findings have implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers in showing that healthy, high-achieving urban band programs are possible when teamwork, strategic leadership, and a culture of collective purpose are intentionally developed and maintained.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Disclosure Statement

In the preparation of this dissertation, the following Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools were used: Atlas.Ti, Gemini, and Grammarly. I used Atlas.Ti to check, post analysis, that I did not miss any potential themes. In addition, I used Gemini to help anonymize interview transcripts. I transcribed the data, verbatim, but used Gemini to remove all identifying information. Finally, I used Grammarly to double-check my grammar in places where Microsoft Word identified “clarity” as a writing issue, and to help me learn different ways to write in active voice versus passive voice.

I have ensured that all AI-assisted sections have been reviewed and revised for accuracy and appropriate academic style. All AI-generated content was reviewed and validated for relevance, appropriateness, and accuracy before incorporation into the final document to maintain scholarly integrity of this research.

Digital Accessibility Disclosure Statement

In the preparation of this dissertation, the following digital accessibility tools were used to ensure this document complies with federal requirements: Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat Pro. The author acknowledges full responsibility for the intellectual content of this work and has made a good faith effort to comply with digital accessibility requirements in publishing, wherein the nature of the content does not significantly change in order to do so. Furthermore, all content has been reviewed and revised to meet these requirements prior to final publication.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

As a young musician and aspiring educator, I always questioned what contributed to certain school band programs being so much more successful than others. Why can some band programs struggle to attract membership while another of similar size at 6A is able to field 200? I entered teaching early in life with the intention of building the big bad wolf band of my dreams that would produce crowds and create students who left feeling like rock stars. After a few years, it became clear to me that notes on staff and drill charts on a field were not the only ingredients in a successful and sustainable band program. Culture, shared ownership, and strategy are vital to any program's success.

Near the end of my first year of teaching, I came to the realization that the most decorated and consistently successful programs are not created or solely maintained through the individual efforts of a director. Thriving school band programs are those in which the entire community (administrators, community, students, and teacher leaders) work toward a collective goal of excellence in culture and achievement. My personal interest in this research question became motivational for this study. I wanted to explore how some urban programs were able to develop this sort of success. I wanted to know what made certain urban programs unsuccessful while others produced excellent and effective musicians. I wanted to know how leadership in these programs could make a positive impact on growth or contribute to its demise.

Urban school music programs face complex environments that require music

educators to be effective in high-need schools with potential resource inequality and a variety of shifting environmental priorities. In these conditions, some urban bands seem to have more identity, resilience, and achievement. This study, *It Takes a Team: A Case Study on Overcoming Challenges and Cultivating Excellence in Urban School Band Programs*, explores the organizational structures, cultural processes, and team relations that can contribute to a high-functioning urban band program. I will examine the collaboration that must exist between directors, administrators, and other school stakeholders to cultivate the program culture and make high-performing urban band programs a reality.

Leadership and administrative support strongly impact program outcomes. Supportive principals who advocate for music as curricular rather than “extracurricular” allow for stability and growth (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Hearn, 2009). Given the low preservice preparation and mentorship that preservice teachers often experience before entering urban contexts, mentoring, advocacy, and administrative literacy are essential to retaining teachers (Kelly, 2003; Siebert, 2008). Because arts programs are often not central in school priorities, many successful directors have learned to strategically communicate their value to principals and district administrators in order to secure resources and visibility (Vitale, 2007). The research literature and practitioner experience in urban band programs affirm that these outcomes are built through shared leadership, collaboration, and intentional culture building, not individual heroism. Many of these challenges are further intensified in communities with low socioeconomic status (low SES), where limited economic resources can restrict educational opportunities and access to music education.

Statement of the Problem and Need for the Study

Although there is a wealth of evidence for the academic, cognitive, and social benefits of music participation, as well as the existence of high-quality urban band programs, many urban schools face challenges in maintaining healthy band programs. Chronic historical inequities, concentrated poverty, constrained resources, and heightened accountability pressures compromise the vitality of urban arts programs and can contribute to uneven access. Recent research documents a number of issues in urban band programs including low representation of low SES and minority students in music ensembles, unequal access to instruments and private lessons, and inconsistent administrative support.

In many ways, the existing research in this area has done an effective job of surfacing a range of barriers to urban music education, but it has less to say about the many urban band programs that do find a way to flourish in spite of daunting challenges. There is a relative lack of qualitative research about the ways that band directors and school administrators in urban school districts collaborate to develop and maintain successful programs, how they define and measure success, and the ways school culture and leadership interact with programmatic outcomes.

The problem, then, is that there has been insufficient description and analysis of the specific leadership practices, support structures, cultural strategies, and collaborative efforts that enable certain urban band programs to be successful. Without a shared, descriptive vocabulary and deeper understanding of the key ingredients of successful programs, music educators and administrators in similar situations have relatively few points of reference or models for developing and sustaining success.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify the ways in which a band director and an administrator partner address challenges in and create a successful band program within an urban school district. The present study also specifically sought to uncover the crucial elements of success, how success was defined and measured by the various stakeholders, and the ways in which school culture and leadership facilitated or hindered a successful band program.

As such, this study on an urban band program which can be considered successful has the potential to uncover best practices, strategies, and partnerships that may be beneficial to other educators and administrators in similar contexts.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What variables are associated with successful band programs in urban school districts?
2. How do band directors define and measure success?
3. How do administrators support band programs and how does their level of support impact success?
4. What are the challenges directors and administrators face and how are they overcome?
5. How does school culture and leadership impact program achievement?

Positionality Statement

As a working band director within an urban setting, I came to this study with an insider perspective, professional experience, and personal investment. My personal experiences of initially wondering why some programs succeed and others fail, to later

understanding through personal experience that success is not an individual achievement but one created by teams and with a culture influences the questions I ask, as well as the way I interpret the information I gather during this study. I have a personal conviction that music is important to cognitive, social and emotional development, and that band is a setting where students in urban schools can form identities, practice self-discipline, and build community. I also acknowledge that my own deep commitment to band may influence how I interpret the findings of this study. I have experienced the range of supportive to challenging environments in which band programs can exist, and this could impact my impressions. In this study, I will practice continual self-reflection and will make a concerted effort to allow participant, triangulation, and transparency of my own role and assumptions to guide my work.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The validity of this study relies on assumptions that participants will be truthful and reflective when answering interview questions and participating in other data collection processes. The urban band programs that chosen for this study offered a valuable case of success to learn from. Band program success is complex and multidimensional. The chosen programs had specific demographic realities that are not transferrable to all urban programs. It is not possible to accurately define success with performance ratings alone as success is also cultural, relational, and developmental. Leadership, school culture, and administrative support have a significant impact on the success and operation of band programs.

Limitations

This is a qualitative case study of a particular urban context. Therefore, findings may not be generalizable to other districts or regions. Data will be based on self-reported perceptions and experiences and may be affected by personal bias, memory, and positional perspective. All stakeholder groups (i.e. extensive student focus groups, or community members, etc.) were not in the study to the same extent. In addition, while one person in the study had an administrative role, they also were a band director, so their views on administration came through the band director lens.

Delimitations

This is an in-depth study looking at band programs within an urban school setting. Orchestra, choir, and general music programs were not included in this study. This study only included perspectives of band directors and did not attempt to evaluate all programs within various school districts. Further the chosen programs met specific demographic criteria including socioeconomic, location, and types of students attending the schools. This is a study of the current conditions and recent history of these programs and not an attempt to draw conclusions from a comprehensive longitudinal analysis of these programs over several decades.

Important Definitions

This study uses “urban,” “equality,” and “equity” and defines them based cultural understandings around these two terms. More specifically, in literature about urban schools, the focus is less often about location and more aligned with ideas that urban schools also might have a majority of students attending who are not white. While urban does often mean location alone, given the literature surrounding this term, in this study,

urban also reflects the demographic characteristics of each school. The students in these schools are predominantly African American and are all located within a major city. Further, all schools in this study are also have lower socioeconomic status.

When looking at equity, we should remember that equity means one thing while equality means something different. Equality is trying to give the same things to each group and equity is trying to ensure every group gets what they need to be successful (Minow, 2021). It is important to remember these distinctions throughout this document.

Chapter 2

Review of Related Literature

Music in Education

Music is a core element in a child's education, with a range of studies over the years to support this fact. The interest in music learning is based on its capacity to provide intellectual, social, and emotional benefits that translate to broader skills. Vincenzi et al. (2024) assessed the impact of musical training on the development of the brain in terms of improved abilities in various areas. The results showed that, after one year of training, the music-trained students showed higher scores in both cognitive abilities and music skill as compared to those who had not been given any training. Other earlier research that had also focused on the participation in music education pointed to improved academic performance and learning outcomes as linked to cognitive skills. As shown by the latest study, musical training is vital in developing and strengthening such cognitive abilities, including executive functioning and mental flexibility. These are skills that are known to lead to better academic performance across different subjects. The focus on skills that enhance such essential life-long cognitive processing patterns also plays a part in the more positive academic outcomes of musical instruction.

Brandler and Rammsayer (2003) discovered the impressive edge that musical training gives students over their peers with regard to the verbal memory. Their findings had pointed to musicians having a better chance of outperforming non-musicians in the field. The suggestion was made, therefore, that this better performance indicated an improved left hemisphere advantage as well as better connectivity across regions in individuals with musical training. Given the fact that the interpretation and production of

music call for the interaction of perceptual and sensory motor as well as emotional processing skills, the ability to play music showcases an advanced cognitive processing framework that calls for both intuition and intelligence. This study thus adds to the larger evidence that supports the importance of music education in developing important mental habits like focus, pattern recognition, and emotional processing. These mental habits are what then go a long way in influencing students' academic performance.

Heffernan (1976) had argued earlier on the importance of introducing children to a wide range of musical experiences from an early stage in their lives. The researcher had also pointed to the need to introduce students to early music skills like singing, reading music notation, and the manipulation of various instruments as part of the development of creativity and interpretative abilities. Such abilities, according to the research, might not always be sufficiently developed in typical classroom settings. A chance to play and interpret music gives students an opportunity to get actively involved in creative problem-solving activities that help to boost their confidence levels as well as give them a sense of belonging in their school setting.

In the same way as Heffernan did before them, Corrigall, Schellenberg, and Misura (2013) focused on music training, cognitive ability, and some personality aspects. The researchers had argued that the strong relation between the two has often been taken to indicate the influence of the former on the latter. Corrigall, Schellenberg, and Misura saw this as a misunderstanding, indicating instead that there is a mutual, and not unidirectional, relationship between the two variables. This, therefore, means that musically-inclined students have higher intelligence quotients and are at the same time more open to new experiences. The significance of this finding is that music

classes attract a majority of motivated learners, but at the same time, they offer a space for students who might be struggling in other subjects to still find some success. This is because of the level of structure and discipline as well as the rich experiences that the study of music provides.

Thaçi and Kovaç (2024) add to this knowledge by offering a comprehensive perspective on how music programs in schools exert a direct impact on student motivation, attendance, and psychological well-being. In Kosovo, researchers studied the impact of music schools on students' learning, finding that areas such as parental involvement, classroom management, and attendance have an immediate impact on students' academic achievements and their decisions to continue their studies in school. The results of two similar studies in the US context affirm these results. In both countries, teachers understood that music classes are an integral part of students' school experience because they directly impact attendance and engage the students most at risk of feeling excluded from the school community. Music programs actively contribute to lower absenteeism and make the music classroom an integral force in keeping students in school.

The previous two studies combined provide a valuable and in-depth explanation of how music directly shapes students' learning experiences. The advantages of music go beyond the visible to support cognitive growth and to strengthen school culture. Music training nurtures some of the most desirable traits, such as teamwork, perseverance, and social-emotional learning that are especially relevant for students in urban school settings. The students in such contexts face greater challenges, including

the consequences of low SES. Music programs can thus have a very powerful impact on their school spirit and lay the groundwork for future success.

Urban Education

Urban education is one of the most interesting and complex facets of the American public-school system. Urban education is a melting pot of different cultures; it is a site where many problems are either worsens or enhances. One of these problems is economic inequality, which can lead to resource inequities that can negatively impact the quality of music instruction and school band programs.

Becoming familiar with the historical, social, and economic contexts of the children in these urban schools can help one understand some of the challenges faced by urban school band programs, but also many of the unexpected triumphs. For instance, resource shortages and a lack of funding for some types of urban schools may mean a lack of access to musical instruments, qualified music teachers, and rehearsal space. On top of this, the societal issues these types of schools face (poverty, community violence, systematic inequity, etc.) compound the effects of this issue.

Digging deeper into each of these areas can shed light on not only the many issues that underfunded schools must face on a daily basis but also the ingenuity and grit their students and teachers have when it comes to overcoming these issues. Band programs in underfunded schools can also provide students with a sense of community and belonging. For students who are struggling in other aspects of their lives, band programs and other extracurriculars can provide outlets for self-expression and personal development.

Cultural diversity within urban schools also can benefit band programs by

bringing many different styles of music and traditions to the program. This can create a unique intersection of musical influences that can lead to innovative performances and a unique school band program. In short, delving further into the challenges and successes of urban school band programs can lead to a greater appreciation of how the arts can impact positive change in urban education.

Historical Foundations of Urban Schooling

Urban schools and the people who experience them are products of history. They mirror the socio-political and cultural complexities of the urban environments that birthed them. This next section explores the history of urban education. Liddell (2022) and Span (2002) present distinct phases in the history of urban schooling and analyze how they may still affect students in today's schools. The California Law Review (1972) article also focuses on the history of education, but from a legal point of view. In this essay, California Legal Review (1972) presents an exhaustive account of the socio-cultural and legal reality of desegregation in the South, including the loss of resources, community, and identity experienced by Black schools in that region. The document describes the impact of a common-sense legal approach and presents problems that arose after implementing federal law in schools. The historical and legal aspects that these articles present illustrate some of the realities of urban education.

Liddell (2022) traces the history of African American schools in Mississippi. He uses this history to show what education might have looked like in the Reconstruction period of the post-Civil War South. Liddell (2022) writes that schools in this area at that time were mostly focused on meeting the educational needs of newly freed Black Americans. Missionary societies from the North organized and developed schools to

meet freed slaves' basic educational needs and life skills. At the same time, they enriched students' experiences by introducing them to the arts and developing community and identity in these schools.

Span (2002) and California Law Review (1972) both give an account of education policy and practice during one of the most significant periods in the history of American schools. This era was the decades of legalized and culturally accepted segregation. The South lived by the "separate but equal" legal doctrine for years, and the cultural and practical impact of this reality seeped into American society. Span (2002) writes that the country only had legal justification to demand the end of public school racial segregation after the Supreme Court's 1954 decision (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 347 U.S. 483). The cultural and educational changes that followed this decision in the South affected American schools far beyond policy and public-school curricula, reaching into artistic spaces and music education.

Band traditions of Historically Black schools became known for their quality. As an example, Groulx (2018) mentions that in Duval County, Florida, several exceptional Black high school bands existed before desegregation. Segregation forced these communities to create a closed system in which people built strong identity and high-performing music programs that became the pride of the schools. Desegregation of the state and county, however, caused the Black high school bands to lose many instrumental resources, funding, and most of their institutional presence and identity (Groulx, 2018). Despite these losses, the music programs in these schools committed to providing their students with the best music education. They decided to "adapt and

adjust” to continue producing great music and helping their students feel proud (Groulx, 2018, p. 107).

The history of urban bands is long, and this makes them an institution of resilience for their students. These ensembles are expressions of a common culture, and more than just academic classes. They are sacred places for young people to express themselves, develop their musicianship, and be a part of something bigger than themselves, something that is often threatened by the systemic inequality they face in other spaces.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Realities

Urban schools face long-standing challenges that still affect their educational institutions today. According to Kinney (2010), socioeconomic status has been a major factor for how many students engage in band and music programs. In many cases, a student’s family income will largely dictate their access to musical instruments, lessons, transportation, and performance opportunities. The fortunate child whose family has resources will often find them; however, low-income students have been reported to often face financial and transportation obstacles that can prevent their access to these activities.

After several surveys and studies, Catterall (1998) determined that “students who participate in high-quality arts programs score higher on measures of academic success and show more evidence of civic involvement...” (Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2007, para.). Costa-Giomi and Chappell (2007) support his results and note that these findings hold true even when studies account for students’ SES. The authors also reveal the harsh

inequalities in students' access to arts programming. In low-SES school districts, there are often very few funds or space for a quality arts program.

To identify the demographics of students in school music ensembles, Elpus and Abril (2011) used national data and revealed some substantial disparities. They found that "65 percent of music ensemble students identified themselves as White and 15 percent identified as Black or African American" (Elpus & Abril, 2011). They also found a strong correlation between students' participation in music and their family's income and parental education level. Therefore, urban students are significantly underrepresented in music programs throughout the country. For music teachers and band directors, this underrepresentation has posed a critical issue in attempting to increase access to the music's powerful learning benefits.

Cultural Relevance and Representation

Doyle (2014) conducted a literature review and integrated studies on the importance of connecting music programs with students' backgrounds, identities, and interests in this section. In Bradley (2007) and Legette (2003), the message was the same. Music teachers should not ignore race and culture in their curriculum if they do not want to turn classes with students of color as the majority into a failed practice. All three writers claimed that while urban schools have an abundance of styles and genres to teach, school music is based primarily on white European art music. Because instruction in such genres is often not relevant to the students' daily lives, it results in negative student attitudes about school music.

Abril (2009) and Albert (2006b) also demonstrate how intentional teaching that recognizes culture and race can have a direct positive impact on the recruitment and

retention of urban band students. Albert (2006b) and Abril (2009), for example, illustrate how bringing popular music and styles from students' communities into the classroom can create interest and lead to continued participation.

The tradition of marching bands at historically Black colleges is one genre that can give urban students a musical "home" when educators intentionally bring it into the school band program. The band classroom thus becomes an affirming "home away from home," and students are less likely to drop out of school music entirely.

Resource Distribution and Policy Constraints

In spite of the benefits of participation, there are some considerable inequities that often impede opportunities for access to arts learning. Urban school districts face barriers of unequal resource allocations, old facilities, and shortages of highly qualified teachers (Barth, 2003; Peske & Haycock, 2006). It is often the case that these districts are assigned less-experienced teachers and have less financial support from the state for arts education. This unequal distribution of resources and opportunities creates larger gaps that work to widen and unbalance the field.

The U.S. Department of Education (2012) further supports these findings by reporting a continued lack of funding for arts education. They specifically state that schools have decreased instructional time to arts courses. Schools felt an increasing pressure of accountability for test performance under the No Child Left Behind Act (2011), which caused them to shift attention to courses that directly impact test scores, such as reading and math. Aud and Hannes (2011) suggest that this results in a negative impact on communities that are plagued with poverty and high dropout rates.

In these communities, children lack an opportunity that may greatly enrich their lives through music and the arts.

Catterall, Dumais, and Hampden-Thompson (2012) presented a study that establishes a positive relationship between participation in the arts and academic achievement and social skill growth. Students from low socioeconomic status (low-SES) families who were involved in instrumental music were shown to score higher on standardized achievement tests than those who did not participate and who had similar backgrounds. The study also demonstrates that involvement in the arts bolsters civic engagement and resiliency. In turn, this provides students with more opportunities for success in the long-term. These results have been noted by Fitzpatrick (2011), who also found that students who were involved in instrumental music outperformed their non-participating peers on academic measures, and this effect was consistent across student populations.

Taken together, these findings are especially powerful for children in poverty. If students from underserved communities are given access to arts education, it may contribute to positive academic and long-term life outcomes. Schools that make this investment in music create important opportunities to level the playing field.

Teacher Preparation and Representation

The demographics of teachers that make up the staff of urban schools play a large part in how complex urban education can be. Studies have found that most preservice music teachers come from suburban middle-class communities (Pembrook & Craig, 2002; Robinson, 2012; Gardner, 2010). This socioeconomic and cultural homogeneity presents issues when teaching in schools that are predominantly staffed

and attended by non-middle-class community members. The reality is that most inner-city schools are situated in complex cultural ecologies, which have resulted in systems of belief and practice that may be difficult for teachers to understand or relate to who come from suburban areas (Wuttke, 2011).

The problem extends to college-level music education as most teacher preparation programs are focused almost exclusively on the Western classical canon. The value of this musical tradition cannot be denied, but neither should it be privileged in teacher education. As a result of the limited curriculum in preservice music teacher education programs, many newly certified music teachers lack the cultural relevance to connect with inner-city school students who are simultaneously navigating the realities of poverty and strong cultural identities (Abril, 2006; Miralis, 2006).

Urban music programs are fighting constant battles for funding, as well as struggling to find skilled teachers that can work with students in engaging ways (Abril, 2006; Miralis, 2006). Solving these problems and many more will come with a greater understanding of multicultural music education (Abril, 2006; Miralis, 2006).

Students participate at higher rates in music classes when teachers connect to their musical lives rather than try to fill classrooms with the same traditional repertoires year after year (Abril, 2006; Miralis, 2006). Urban music education needs to be improved, and this will take more than an ideological shift in music curriculum. A long-term monetary investment and understanding of diverse populations is needed. Educators and policymakers will need to listen more and advocate for the voices and experiences of all students.

School Leadership and Team Dynamics

Administrative support consistently emerges as a major factor influencing teacher retention, job satisfaction, and overall program success. In a four-year longitudinal study of 50 beginning teachers in Massachusetts, Johnson and Birkeland (2003) found that teachers valued leadership that remained approachable, supportive, and respectful. Their study showed that when administrators fostered a culture of open communication and mutual respect, teachers developed stronger loyalty and commitment to their schools (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003).

Quinn and Andrews (2004) reached similar conclusions in their investigation of administrative support for first-year teachers. They discovered that teachers who perceived weak support from school leaders were more likely to leave their positions. Survey data from 106 teachers revealed that principals' direct actions strongly shaped teachers' perceptions of institutional support (Quinn & Andrews, 2004). Kersaint, Lewis, Potter, and Meisels (2007) expanded this line of inquiry, showing that demographic variables influence how teachers value administrative support. Their findings demonstrated statistically significant differences in how male and female teachers perceived support, with men rating it more highly. African American teachers also assigned greater importance to administrative support than White teachers, while Hispanic teachers placed less value on it (Kersaint et al., 2007). These studies indicate that the influence of administrative support varies widely across teachers' identities and experiences.

In music education, administrative support becomes even more critical and complex. Krueger (2000) emphasized that school leaders must intentionally combat

music teacher isolation. He argued that administrators should cultivate environments where mentor relationships develop, collaboration flourishes between music and non-music teachers, and team-teaching opportunities reinforce music teachers' sense of belonging. South (2004) added that administrators must show support both directly and indirectly. Direct support involves allocating adequate resources, protecting instructional time, and providing access to professional development. Indirect support involves shaping a school culture that values music education and gives it prominence in the curriculum.

Siebert (2008) reinforced this notion by demonstrating the importance of supervision from certified music administrators. Through interviews with beginning music educators, he noted that feedback, professional development, and philosophical validation from school leaders strengthened motivation and deepened teachers' commitment to their careers. Hearn (2009) extended these ideas in a study of band directors in the Southeastern United States, identifying administrative support as a central factor in teachers' career decisions. His definition of administrative support included assistance with discipline and budgeting, active involvement such as attending performances and offering encouragement, and a shared understanding that music is not a fringe subject (p. 31). Hearn linked this model of support to high teacher satisfaction and thriving music programs.

Several scholars also explore the challenges administrators encounter when supporting music teachers. Pegg (2010) described contemporary principals as "risk-conscious" leaders who must navigate systemic constraints while simultaneously advocating for creative learning opportunities. Wong, Britton, and Ganer (2005)

echoed this idea, arguing that great administrators distinguish themselves through their deep understanding of both teachers and students. Vitale (2007), focusing on high school music programs, cautioned against expecting administrators to serve as sole advocates for music. Because most principals lack formal music training, they may make budgetary or curricular decisions without fully understanding music's pedagogical value. Vitale therefore urged music teachers to proactively "sell" their programs to secure equal resources and recognition.

In summary, research consistently highlights administrative support as essential to teacher retention and music program success. When school leaders provide material resources, time, constructive feedback, and philosophical backing for music education, they significantly increase music teachers' satisfaction and effectiveness. Conversely, without support, even highly skilled teachers may struggle to maintain the motivation necessary to sustain long-term careers in music education.

Need for the Study

This qualitative case study sought to reveal how a band director and her administrators took action on the problems faced in an urban school district to create a successful band program. The case study delves into what made the band program successful, how different people viewed the meaning and measure of success, and the role school culture and leadership played in the program's success. The case study of this successful urban band program could reveal best practices, strategies, and partnerships to implement to those teaching and administering similar programs.

Chapter 3

Methods

Qualitative Design

Qualitative research design is chosen for this study since the real-life settings were analyzed to examine how participants make sense of and experience a particular social process. Qualitative methods are often used when research involves complex social phenomena, and they are usually conducted in natural settings by the people who are a part of these environments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Consequently, the subjective meanings and common interpretations of band directors were examined in this study. This approach is preferred instead of quantitative techniques, such as testing a hypothesis or measuring variables, since qualitative research helps to explore a certain research question, as Patton (2015) states, when the researcher's aim is to find processes, meaning, and context.

A case study design was used because the study unit of analysis is a bounded system (single urban high school band program located in its school district context) (Yin, 2018; Stake, 1995). Case studies are also particularly useful when the phenomenon and the context are inextricably intertwined (Yin, 2018), when the researcher desires deep, rich, multilayered understanding of practice (Stake, 1995), and when multiple sources of data are triangulated in the development of meaning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018). This research effort meets these three criteria as well.

Rationale

Consistent with Merriam and Tisdell (2016) description of a purposeful sampling design, a case was selected in which a great deal of information would be available,

one of a successful urban band programs that could yield important insights. This single-case design puts a premium on rich, not maximal, information. According to Stake (1995), this density is one of the primary distinguishing characteristics of case study research conducted for purposes of seeking deep, conceptual understanding.

As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, however, findings from qualitative research are always context-bound. It is important to take context into account, in as much detail as possible. The best way to accomplish this is through what Geertz (1973) has called a thick description. The school district described in this chapter was an urban district in the south of the United States. It was a district with a high degree of diversity, and a high degree of concentrated poverty. As such, context is important to understanding the experiences of both the students and educators in this district. It is also important for understanding the specific conditions that have allowed success in this setting despite the challenges. The district also served a large population of students from low socioeconomic status (low SES) backgrounds, making socioeconomic context an important consideration in interpreting the findings.

Participants

Purposeful sampling approach is in reference to a type of sample that is deliberately gathered for the function of research due to the fact they have actually direct exposure to the phenomenon. The objective of including individuals that have direct exposure to the situation under study is in light of the fact that it is thought that this could lead to improved and more valuable information that concerns the problem (Patton, 2015). Qualitative data collection is the physical means to receiving an in depth examination of the problems of the topic of interest, in this case, how project based

learning (PBL) approaches can assist in increasing awareness of some subject issue. Purposeful sampling is significant in a qualitative research due to the fact that the participants are chosen on the basis of some qualities they have or have actually experienced. This sampling procedure is meaningful because it leads to picking people who have directly encountered a circumstance for a very long time or are familiar with a phenomenon for long. The information that they have or collect from such individuals is very significant.

This study uses a criterion-based purposeful sampling approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to select study participants. The sample of head band directors, assistant band directors, and district administrators were chosen because of their active role in either the arts programming or in secondary education programs and administration in urban education.

The following inclusion criteria have been established for participants in this study. Participants must have a minimum of five full years of service in an urban school district. Participants must have been involved in the development, management, or support of band programs. Additionally, participants must be willing to commit to the research process. This includes the completion of in-depth interviews of experiences and insights, as well as providing artifacts demonstrating the success of the band programs participants have been a part of. We conducted interviews with more than one band director and administrator in order to meet Patton's (2015) recommendations for collecting multiple voices in the same school system.

Data Collection

The data collection strategies included semi-structured interviews, the analysis of artifacts, observations, and field notes. The semi-structured interview is the interview that “enables both in-depth interviews and the flexibility to probe for unanticipated topics” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is supported by the creation of an interview guide and questions. The next data collection strategy, which is the artifact, could be in a form of documents, pictures, or any other means of information. Observation is used for recording information about participants and the surroundings. The last data collection strategy, which is field notes, is used as a record of researchers’ thoughts and reflections on what is happening and what has been observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2018).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Each of the five participants engaged in one 60–90 minute semi-structured interview. Clarification follow-up interviews was conducted as needed. Interviews was recorded and transcribed verbatim per Seidman's (2019) instructions.

Artifact Collection

In addition to interviews, program artifacts was gathered and analyzed for physical evidence of success and culture. Artifact types include: trophies, plaques, adjudicated awards, certificates of achievement, photos of performances, rehearsals, band camps, school events, historical memorabilia (banners, uniform displays, etc.), and digital artifacts (newsletters, social media posts, competition programs, recruitment flyers, etc.)

Adopting Bowen (2009), artifacts were used to corroborate self-reported stories, show organizational values and understand how success is publicly and privately displayed. The artifacts support the interpretation of the data and provide an opportunity to view culture, history and recognition symbolically. Artifacts were scanned or photographed (with permission) then tabulated and coded if they have a theme related to visibility, achievement, legacy, identity or recognition.

Observations

Observational fieldwork, where possible, consisted of rehearsals, performances or school presence events, public award displays, meetings, or informal director-administrator interactions. This is to capture culture in action, per Merriam & Tisdell (2016).

Institutional Review Board

Because this study involves human subjects, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required prior to data collection. The IRB process ensures ethical compliance, protects participants, and verifies informed consent procedures (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The IRB protocol including research purpose, design, participant criteria, interview instruments and consent forms, procedures for protecting confidentiality, recruitment scripts and data security plans were submitted to the university IRB for review and approval before interviews are scheduled and artifacts are collected. Consent procedures that clearly articulate participant rights, voluntary nature of participation, ability to withdraw at any time, confidentiality guarantees and minimal risk acknowledgment was developed. Ongoing compliance with the IRB was demonstrated

through password-protected storage of digital files, de-identification of all participant data, and destruction of raw files following required retention period.

Interviewing, observation, and collection of artifacts did not begin until after IRB approval. Data was kept behind password protected systems. Pseudonyms were used when reporting results.

Data Analysis

Artifact data (trophies, photos, certificates, digital media, etc.) was also coded along with interview and observation data. For example, codes that are present in multiple interview transcripts, such as the words “recognition”, “celebration”, or “community validation”, was contrasted against the ideas and topics artifacts present to the public. This help in triangulating the data, to make it more credible (Yin, 2018; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness

Artifact analysis allows for corroboration and confirmability of the findings, thus increasing the credibility of the research. By using various types of artifacts, the self-reporting approach was avoided or at least limited (Bowen, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In other words, different sources of information allowed to cross-check facts, as well as back up statements with supporting material.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify conditions contributing to thriving urban high school band programs. More precisely, what did experienced urban band directors and music administrators consider success to be, and how did they build and keep outstanding programs going? How do successful urban band directors work with stakeholders? What challenges do they face when leading programs in urban schools? What type of organizational culture do successful directors create to foster long-term student and program success? Data were gathered from semi-structured interviews with five participants who led successful urban high school band programs. Notes and supporting artifacts were gathered through observations and field notes.

Interview responses were organized and coded according to the six-phase thematic analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This began with multiple readings of each interview to gain familiarity. Codes were generated through inductive analysis of the interview transcripts and then compared across participants. Related codes were combined and collapsed into categories. Categories were refined until themes developed that represented perspectives shared across participants. Themes were reviewed repeatedly throughout the analysis process to ensure they were supported by the data and addressed the research questions guiding the study.

Rather than discussing each participant individually, participant responses were aggregated to highlight shared perspectives and unique perspectives where interesting

trends were present across all cases. Quotations provided for each theme were selected to represent responses from multiple participants when possible. Interpretive discussion followed each set of quotations to explain how participants collectively addressed each research question.

This chapter follows the structure of the five research questions guiding the study. After describing the participant selection process and participant bios, results are presented under each research question. Each research question was restated followed by a summary of the findings. Following the summary was the themes that emerged from analysis of the data. Within each theme, participant quotations were provided along with interpretive discussion to synthesize participants' perspectives and clarify how the presented evidence answered the research question. The final section of this chapter summarized the major findings of the study and allowed for proper transition to Chapter 5 where the results were discussed in relation to existing literature, the conceptual framework, practical implications, suggestions for future research, and conclusions.

Participant 1

Participant 1 was a high school band director in a nationally recognized public magnet school in a large urban district in Alabama. He had 6 years of experience teaching in urban schools exclusively and directed a comprehensive band program with approximately 120 – 140 students. Under his direction the program consistently received superior ratings at Music Performance Assessments (MPA) and won numerous marching band championships. He highlighted relationship building, promoting student ownership, and developing student leaders as keys to running a

successful program. As the participant with the least amount of experience, he offered insight into modern leadership practices and the perspective of an early-career urban band director.

Participant 2

Participant 2 had 15 years of experience teaching instrumental music in urban environments. He taught in schools located in Alabama and Florida and directed a high school band program with approximately 120 – 140 students. The majority of his students identified as African American and qualified for free/reduced price lunch. Throughout his career, his ensembles have consistently received superior ratings at performance assessment festivals. His students were selected to participate in regional, state, and national honor ensembles and received significant collegiate music scholarships. He offered a student-centered perspective focused on leadership development, musicianship, assessment, and providing students opportunities that would help them be successful after high school.

Participant 3

Participant 3 contributed 26 years of experience working as an urban band director and fine arts administrator at the district level. As a band director his ensembles consistently earned superior ratings at marching, concert, and jazz festivals while maintaining steady program growth. As a district administrator he supported music educators by developing curriculum, mentoring new teachers, providing advocacy, and connecting teachers with resources. He provided perspective on administrative leadership, program sustainability, and how organizational support impacts successful urban band programs.

Participant 4

Participant 4 was the most experienced active classroom teacher in this study with 28 years of teaching instrumental music in urban public schools. He directed a Title I high school band program with 60 – 80 students who resided in a community that was predominately African American and Hispanic. Throughout his career his ensembles have consistently received superior ratings at performance assessments. His students were selected to perform at regional and All-State honor bands. He highlighted the importance of holding high expectations for students and themselves, fostering individual student growth, consistency, and teaching to the highest level despite some of the difficulties that can be experienced in urban school settings.

Participant 5

Participant 5 had 21 years of experience leading successful urban high school band programs. He directed a Title I program with approximately 80 – 120 students that participated in concert and marching music. The majority of his students qualified for free/reduced price lunch. His students consistently received superior ratings at concert festivals. His program also competed in HBCU-style marching band competitions and produced many students who received scholarships to play music in college. He placed an emphasis on mentorship, discipline, work ethic, parent involvement, and helping students become successful after high school.

Field Observations and Artifacts

Analysis of observations and artifacts from each band program indicated a positive and thriving culture. Perhaps the biggest takeaway from observations was the emphasis on familial relationships between students and directors. In each observation,

interactions between students and directors were respectful, encouraging, and caring. Directors seemed invested in students' academic success as well as musical and personal growth. Students seemed to trust their directors and be eager to help one another and follow direction. This sense of family was present during general music teaching as well as how students addressed their peers, collaborated during music-making, and approached their directors. Students in each band program seemed to feel as though they were part of something bigger than just band class. Building meaningful relationships with students may be one of many variables that contribute to positive band cultures where students feel comfortable, supported, and motivated to work together towards common goals. Another element that may contribute to the welcoming environment of each band program is the pride students have in their school and band. The artifact and observational data supports the notion that students in band don't just learn music together, they grow socially and emotionally.

Similar to how artifacts can give insight to the type of relationships built within each program, the facilities also shed light on the traditions of each band culture. While the age and set up of each facility was different, all three facilities were relatively clean, organized, and well kept. This may demonstrate that students in each band program take pride in their environment and expect to be taught in a professional setting. Each rehearsal space had banners, posters, pictures, and other decorations that identified the school and depicted aspects of the band's culture. The use of school colors, mascots, banners, photos, and other decorations created a visual representation of each school's identity and band program. These artifacts helped students feel connected to their school and indicated the values, history, and expectations that had been set by each

program. By decorating their space with these objects, it showed students and visitors that band was important.

The most impactful artifacts I noticed in each band room were the trophies. There were easily 80+ trophies in each band room that collected dust from years of success in marching band competitions, concert festivals, and other performances. I think these trophies represent much more than success in competitions. Having a physical representation of decades of band history demonstrates the strong traditions that have been built by students, directors, and the community. Having these trophies display proudly in each band room can reinforce a culture of excellence by showing students the standard that previous students have set. Displaying trophies can also act as an artifact of high expectations, showing students what they can accomplish with hard work and dedication to their craft. Finally, these trophies can help a band program create a organizational identity by allowing current students to feel connected to the history of the program.

What Variables Are Associated with Successful Urban High School Band Programs?

Participants described successful programs in similar ways throughout all five interviews. Most notably, participants defined success as achievable through intentional leadership practices rather than areas outside of a director's control such as demographics, funding, or location. Despite discussing challenges unique to teaching in urban environments, participants agreed that strong leadership, purposeful planning, and dedication to students allowed programs to thrive in urban settings. Participants also acknowledged that many successful programs served students from low

socioeconomic status (low SES) backgrounds and emphasized that effective leadership helped mitigate many of the challenges associated with poverty.

Success was largely attributed to building programs through collaborative relationships and intentional leadership. Participants noted that successful programs operated as learning communities where directors, students, administrators, parents, alumni, and community members worked together to achieve common goals. Rather than placing the responsibility of program success on one director, participants explained that successful leaders developed organizations where teachers, students, and stakeholders worked collaboratively to support the growth of students and program. Three themes were identified from responses pertaining to what allows urban high school band programs to be successful. The first theme, *Strong Relationships as the Foundation of Successful Programs* , describes participants' views on how positive connections with students, parents, administrators, alumni, and community members established trust, commitment, and support for band programs.

The second theme, *Shared Leadership and Collaboration* , reflects participants' perspectives on how successful directors empower students, teachers, parents, and stakeholders to lead alongside them. The last theme, *Student- Centered Leadership and Development* , summarizes participants' beliefs that successful programs take a students' first approach and focus on developing students to be successful both inside and outside of the band program.

Strong Relationships as the Foundation of Successful Programs

Developing authentic, positive relationships with students, family, administrators, alumni, and community members was identified as the foundational aspect of

successful urban band programs. During each interview, participants expressed that building meaningful relationships was critical to program success and sustainability. Participants explained that strong relationships with students, parents, alumni, and community were a leadership strategy that promoted trust, commitment, accountability, and investment in band program.

Each participant expressed that strong relationships with students were the starting point for building a successful program. Participant 5 mentioned that students will not become invested in the band program until they know you care about them as more than just a student. He stated,

“He found out that I care. Well, she found out that I care. And when they needed you the most...you showed up...Some of them don’t have parents that do that. So when they see your face in the audience... it makes the difference.”

Participant 5 implies that students feel connected to and committed to their band program when there is an established relationship, rather than a relationship based on authority. If directors take the time to support their students outside of band rehearsals and performances, they can establish trust which allows students to feel connected and committed to remaining in the program and doing well.

In a similar manner, Participant 2 described choosing to teach in the city he grew up in as an opportunity to help students that may have similar backgrounds as him. He stated, “I always wanted to come back to where I started from and see what kind of difference I can make in the system.”

Instead of viewing his job as a means to an end, Participant 2 described teaching as an opportunity to help shape the lives of students as he was shaped in youth. This

exemplifies how impactful urban band directors can build strong relationships with not only their students, but the community that their students are from.

Participants also expressed that relationships with parents and alumni were important to the longevity of a band program. Participant 5 described how parent involvement increased when directors establish that they care about their students.

“When the connection happens...now you got the parents involved. Now you got a kid that actually wants to do it.” This statement implies that parents are more likely to get involved when there is trust between the director and the student. As relationships with students are cultivated, parents are then more willing to support band practices, concerts, fundraisers, and other events.

Participant 1 described a similar sentiment through alumni involvement. He stated that former students still stayed involved with the program because they had formed relationships with other staff and students while they were in the band. “I’ve recently gotten a couple of donations from some school alumni...they just love hearing us practice...they just wanted to help grow the program.” Instead of viewing alumni as just students who used to be in the band, Participant 1 views his former students as lifelong ambassadors of the program. This shows how positive relationships with students can allow alumni to become highly involved with the band program even after graduates.

Participants additionally commented on the importance of building relationships with administrators and community stakeholders. Participant 3 stated that administrator support can look like advocacy, collaboration, and opportunities because administrators who value music education as a tool for student development will do whatever they can

to help music programs grow. This illustrates that building relationships with administrators can help programs because directors have someone backing their program at the administrative level.

Participant 4 spoke about how community members would support your program if they know you are doing something worthwhile. “We’ve got a community that supports you 100% when they see you know what you’re doing.”

This statement implies that communities provide support when they know that the program is benefiting students and running smoothly. Building strong relationships with your community can allow them to become involved and support band program. Participants agreed that positive relationships with students, families, administrators, alumni, and community members were the building blocks to successful urban high school band programs. Directors who prioritize building authentic connections with their students and those around them were able to cultivate an environment of trust, responsibility, and investment that went beyond students being involved in the band program. Rather than strong relationships being a byproduct of successful programs, participants built strong relationships on purpose to allow their programs to succeed.

Shared Leadership and Collaboration

Another reoccurring idea was that successful directors work collaboratively with their students, teachers, parents, and stakeholders to leadership their programs. Participants expressed that one person cannot run a program by themselves and that students, parents, booster organizations, administrators, instructional staff, alumni, and community members played a role in developing successful urban high school band programs. Participants discussed collaboration being an intentional leadership strategy

that distributes leadership responsibility among the program which allows for organizations to be sustainable and able to grow.

Participant 1 spoke about the importance of having student leaders in his program. He said that he wanted his students to be able to run his program if he was no longer there because he has adequately prepared them to do so. He stated, “I want my band to be able to function without me. If, God forbid, I pass out or something, somebody else can step in because I’ve prepared them properly to function without me. I can walk away, and they can teach a section without me having to spoon-feed them everything.” This quote illustrates that successful directors should be preparing their students to not only be better musicians, but stronger leaders. If directors focus on preparing their students to run the program, then they do not have to worry about what will happen to their program when they are gone.

Participant 2 described collaboration by sharing that he has multiple committees that are responsible for different tasks that need to be accomplished within his band program. He stated, “We have different committees that focus on different responsibilities within the band. Everybody has an opportunity to contribute, and every student has ownership in making the program successful.” By allowing students to feel like they have a voice and a leadership role in the band program, participation and students feeling responsible for the band program increases. Although there are student leaders who help run the show, participant 2 creates a system that allows every student to feel like they have a responsibility to help the program succeed.

Participant 3 expanded upon the idea of collaboration by describing how parents, booster organizations, and administrators also play a key role in creating a successful

program. He described how successful directors know how to communicate with stakeholders and allow them to help support the program. He said, "I tell the boosters exactly what we need and how they can help. When everybody understands the vision, people are willing to work together to accomplish it." If directors can create a clear vision for their programs and communicate that to their stakeholders, they will be more likely to support your program. By allowing others to help support your program, you can develop strong collaboration within your program.

Similar to Participant 3, Participant 4 also described collaboration as a key characteristic of a successful band program. He noted that student leaders should be trained on how to lead other students which will create leadership succession as upperclassmen teach underclassmen.

The last participant interviewed, Participant 5, also discussed the importance of collaboration by stating that everyone wants to feel involved. He said that as a director, you cannot do everything yourself and you have to allow others to help you run your program.

These participants all described collaboration as essential to the success of urban high school band programs. If leaders can share leadership with their students, staff, and stakeholders, not only will your program run more smoothly, it will be more likely to succeed in the long term. Successful directors allow others to share in the responsibility of running a band program by intentionally creating a collaborative environment.

Student-Centered Leadership and Development

The last theme that surfaced throughout the data was participants describing successful programs as taking a student-centered approach. Each participant expressed that successful programs take priority in developing students as musicians and people. Participants mentioned that they wanted their students to develop skills like confidence, responsibility, independence, and leadership that they can take with them after leaving the band program. Although participants each described student development differently, they all agreed that student development was central to their success as a leader and should be a strategy used by other directors to benefit their students.

Participant 4 expressed that leadership should not only be developed in students who are official leaders. When asked how students develop leadership skills being involved in the band program, he said, "I feel like just through existing in the program, they're developing leadership skills." Based on this response, it can be assumed that participants believe students develop leadership skills by being responsible and staying engaged while in the band program. If students know that they will have responsibilities as a member of the band program, they will learn how to become better leaders. This shows that successful directors allow students to develop leadership skills by requiring them to do more than just show up to band.

Like Participant 4, Participant 1 described how he tries to create a safe environment where students are not afraid to ask questions or step up and help their fellow classmates. He wants students to know that it is okay to not know something and encourage them to become leaders by asking questions.

Participant 2 described student development as being well-rounded musicians. He said that students in his program aren't just learning how to better themselves in the classroom, but they also have opportunities to go outside and be better musicians elsewhere. He stated, "Students are participating in outside activities outside of what you offer at your school. That's All-County, All-State, honor bands, community performances. If they're doing those things, they're becoming well-rounded." By allowing students to go play with other honor bands, Participant 2 is allowing his students to develop confidence in their musical abilities. This participant is developing his students by not only allowing them to grow as musicians in the classroom, but outside of it as well.

The final participant, Participant 5, spoke about how the band program was like preparing his students for college and their careers. He said that although music is important, teaching students life skills and helping them realize their potential is the most important thing. "If you can help shape these kids, show them they can be something because most of them don't think they can. Once they learn discipline and they learn how to try their hardest, you build strong people."

Participant 5 describes how he uses music to help develop life skills that his students will use when they get older. All of these participants described ways that they develop students to be successful not only in music, but in life. These participants view developing their students as leaders and musicians as the main purpose of band which allows them to be successful directors.

Participants took a student-centered approach to leadership. They created band programs where students are able to develop confidence, independence, responsibility,

and leadership. Although ways of developing students may look different for each director, it is important that directors focus on positively developing their students.

How Do Band Directors Define and Measure Success?

The second research question asked participants to define success and explain how they measured program success. Each participant agreed that superior ratings, championships, and public accolades were positive indicators of success. However, when defining success all participants discussed the importance of continued student growth, musicianship, leadership, life preparation, and development more so than championships or the number of students in the program. In essence, all participants viewed musical accomplishments as a byproduct of program success instead of the sole indicator of success.

Three themes were identified from participants' interview data. Success is Measured Through Student Growth and Development describes how participants view one's students' individual growth as the most important indicator of success. Success is Demonstrated Through Musical Excellence and Achievement described how participants assessed student learning through their musicianship, performance standards, and involvement in honor bands and festivals. Success Extends Beyond High School detailed how participants believed students' character, leadership skills, college opportunities, and career successes were the ultimate measures of a successful band program.

Together these themes show that successful urban band directors measure success in a holistic manner by developing musicians while also building students who are confident, responsible, and productive young adults. Although recognition and

musical excellence are important metrics, successful urban youth band directors define success by who their students become after leaving the program.

Success is Measured Through Student Growth and Development

The first theme that emerged was that successful urban band directors measure success by their students' growth and development. While participants acknowledged the significance of musical accomplishments, they described students getting better at their craft, more confident in their abilities, and improved leaders as the most important measures of success. Participants defined success as seeing students grow and improve rather than comparing students to their peers. By helping students improve their musicianship, self-confidence, and leadership skills, participants felt they were able to make a positive impact on students' lives.

Participant 2 defined success by how much his students grow during their time in the program. When discussing how he measures students' musical improvement, he said students should be "participating in outside activities outside of what you offer at your school." These activities included honor bands, community performances, all district band, all region band, and all state band. For Participant 2, success wasn't about how many students made all-state band but if his students had the confidence to continue developing musically after high school. Participant 2 further explained this by illustrating how one of his former students received \$500,000 in scholarships for music education. "Zach came to me his sophomore year, never played trumpet before. Zach did everything I told him, worked very, very hard, and now he's received over 500,000 in band scholarships."

Participant 2 was not bragging about the amount of scholarships his student received. He told this story to demonstrate that his student grew to become one of the best trumpet players in the state by his senior year. This example highlights how directors define success by how much their students grow during their time in the program, not what they were like when they first arrived.

Participant 1 described success as not only seeing his students improve but continuing to better himself as an educator. When asked how he defines success, Participant 1 said, “It’s just seeing my kids develop and getting better at this craft. Even myself— iron sharpens iron. The better they get, the more I have to research, learn, and become a better teacher.”

Participant 1 viewed growing his students’ musicianship and leadership skills as a shared responsibility. As his students grow, he has an obligation to improve his teaching methods to better serve his students. Participant 1 believes that a true indicator of success is if both students and teachers are getting better every day. Similar to Participant 1, Participant 4 measures his program’s success by looking at how much each student improves every year. When discussing what makes a successful band program, he stated, “I think where they’re at when they start and where they finish. So I like to think about where they started at the beginning of the year and where they are at the end of the year.”

By knowing each students’ starting point, Participant 4 was able to ensure that every student continued to make progress throughout the school year. Although some students may have started the school year better than their peers, Participant 4 held

every student to the same high standards and celebrated how much they improved by the end of the year.

All participants agreed that one of the most important indicators of success is when students continuously grow as musicians and young adults. If students are improving musical skills, confidence, and personal responsibility, they are experiencing success in the eyes of the participants. Although winning championships and performing at high-quality is important, participants viewed students' growth as music learners and people as the best way to measure if they were successful teachers.

Success is Demonstrated Through Musical Excellence and Achievement

The second theme that emerged from the data was that successful urban youth band directors measure their success through musical excellence and student achievement. While participants stated that the number of awards or size of the ensemble did not define success, they all agreed that musical excellence was important. Participants defined musical excellence as students showing high musical proficiency and performing at a high level. Directors measured musical success by continuous improvement, instruction, and assessment rather than festival placements or competition outcomes. Participants viewed musical achievement as an indicator that students are receiving a high-quality music education. Participant 3 believed musical success could be defined by the quality of performance. When asked what makes a successful band program, Participant 3 said, "It was the quality. It was always the quality of the product." Participant 3 further described how having a high-quality program helped him to continue to grow as a director, "Once you get that quality product

going, everything else takes care of itself. The more you put into it, the more you get out of it.”

By putting the music program first and emphasizing musical excellence, Participant 3 was able to grow his program every year he was given the opportunity. As the quality of the band program increased, so did the number of students who wanted to be a part of it. This demonstrated musical excellence was an outcome of a successful band program but also increased the program’s success. Participant 2 defined musical success as students mastering their musical skills. He went on to describe how he knew students were excelling at music by requiring them to know their 12 major scales. “We go through and do daily assessments. I require all students to know their 12 major scales. If we can get all of our students to play all 12 major scales, then we know they can do pretty much anything.”

Based on Participant 2’s statement, he believes successful directors should consistently check for understanding rather than using formal assessments to see if students are learning. If students can play all 12 major scales, they have the musical foundation to learn any piece they are given in the future. Like Participant 2, Participant 4 believes directors should assess students using where they started as a benchmark. He continued by stating, “So if you can help that student reach that peak potential that they can do, then you’re successful.”

Although participants wanted students to reach their full potential, they did not use other students or bands as a benchmark for success. Successful directors helped each student become the best musician they could be and did not compare their students to other musicians.

Although all participants agreed that festivals such as MPA and honors bands were not the sole indicator of success, they were used to confirm that students were learning. If students consistently performed well at festivals, received superior ratings at assessments, and were selected for honors bands, they were successful in music according to the participants. Musical excellence and achievement was demonstrated by students receiving high ratings on their performances.

Together these findings suggest that successful urban band directors define musical success as students performing with confidence at a high level. Students gain this confidence by having strong musicianship skills which are developed by continuous improvement, effective instruction, and regular assessment. Musical achievement shows that students are benefiting from music education which is why successful urban youth band directors use it as a measure of success.

Success Extends Beyond High School

The final theme that recurred throughout the interview questions was that successful urban youth band directors define success by their programs' impact on students after they graduate high school. While participants discussed how musical success and student development are important, they all said that helping students become successful in life was the ultimate goal. Every participant viewed band as an opportunity to help students grow into disciplined, responsible young adults. Participant 5 specifically stated that success is when students graduate and continue to be successful after leaving the band program. He further explained that

“Every band student I’ve ever met that has been a part of a quality program... they have a work ethic. They know discipline. They know how to work. Those kids go out, get quality jobs, continue their education, and become successful people.”

Participant 5 firmly believes that band students who are taught by great directors will be successful after leaving the program. He describes success as the character students develop while participating in music programs. Participants believed that students who were taught by successful directors developed lifelong skills that allowed them to be successful adults. Supporting Participant 5’s point about preparing students for life after high school, Participant 2 discussed how he views musical scholarships as an indicator of program success.

“Student A came to me his sophomore year, never played trumpet before. He started playing here at West High and got blessed with some great teachers. He did everything I told him, worked very, very hard, and now he’s received over 500,000 in band scholarships.”

Similar to the previous example with Participant 2, he used this story to show how his students could be successful if they worked hard in the program. Participant 2 views success as the band program providing students with opportunities that they can use to further their lives after high school. Likewise, Participant 3 described success as preparing students to be productive citizens. He said that successful music programs help students develop skills to be successful, “In life. Not just music. But life in general. They’re going to be responsible. They know how to work with other people to make something happen.” Although musical skills are important, Participant 3 believes that students should leave band programs understanding the value of music and how to

excel in life. Participant 3 views music as a tool for students to develop life skills that will help them after high school.

Echoing what was mentioned by Participant 1 in the first theme, Participant 1 also believes the impact of a successful band program continues after students graduate. He said that family like relationships students form with the program after high school is a positive indicator of success, “You still have students that come back and help us out. That to me is success because they want to come back and help other students.” When students come back to help out at the school they once attended shows that they will pay it forward as adults. Participants believed that success in a band program helps produce students that care about serving others which will continue to help band programs for years.

All participants defined success as their program’s impact they have on students once they graduate high school. Winning championships and performing musically difficult pieces are wonderful accomplishments, but participants wanted their students to be successful in life. Successful urban youth band directors strive to develop students who are disciplined, responsible, and want to serve others after they graduate high school.

How Do Administrators Support Band Programs, and How Does Their Level of Support Impact Success?

The third research question asked participants about their perceptions of administrative support for successful urban high school band programs. Participants acknowledged administrators’ ability to provide funding and material resources that directly impacted operations but continually stressed the fact that supportive

administrators did much more than just write a check. Supportive administrators were described as advocates for music education that communicated with directors, removed barriers, and provided students with opportunities to succeed. Alternatively, minimal administrator involvement created barriers that limited the growth of these programs and placed more responsibility on directors.

Two themes were developed after coding the interview data. Administrative Advocacy and Resource Support describes the ways that administrators and directors partner with one another to support music programs by providing resources and advocating for music education. Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Success describes how successful directors and administrators work together to develop a shared vision and foster trusting relationships that benefit the band program as a whole. Together, these themes suggest that administrative support plays a critical role in the success of high school band programs and is demonstrated through leaders' commitment to advocating for music education and empowering directors.

Administrative Advocacy and Resource Support

Administrative Advocacy and Resource Support was the first theme that emerged from the interview questions. Participants acknowledged the importance of financial resources to keep instruments playing, purchase equipment, and allow for student activities. However, they overwhelmingly described successful administrators as leaders that supported music education and collaborated with directors to provide students with opportunities to succeed. Many of the participants associated administrative support with director-administrator partnerships that were built on trust, open communication, and shared commitments to helping students achieve their goals.

When discussing his experiences working with school and district administrators, Participant 3 gave meaningful insight about the importance of administrative support. As a successful band director and district-level fine arts administrator, he understood the perspectives of both directors and administrators. He explained that supportive administrators helped directors by advocating for music education and connecting them with people who have the resources to help. Participant 3 specifically described his relationship with his school principal, "Anything that I truly need, I go to one resource that everybody doesn't have, the principal. He knows everybody. He knows where I can get it. He knows how to get it." These comments from Participant 3 reflect that administrative support involves more than just providing financial resources. Successful administrators used their professional networks to advocate for music programs and create opportunities that directors would not have access to otherwise. Instead of only supervising directors, administrators partnered with them to strengthen the program.

Participant 3 continued by explaining that another way administrators showed support was by becoming involved with the program, "When you've got an administration that'll say, 'I see you working. Let me help you with this,' your job is one hundred times easier." This response provides evidence that participants defined administrative support as administrators who not only acknowledged the hard work of directors but also took the time to understand their programs and offer assistance. Participants explained that this level of involvement allowed directors to focus more time and energy on students instead of administrative tasks that did not contribute to student growth. Participant 5 shared a similar view and pointed out that administrators impact

every aspect of a band program's success, "If the administration is backing you, it's a lot of things that you can get done versus an administration that does not care."

Participant 5 believes that supportive administrators provide directors with the confidence they need to teach, recruit new students, and focus on the development of current students. In his opinion, administrators show their support by caring about the band program. On the other hand, participants noted that a lack of administrative involvement limited the potential for growth regardless of how hard directors worked. Administrator support was also described as allowing directors to access community resources by Participant 1. He said that district administrators and community members provided financial assistance and instruments because they cared about the program and its impact on students. Having community members and alumni support the program showed participants that advocacy can help programs receive support from outside of the school.

Participant 4 added that administrative support was demonstrated by maintaining consistent funding to keep the program running. Although he mentioned that funding was becoming less of an issue over the years, instrumental repairs, replacement of equipment, and updated instructional resources are still needed to maintain a quality program. His response supports the idea that administrators should view these expenditures as investments in their students rather than inconveniences.

In conclusion, participants viewed administrators as advocates that supported music education by providing directors with resources, connecting them with people who could support their program, and removing organizational barriers. Participant responses suggest that advocacy allows administrators to create the necessary

conditions for directors to concentrate on teaching, leadership, and continuing to improve their program.

Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Success

The second theme consisted of the collaborative relationships that successful directors formed with school administrators and community stakeholders. Participants expressed that collaboration was critical to the success of urban band programs. Successful programs did not allow the director to work independently; rather, directors established partnerships with administrators, teachers, parents, booster organizations, alumni, and community members. Participants believed their collaborative relationships improved organizational capacity and provided a foundation for both students and programs to be successful.

Collaboration was defined by Participant 3 as a significant characteristic of successful leadership. As a band director and district-level administrator, he focused on the importance of working with others to improve student learning. He believed administrators should collaborate with directors to determine needs, communicate with stakeholders, and coordinate resources. Participant 3 highlighted the importance of directors communicating their program's vision. He told boosters exactly what his program needed so they could help.

This response demonstrates that participants believed collaboration could be strengthened if leaders clearly communicated their program's goals. When others know what they can do to support students and band programs, they are more likely to help. Similar to Participant 3, Participant 2 discussed the importance of collaboration by distributing leadership roles within his program. He created a leadership team that

consisted of students who were responsible for managing different aspects of the band program. He stated: “We have different committees that focus on different responsibilities within the band.” Although he was referring to his student leadership model, Participant 2’s response implies that he believed in distributing leadership roles throughout his organization. Directors can collaborate with students by allowing them to make decisions and take on responsibilities that would typically be handled by the director.

Participant 5 suggested that collaboration is visible when administrators support directors as long as they know what the program is trying to accomplish. He explained that directors should maintain open communication with administrators so they can work together to provide students with more opportunities. Mutually beneficial relationships develop when administrators value directors’ knowledge and experience while directors are transparent about their program.

Like Participant 5, Participant 1 discussed the importance of collaboration with external partners. He formed strong relationships with alumni, district leaders, and individuals in his community that provided his program with instruments, financial support, and volunteers. Collaboration allowed his program to continue to grow despite a lack of funding because people cared about the program and its impact on students. Interviews with all participants revealed that successful leadership depended on the ability to work collaboratively with others. Administrators who communicated with their directors, trusted their abilities, and reached out to students, parents, alumni, and community members created an environment where band programs could prosper. Directors that built partnerships with people who have a desire to help the program

learned how to share leadership responsibilities. This, in return, created organizations that were prepared to handle any situation because there were multiple people capable of making decisions. Collaborative leadership is essential to urban band programs because it unites stakeholders toward a shared vision of improving students' lives.

What Challenges Directors and Administrators Face and How Are They Overcome?

The fourth research question asked about challenges successful urban directors and administrators faced and how they overcame those challenges. While each participant expressed challenges that came along with teaching in an urban school setting, each interviewee agreed that challenges did not make or break their program. When faced with challenges, participants overcame those obstacles with leadership, creativity, and persistence. Participants did not allow limited resources or situations out of their control define their program; they developed ways to ensure students were still able to learn and excel.

Two themes emerged from participants when answering question four. The first theme, Overcoming Resource and Organizational Challenges, showed how participants overcame limitations such as funding, equipment, staffing, recruitment, and program resources by thinking outside of the box, advocating, and building community partnerships. The second theme, Persistence and Adaptive Leadership, showed how successful directors set high expectations for their students and programs, adapted to the situation, and did not allow obstacles get them down.

Successful directors and administrators did not become discouraged by challenges; instead, they persisted, adapted to their situation, and found ways to work through challenges with their students at the center of their decision-making.

Overcoming Resource and Organizational Challenges

Successful urban band directors overcame organizational and resource challenges by thinking outside the box, advocating for their program, and building strong community partnerships. Each participant discussed limitations with funding, equipment, staffing, enrollment, and organizational challenges due to the school's size and bureaucracy. However, those limitations did not break their program, and each participant overcame those limitations by getting creative, building community partnerships, and advocating for their students and program.

Participant 3 gave great insight on how to work through organizational challenges due to his experience as a district-level fine arts administrator and successful urban band director. When discussing challenges that come with running an urban band program, he stated that funding can be limited for equipment. He stated,

“We would try to raise money, but there's not enough chickens out there to raise enough money to buy \$50,000 or \$60,000 worth of instruments that you need. So you have to get by borrowing something from the middle school, trying to find a used horn here or there.”

Instead of waiting for the ideal situation to purchase new equipment, successful directors could borrow equipment and truly make what they had work. Participant 3's program did not allow a limitation like budgeting for new equipment stop them from

reaching their students. Participant 2 also discussed challenges with budgeting for equipment as his band program does not have a guaranteed budget. He stated, “We don’t receive a budget. Our budget is really whatever the students pay, band fees and fundraisers. The very few donations we may get— we really don’t receive a whole lot.”

Unlike some directors who used this as an excuse to have lower expectations, Participant 2 worked with what his program had. He made sure his students were receiving quality instruction by asking them to participate in fundraisers and even purchasing equipment with his money. Program budgets did not limit Participant 2 when it came to reaching his students. Participant 1 discussed how his program overcame challenges by building relationships with the community. BandBoost.org, the company he worked for, connected with the community and received donations to help his band program. “I’ve recently gotten a couple of donations from some alumni that stay in the area. They just love hearing us practice, and they wanted to help grow the program.” Partnering with companies like BandBoost.org allowed Participant 1 to not only receive help with his program but also grow his program’s presence in the community.

Participant 4 spoke on the importance of maintaining your current resources as a leader. While his program was fortunate to receive more help now than when he started, he understands that some instruments are bound to break and that some music/books may become outdated. Instead of waiting for these things to happen, successful directors take the initiative to replace aging equipment and help students stay on top of their game.

Similar to Participant 4, Participant 5 understands that all urban schools will face challenges. However, what makes a director successful is their ability to look for solutions to problems, not the problems themselves, “You still have those challenges, but you just continue to fight for your kids and look for every little avenue you can to help better your program.”

Participant 4 and Participant 5 both recognize that limitations will always be prevalent in urban education. However, what separates successful directors is how they work through those challenges. Participants viewed challenges as obstacles that could be worked through, not excuses to have lower expectations. Whether that be having to think outside of the box due to budgeting restrictions, advocating for more instruments, or building relationships with your community. Every participant overcame challenges with their students’ best interest in mind.

Persistence and Adaptive Leadership

Persistence and adaptive leadership were qualities that all participants shared. Participants mentioned various challenges that come with the urban education setting, including but not limited to; students showing up unequipped to learn, a lack of parental support, students having other interests or priorities, and society’s view on band being childish. Although participants faced these challenges, they never let them get in the way of their students’ success. When faced with adversity, participants persisted while doing whatever they could to best serve their students. Participant 2 explained that one of the biggest challenges of teaching in an urban environment was society’s view on band, “A lot of times people see band as not something that serious, but it is. Band is a life-changing activity that can change a student’s future.”

Unlike some directors that allowed this belief to get them down, Participant 2 persisted while advocating for his program any chance he could. Participant 2 showed persistence by not giving up on his students and showing society the impact music can have. Participant 4 believes it is essential to work for your students by adapting your instruction to where they are, "I think you have to meet them where they're at. You know some kids come in not knowing anything about band. So, you have to start from the beginning with them." Instead of giving his students watered-down material because they were behind, Participant 4 will elevate them to where they need to be. Participant 1 stated that another way to show persistence is by celebrating small victories. When improving your program, change does not happen overnight. By celebrating small accomplishments, you show your students that they are improving while working towards your bigger goal.

Similarly, Participant 5 explained that in order to show persistence, you have to love your students unconditionally. If you give up on your students after they break your trust or don't live up to your expectations, then they'll come to know that persistence. In order for your students to be persistent, YOU have to show persistence. Participant 3 believes that persistence in leadership also includes adapting to change. As educators, we are constantly faced with change. Whether that be changes in students, administration, policies, school curriculum, etc., participants adapt and continue to work for their students.

Participants showed persistence by never allowing challenges get in the way of their student's success. They also showed adaptive leadership by advocating for their

program, meeting their students where they are, celebrating small accomplishments, loving their students, and adapting to change.

How Do School Culture and Leadership Impact Program Achievement?

The fifth research question asked how school culture and leadership impacted long-term sustainability of urban high school band programs. In each participant interview, directors described culture as something that is intentionally built, not something that naturally occurs. Successful programs created cultures that had high expectations, shared ownership, accountability, collaboration, and pride. These cultural aspects were built through leadership and reinforced daily through the interactions of directors, students, administrators, parents, alumni, and the community.

Findings from the interviews developed three themes. Leadership Establishes High Expectations described how directors built cultures of excellence by communicating expectations, being consistent, and modeling professionalism. Shared Ownership Strengthens Program Culture illustrated how successful directors empowered students, parents, and communities to invest in the band program by distributing leadership roles throughout the organization. Positive School Culture Sustains Long-Term Success explained how strong organizational cultures create traditions that last beyond directors' tenure, build school pride, and allow programs to continue growing each year.

Together, these themes demonstrated that successful urban band programs are built not only on talented directors and exceptional students, but also on organizational cultures that are intentionally shaped through leadership.

Leadership Establishes High Expectations

The first theme that developed from the interview data was high expectations. Successful urban high school band programs were characterized by cultures that had high expectations established by strong leadership. All of the participants defined leadership as more than directing students at rehearsals and performances. They believed leadership to be the process of creating a culture where excellence, accountability, discipline, and personal responsibility were expected from everyone in the organization. Despite the socioeconomic status of their schools, each participant said that they held high expectations for their students because it allowed them to grow as people, strengthened their program culture, and contributed to their long-term success.

Participant 4 discussed how leadership should start by expecting students to behave and learn as he or she would expect his own children to. As a teacher with almost 30 years of experience in the urban setting, Participant 4 believed that every student deserved the opportunity to be challenged to become the best they could possibly be no matter what their background or prior musical experience was. When talking about leadership, he emphasized how he did not lower his expectations for students because of their circumstances. Instead, he held high musical and behavioral expectations for his students and gave them the tools they needed to reach his expectations. When leaders do this, students know that they are expected to excel and can reach that expectation with some help from their teachers.

Similar to Participant 4, Participant 2 stated that leaders should create a culture where students are expected to improve every day. He held his students accountable

for knowing basic music fundamentals by assessing them every day and requiring students to be involved in musical activities outside of school. When students were required to engage in music-making at higher levels, they strove to be a part of all honors groups, all-state auditions, winter guard, and other activities that would better them as musicians. Participant 2 created high expectations for his students and reminded them of those expectations daily.

Participant 5 shared his viewpoint on high expectations by describing how important discipline and work ethic are to developing successful students. He believed that students learn many skills by being involved in a band program. They learn how to show up somewhere on time every day, they learn they are accountable for their actions, and they learn they can work hard for what they want to achieve. If students are held to high expectations and meet them each day, they learn behaviors that will stay with them throughout their life—long after high school band is over. Participant 5 believed teachers show students they care about them by having high expectations and preparing them for life after high school.

Unlike the other participants, Participant 1 described high expectations from a student standpoint. He believed students should have some ownership over the musical knowledge of not only themselves but their classmates as well. Students should know what they are doing if they are unable to attend rehearsal and be able to help others with proper technique as they grow in the program. When teachers allow students to take ownership of their learning and their ensemble, they are showing them that they are capable of teaching and leading other students like them. Higher expectations are

put on the students because they are expected to not only know what is going on around them, but help their fellow students as well.

Similar to Participant 1, Participant 3 believed that school culture reflects the leadership. If leaders show students they care about their students by having high expectations and acting professionally, then students will mirror those behaviors. When not only the students but the school leadership as a whole holds students to high expectations and acts professionally, students will perceive that as the norm for how they should behave while at school.

High expectations were a significant portion of every interview. All participants disagreed with the notion that students in urban schools should be taught at lower levels because of their surroundings. Each participant defined leadership as teachers communicating their high expectations and showing students they care about them by equipping them with the tools they need to be successful. Creating a culture with high expectations does not happen by accident, it is built by leaders who have confidence in their students and are committed to helping them reach their fullest potential.

Shared Ownership Strengthens Program Culture

The second theme that developed from the data was shared ownership. Successful urban high school band programs created a culture where students, parents, administrators, alumni, booster organizations, and community stakeholders had shared ownership of the program. Although directors played a key role in the management of the organization, participants talked about how they built leadership structures within their programs that allowed all stakeholders to take ownership and do their part to help the band program run smoothly. When all stakeholders had a sense of ownership over

the band program, they were held more accountable, which strengthened the organization's culture. Unlike some of the other participants, Participant 1 described shared ownership from a leadership perspective. He wanted students to know that he wanted his band to be able to run if he was not there. He said, "I want my band to be able to function without me. If, God forbid, I pass out or something, somebody else can step in because I've prepared them properly to function without me."

Participant 1 focused on preparing students to be able to teach, lead, and solve problems on their own. He creates student leaders who can step in and help their peers because they know how he would run rehearsals and solve problems. When students feel a sense of ownership over their learning and their program, they know that they can take leadership roles in their band if their director were not there. Sharing similar thoughts to Participant 1, Participant 2 decentralizes leadership by giving many students leadership roles. He said, "We have different committees that focus on different responsibilities within the band." By having many students with leadership roles he allows students at all levels to feel like they can help contribute to the band's success. Participants 1 and 2 both show that students feel a sense of ownership over their band program when they are given leadership opportunities.

Where Participants 1 and 2 focused on students having ownership over their program, Participant 3 focused on other stakeholders such as parents, boosters, and the community. As a former band director and current district-level fine arts administrator, Participant 3 knows how important collaboration with other stakeholders is. He said, "I tell the boosters exactly what we need and how they can help."

By asking for help from stakeholders and telling them what your program needs to succeed, you are building a partnership. Directors build stronger program culture by allowing stakeholders to feel like they are a part of the solution to their child's education. Similarly to Participant 3, Participant 5 believed parents become more involved when directors let them know they care about their students. When school leaders build authentic relationships with parents, they will feel comfortable helping out with fundraisers, driving students to contests or concerts, and volunteering at band events. Participants 3 and 5 showed that parents and other stakeholders feel that they have ownership over a school's band program when leaders trust them and build authentic relationships.

Shared ownership was mentioned throughout each interview. Participants defined shared ownership as the feeling students, parents, and other stakeholders have when they are allowed to take responsibility for the running of a band program. Schools build strong culture when directors allow students to lead their peers and when they collaborate with parents and community stakeholders.

Positive School Culture Sustains Long-Term Success

The final theme that developed from the data was built on previous themes. Participants stated that positive school culture was what allowed their programs to continue to grow each year. They defined culture as the environment created by leaders that is experienced by students on a daily basis. School culture was not mentioned by that term but could be described by the way participants explained leaders encourage students to take pride in their schools. Although participants did not use the word culture, they all talked about building strong organization where students succeeded

because they wanted to succeed, not because they had to succeed. Program culture builds when schools do what is best for the students and that contributes to a program's long-term success.

Participant 5 believed schools build positive culture by helping students realize they are part of something bigger than themselves. When students feel like adults in their school care about them, have high expectations for their behavior and work ethic, and take the time to mentor them, they develop a strong sense of pride for their school. Students will do whatever they can to help the band program be successful because they love being a part of it. They continue the legacies that were created before them and develop traditions that will last beyond them. School culture positively impacts student success because students make friendships that will last them a lifetime.

Similar to Participant 5, Participant 4 believed school culture was reflected in how parents and the community perceive your program. He said that if directors do what is best for their students and stay true to who they are as a teacher, they will earn the trust of students, parents, and the community. Once leaders earn that trust, "We've got a community that supports you 100% when they see you know what you're doing."

Programs have positive culture because students have administrators and leaders that care about what they do. Community members will support schools when they know you are running your program the right way. Unlike Participants 4 and 5, Participant 3 focused on how positive school culture allows school programs to be successful long after you're there. He believes leaders should keep the program's vision clear, allow leaders to emerge, and build other leaders. If school leaders do this, they will have a program that can sustain itself because they prepared students to be

leaders. Building a positive school culture looks a lot like preparing students for their life after high school by allowing them to grow as leaders.

Participant 1 gave another example of how school culture can last a lifetime. He said alumni support his program by attending band rehearsals, helping current students, and donating to help the program. No matter where they go after graduation, former students still feel connected to the school band program. Schools have a positive culture because students continue to be involved with something they are passionate about after they graduate.

Last but not least, Participant 2 believed schools build student pride by taking your program outside of the school. When students have the opportunity to perform at bank events, in honor bands, or other events outside of school, they represent their school everywhere they go. Students will act professionally because they don't want to disgrace their school. If schools take students outside of the school to perform, students will build school pride that will last them throughout their high school career.

Across all interviews, participants discussed how important positive school culture is to the longevity of a school's band program. Although they did not use the term culture, each participant talked about how they built school pride by doing what was best for their students. They built legacy in their schools that will last beyond their time at the school and taught students to act professionally. School culture lasts long-term when administrators and leaders take care of their students.

Summary

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative case study were presented. This study explored various variables that urban band directors identified as influential in

building and maintaining successful urban high school band programs. Interview data were collected from five practicing urban band directors and music administrators who were then analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process of thematic analysis. Patterns within the data were reviewed until they addressed each of the five research questions posed for the study. Ultimately, successful urban band programs were found to be built and maintained through specific leadership practices including building meaningful relationships, establishing collaborative teams, focusing on students, developing administrative support, exhibiting resilience, and contributing to positive school cultures.

Successful urban band programs are intentionally built and developed through authentic relationships, collaborative leadership practices focused on students, and those that view students holistically as musicians and leaders who will succeed beyond their high school careers.

What Variables Are Associated with Successful Urban High School Band Programs?

Three themes addressed this research question: Strong Relationships as the Foundation of Successful Programs, Shared Leadership and Collaboration, and Student Centered Leadership and Development. Participants made it clear that successful band programs do not happen accidentally. Successful programs are built on authentic relationships, strong collaborative leadership, and a focus on students as musicians and people that will impact their lives beyond high school.

How Do Band Directors Define and Measure Success?

Three themes addressed this research question: Success is Measured Through Student Growth and Development, Success is Demonstrated Through Musical Excellence and Achievement, and Success extends Beyond High School. Participants defined success in multiple ways that reached past program accolades and superior ratings. Successful programs produce students that grow musically and personally by becoming better leaders and students who are equipped to excel after high school.

How Do Administrators Support Band Programs, and How Does Their Level of Support Impact Success?

Two themes addressed this research question: Administrative Advocacy and Resource Support and Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Success. Successful administrators provide more than just financial resources. Successful administrators advocated for the music program and teachers. These administrators work collaboratively with directors to find solutions and remove obstacles.

What challenges directors and administrators face and how are they overcome?

Two themes addressed this research question: Overcoming Resource and Organizational Challenges and Persistence and Adaptive Leadership. Participants identified many challenges that urban music programs face. Larger challenges included a lack of funding, instruments, equipment, teachers, and students who were not prepared for rigorous bands classes. Although these challenges were present in urban schools, successful programs learned to work through these obstacles with strong leadership. Successful programs did not let these challenges dictate the quality of music instruction students received.

How Do School Culture and Leadership Impact Program Achievement?

Three themes addressed this research question: Leadership Establishes High Expectations, Shared Ownership Strengthens Program Culture, and Positive School Culture Strengthens Long-Term Success. Successful school band programs were purposeful organizations that were created and maintained through strong leadership. These leadership practices established a positive school culture by setting high expectations for everyone involved, allowing everyone to take ownership in the success of the band program, and because of the positive culture, band programs were able to sustain success long-term.

The theme connecting all of the research questions is leadership. Successful urban high school band programs require strong leadership. Successful directors built strong relationships with their students, administration, and staff. They work together to better the organization as a whole and focus on helping students become better musicians and people. These directors do not let barriers get in the way of their students' learning. Instead, they work around these barriers and persist through difficulties to provide the best music education they can.

The next chapter discusses the results from this study. The results will be interpreted and compared to the literature review and conceptual framework. Contributions to the field of music education and educational leadership will be discussed. Limitations of this study will be identified as well as recommendations for music educators and researchers. Finally, the significance of this study will be concluded.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusion

The goal of this qualitative case study was to understand the components that contributed to the creation and maintenance of successful urban high school band programs. More specifically, this study looked at how successful urban band directors and music administrators created successful programs, defined success and measured it, worked with administrators and stakeholders, navigated issues specific to urban schools, and developed organizational cultures that promoted long-lasting student success and success of the program. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with five experienced participants along with observations, field notes, and artifacts. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the interview transcripts yielded themes that responded to each of the study's five research questions.

Chapter 4 summarized the findings of the study. Responses from participants were separated by each research question and then further separated by the themes that arose during thematic analysis. Together, the findings from this study showed that successful urban high school band programs are cultivated and maintained through intentional practices that promote genuine relationships, collaborative leadership, student-centered practices, advocacy with administrators, perseverance, and a positive organizational culture. Instead of pointing to musical knowledge, financial support, or simply being lucky, each participant framed leadership as the key ingredient for creating and maintaining successful programs.

The goal of this chapter is to discuss the results found in chapter four. Each research question will be discussed individually in terms of how the results support, add to, or differ from previous research concerning educational leadership, organizational culture, urban education, and music education. Additionally, this chapter discusses implications for band directors, administrators, school districts, universities, and urban music education and contains recommendations for professional practice and future research. Limitations of this study and concluding thoughts are provided at the end of this chapter.

While each research question addressed different elements of successful urban band programs, the results from this study show that longevity in these types of programs is due to leaders who intentionally work to promote collaboration, build relationships, set high expectations, and foster an organizational culture that revolves around students and their growth and success in the program. These findings are interconnected and together provide a holistic picture of how successful urban band programs can prosper in the face of difficulties associated with urban schooling.

Overview of the Findings

The findings chapter discussed leadership practices, organizational characteristics, and cultural elements found to promote development and sustained success in urban high school band programs. After analyzing interview responses, it became clear that successful programs are not built on one distinct leadership style or singular achievement. Success did not occur as a result of only one of the six categories. Instead, several of the categories consistently overlapped to produce success. Authentic relationships helped build trust and provided support for

collaboration. Collaboration led to shared leadership and created student-centered learning environments. Advocacy from administrators gave directors the tools to be resilient in the face of adversity and helped to maintain a positive school culture. Taken together, the results from this study indicate that successful urban band programs are carefully constructed through leadership practices that value student development as the driving force behind organizational decision-making.

The intent of this chapter is to interpret the findings in light of the study's conceptual framework and existing literature. Whereas Chapter 4 described the major themes developed from participant interview responses, this chapter discusses what the themes mean in comparison to previous literature on educational leadership, urban education, schools as organizations, and music education. More specifically, this chapter addresses how the findings align with, expand upon, or differ from literature presented in Chapter 2 as well as what the participants add to the larger conversation on successful urban high school band programs.

This chapter is divided by each of the five research questions. The discussion for each question starts by interpreting the main findings related to that question and then connects the findings to related literature. Attention is given to how participants described leadership as shared among not only the director, but also students, administrators, parents, alumni, booster organizations, and community. Additionally, the findings are continually referenced back to the conceptual framework of the study to better understand how leadership practices impact organizational culture, student development, and program success.

Each research question tackles a different aspect of successful urban band programs; however, the findings are deeply interconnected. Positive relationships allow for collaboration. Collaboration creates a shared sense of leadership. Leadership impacts organizational culture. A positive organizational culture reinforces success for students and the program. Additionally, advocacy from administrators and resilient leadership allow directors to thrive in spite of challenges while expecting greatness from students. Instead of functioning as standalone findings, the six categories work together to describe a model of leadership that can sustain successful urban high school band programs.

Together, the findings from each research question demonstrate that urban high school band programs can thrive despite the common challenges of underfunding and poor demographics when directors lead with intentionality. Building authentic relationships with students and other stakeholders creates an environment of trust, which allowed for collaboration to occur. Directors who share leadership with students reported schools with positive cultures that were more focused on student development than policing students. Successful directors were also resilient and had support from school administrators who advocated for music education and their students. In the remaining sections of this chapter, each research question is discussed in depth and added to the conversation on educational leadership, urban music education, and school success.

What Variables Contribute to the Development of Successful Urban High School Band Programs?

The themes resulting from Research Question 1 convey that successful urban band programs are deliberately built through leadership practices that are grounded in authentic relationships, collaborative leadership structures, and intentional student development. While participants discussed elements of successful programs related to musical instruction and performance, each of the themes reinforced the idea that leaders who prioritize people before programs are essential to long-term success. When considered together, the results from this question demonstrate that successful directors work to cultivate communities in which students, parents, administrators, alumni, and community stakeholders all play an active role in reaching collective goals. Therefore, the findings from Research Question 1 support this study's central argument that successful urban band programs are built not by one great director but by many through the development of collaborative leadership practices that strengthen the program's organizational capacity while empowering students to succeed.

Strong Relationships as the Foundation of Successful Programs

Much of the literature reviewed for this study discussed the importance of trust, strong relationships, and school connectedness within successful organizations. Some researchers have also specifically addressed teacher–student relationships and their connection to students' sense of engagement, academic motivation, and school belonging. However, those studies were limited to the students' relationship with their teacher and did not explore relationship-building in larger scope. The participants of this research project expanded upon these findings by explaining that directors must also

develop authentic relationships with parents, administrators, alumni, booster organizations, and community members.

Successful programs were described as communities because participants fostered genuine connections with all stakeholders who had an interest in helping the program succeed. These relationships created a support system for the program that improved recruitment efforts, retention rates, community engagement, and allowed for other resources to be provided that contributed to the program's success. Relationship-building therefore became an organizational strategy that helped successful urban programs meet their goals. The development of strong relationships can also be viewed as an instructional leadership practice that further helps students to feel connected to their school and motivates them to achieve at higher levels.

Shared Leadership and Collaboration

As mentioned earlier, this theme closely supports modern theories on educational leadership. Just as the scholars described leadership as more than one person leading the school, the participants of this research project worked to develop other leaders within their program. These leaders took on multiple forms, including students, instructional staff, parents, alumni, and community members. Successful directors did not see leadership as their responsibility alone, but as something that every invested member of the program should have the opportunity to demonstrate. These findings contribute to the research on shared leadership by describing how successful urban high school music programs exemplify the concept by developing leadership at every level of the organization.

Student-Centered Leadership and Development. Lastly, the results from theme 3 validate previous music education literature that highlights school music participation as an opportunity for students to grow musically and personally. Each participant in this study described successful programs as environments that did not just produce excellent musicians, but also developed students' leadership skills, confidence, responsibility, discipline, and personal growth. This theme extends previous literature by describing how successful urban band directors use leadership to create environments that allow students to learn these skills through real responsibilities and meaningful participation in the organization. Participants of this study did not just focus on preparing their students for successful concerts. They prepared students for life after high school by developing their skills in ways that they could excel in college, the workforce, join the military, or engage in civic affairs.

When taken together, the results from Research Question 1 support this study's conceptual framework by illustrating how leadership is the mechanism by which successful urban band programs are built. Participants expressed that in successful programs, leadership is collaborative, relationship-oriented, and centered around students rather than being hierarchical or solely residing in the band director. Successful directors also work to develop organizational cultures where everyone from students to community members has a role in supporting student achievement and sustaining the program. Subsequently, leadership in successful urban high school music programs goes beyond knowing how to teach music. It includes building meaningful relationships, developing your program's capacity by ensuring others have

the opportunity to assume leadership roles, and preparing students to be leaders outside of the musical setting.

Not only do these results support this study's conceptual framework, but they provide practical implications that can benefit urban music educators and the students they serve. The findings from Research Question 1 challenge previous perspectives of urban education by revealing the positive leadership strategies implemented in successful urban high school band programs. Unlike the research discussed in the literature review, participants did not focus on the limitations associated with urban education such as lack of funding, high percentages of students of color, or students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Instead, participants of this research project focused on actionable leadership strategies that can be implemented in other schools to better support students. Urban band programs can succeed when there are leaders that build strong relationships with their students and community, engage stakeholders in shared leadership roles, and prepare students to be leaders outside of band.

How Do Band Directors Define and Measure Success?

The results from Research Question 2 have determined successful urban band directors view success through a comprehensive lens that prioritizes students over winning or musical performance. While all participants valued high ratings, winning awards, having students selected to honor bands, and receiving recognition from the community, they regularly characterized these outcomes as examples of why their students were successful in school rather than why their program was successful.

Successful urban band directors defined their program's success by how much students improved, their musical development, leadership skills they gained, and how

they saw the band program impacting students' lives down the road. These results indicate successful urban band directors assess their program's success through a musical lens while also considering how they helped students grow as learners and people.

Success is measured through student growth and development reaffirmed findings from previous research that meaningful educational experiences depend on teachers prioritizing personal improvement over besting others. All participants described success by seeing students become better musicians, gaining more confidence, showing increased discipline, acting as leaders, and taking more personal responsibility as students in the band program. Instead of discussing where students started in the program academically or musically, participants viewed student growth as an indicator of success because of where students ended by the time they graduated. This theme agrees with past research that identifies growth minded pedagogy as a crucial factor in education and extends the literature by providing insight into how successful urban band directors establish a culture where growth is expected.

Success is demonstrated through musical excellence and achievement complements existing music education research that emphasizes the value of music-making and upholds high musical standards. Each participant asserted successful programs would produce students who were better musicians and could demonstrate high musical proficiency. Although participants said being successful meant students would receive superior ratings and win awards, they described musical achievement as a reflection of how well musicians performed as a result of consistent, quality instruction instead of why their program was successful. Assessing students daily, ensuring

students mastered essentials skills, having students selected for honor bands, and consistently playing well at contests were all discussed as metrics that indicated students were learning something valuable. This finding builds upon previous research by proposing musical excellence should be viewed as proof students are receiving a meaningful music education rather than what defines a successful program.

Success extends beyond high school was identified as a new theme that illustrates how successful urban band directors prioritize impacting students lives after they graduate. Each participant mentioned the band program continued to influence students and that knowing their students would benefit from being in the program served as the benchmark for success. Concepts such as preparing students to be better citizens, leaders, professionals, and lifelong learners were discussed at length. Participants discussed measuring students' success when they left the band program by their character, work ethic, determination, and leadership skills. Success extended beyond high school supports previous research suggesting music education positively impacts students' personal and social development and extends the literature by demonstrating how successful urban educators frame music as a tool for learning how to live instead of learning how to perform.

When taken together, the results from Research Question 2 support this study's conceptual framework by illustrating how successful urban band directors view leadership influences the definition of success. While participants did not deny the value of winning competitions and receiving superior ratings, they all rejected the notion that program success should be defined by a singular focus on musical performance. Because how participants defined success varied, it can be argued their views were

shaped by how they lead their students. Success was reflected in participants' comments not only through how they taught but what they valued as important when determining if their program was worthwhile.

Furthermore, results from Research Question 2 add to the research on urban music education by demonstrating that the metric for successful urban music programs should not be defined by outside recognition. Participants in this study all viewed high ratings and winning awards as positive outcomes of having strong leadership, teaching students in a meaningful way, and holding students accountable for their growth as musicians and students. Thinking about successful urban music education from an asset-based perspective allows researchers and educators to focus less on what students can do for the program and more on how the program can better equip students for life inside the band program and after graduating.

How Do Administrators Support Band Programs, and How Does Their Level of Support Impact Success?

The results from Research Question 3 revealed that administrative support was crucial to program success. While participants recognized the value of financial resources, they described administrative support in terms of leadership practices, including advocacy, trust, communication, visibility, and collaboration. Rather than conceptualizing effective administrators as those who provide large budgets, participants viewed administrators and organizational supports that allowed directors to teach students and focus on long-term program success. As illustrated by the two main themes, school leaders act as a facilitator of program success by empowering directors.

A primary theme that emerged from Research Question 3 is administrative advocacy and resource support. This theme reinforces existing literature on educational leadership and school principals' responsibilities as instructional leaders and advocates for their organizations. Research indicates that effective school administrators impact teacher effectiveness by creating supportive working conditions, fostering collaboration, and eliminating organizational obstacles that may prevent teachers from focusing on instruction (Robinson et al., 2008). However, participants in this study expanded on this idea by articulating that advocacy should be perceived as something that effective leaders did rather than responded to. Administrators were successful when they connected directors with community resources, helped with logistics and scheduling, supported music education at the district level, and used their professional networks to open doors that directors may not have had access to otherwise. In essence, participants viewed advocacy as comprehensive rather than only providing financial support.

A second key component of administrative support that was present throughout the data is trust. Participants expressed that successful administrators did not micro-manage the band program; instead, they trusted directors to do their jobs and remained available for communication and accountability. This finding aligns with research that has shown teachers who trust their principals are more likely to remain organizationally committed, collaborate with colleagues, and experience higher job satisfaction (Davis et al., 2012). Although trust was discussed in this manner by participants, trust in urban music education was more than a relationship between two individuals. Successful administrators trusted directors as educators and valued their professional expertise.

Establishing trust between administrators and directors encouraged creativity, allowed directors to focus on students, and strengthened professional relationships.

The second theme, Collaborative Leadership and Organizational Success, supports previous research on leadership and distributed leadership. Research on school leadership has consistently shown that lasting school change occurs when leadership is distributed among various stakeholders rather than isolated to a single person (Hornig et al., 2010). This perspective was evident among participants who described successful administrators and directors as partners that communicated openly, had shared visions, and worked collaboratively to solve organizational problems. Administration, teachers, students, parents, booster organizations, alumni, and community members all played important roles in supporting band program success by leading where they were and supporting a common vision.

Another way the collaborative relationships described by participants extends previous research on school leadership is how collaboration promoted organizational strength within urban music programs. Participants discussed that collaboration occurred throughout all levels of the organization. While administrators opened lines of communication, directors taught students to lead, parents and alumni served the program when asked, and community partners provided opportunities to learn. These relationships established connected organizational systems that adapted to challenges and continued to prioritize student learning. As a result, band programs functioned as integral parts of the school rather than isolated extracurricular programs.

Administrative support contributes to urban music research by dispelling the idea that administrative support only refers to money provided to the program. While

participants mentioned the necessity for financial support, they focused more on the leadership practices of administrators that promoted program success. Administrators that attended concerts and celebrations, advocated for music education, and communicated with directors regularly cared about students and teachers. School leaders that fostered organizational cultures of collaboration, trust, advocacy, and open communication inspired others to invest in the success of the band program.

The results from Research Question 3 support the conceptual framework of this study by showing that leadership does not only occur at the top or bottom of an organizational hierarchy. Successful urban band programs were able to partner with school administrators to structure an organization that supported student success. Administrators empowered directors rather than micromanaged them. Consistent with the conceptual framework, leadership was practiced through the collaborative efforts of administrators and directors complementing each other's positional power. Successful urban schools of music guide future researchers to investigate how administrators facilitate program success by empowering directors and teachers.

In conclusion, Research Question 3 has been addressed by showing how administrators support successful urban band programs. Administrators support successful urban band programs by serving as leaders that empower directors. Successful administrators serve as advocates, build cultures of trust, communicate effectively, and collaborate with directors to support student success. Research Question 2 focused on understanding how successful directors defined success. Participants discussed successful urban band directors defined success by viewing success holistically. If students are successful musicians and better people when they

leave the program, then they consider that to be a success. Successful directors lead by example and help their students understand how to be successful in band.

What Challenges Directors and Administrators Face and How Are They Overcome?

The results connected to Research Question 4 uncovered that effective urban band directors experienced similar organizational, financial, and instructional challenges; however, study participants did not view these challenges as indicators of success or failure. Instead, study participants framed challenges as opportunities to lead, collaborate, and create new solutions to ensure students were able to continue learning music. Though issues with funding, lack of equipment, recruitment, staffing, scheduling, and misunderstanding of urban education existed, they did not prevent participants from running successful programs. Leadership and collaboration were consistently viewed as solutions to challenges that may arise.

Overcoming Resource and Organizational Challenges. This theme supports previous findings that urban educators often face financial and resource-based challenges. Research suggests that urban educators have long experienced inequities in funding, instructional resources, staffing, and access to educational opportunities. While participants in this study did not deny these challenges, they did not view limited resources as a predictor of program failure. In order to combat financial and organizational barriers, participants mentioned being resourceful, advocating for their programs, and planning for the future. Building strong partnerships with the community, collaborating with alumni, fundraising, applying for grants, and advocating to

administrators were all ways that participants addressed financial and resource concerns.

This study builds upon previous literature by highlighting that successful directors take an asset-based approach when leading urban music programs. Participants did not focus on what they did not have, but what they did have to offer their students and community. Participants looked at the community and resources they had available and found ways to provide opportunities for students. This finding aligns with recent studies on educational leadership that focus on strength-based approaches while providing a deeper look into how urban music educators can use their limited resources to collaborate with their community.

Persistence and Adaptive Leadership. Theme two supports previous research about effective leadership qualities. Research has shown that effective leaders are resilient, adaptable to change, and always looking for ways to improve their program. Participants in this study have shown all of these traits by adapting to the challenges they were faced with. Whether it was altering their teaching methods, recruiting new students, advocating for their program, or meeting their students where they were at academically and musically, directors stayed adaptable and overcame various challenges. While leaders had to make some adjustments due to organizational or financial obstacles, they did not allow these challenges to lower their program's expectations.

Participants also highlighted that adaptive leadership can look like working to dispel negative views that urban schools have. Directors expressed that they made sure to not confirm stereotypes by treating students with respect, having high expectations

for their students and program, and letting their schools and community see what their students were capable of accomplishing. Participants showed growth mindset when facing challenges and worked to better their programs each year. Study participants pushed against the idea that urban schools were less than by showing what their programs were capable of achieving. This research adds to the study of urban education by demonstrating how urban music programs can shift the way their community views them.

Lastly, the findings from Research Question 4 support the idea of collaborative efforts when facing challenges. Each participant mentioned that when bigger issues arose, they didn't solve them alone. Whether it was administrators, other teachers, students, parents, alumni, booster organizations, or community members, participants leaned on these people to help problem solve and overcome challenges. This finding supports the educational leadership literature that promotes collaboration and team work while showing how urban band programs strengthen their organization by sharing responsibility.

The results from Research Question 4 supported the conceptual framework of this study by showing that obstacles reveal a leader's character. Each participant faced challenges but demonstrated that through collaboration, being resourceful, advocating, and remaining committed to their students and program, they were able to overcome these challenges. Rather than making excuses for why their program did not have certain resources or achievement, participants showed organizational resilience.

Research Question 4 also adds to the urban music education literature by demonstrating that successful urban music programs look beyond stereotypes. Instead

of buying into ideas that because they were underfunded, served a large population of minority students, or faced certain challenges that they would be less than traditional programs, participants worked to better their programs each year. This research showcased that urban music programs can flourish when they operate from an asset-based perspective.

In conclusion, the discussions of Research Question 4 reveal that persistence and adaptability are characteristics of effective urban high school band directors. Participants did not let challenges get in the way of their students learning and excelling in their music programs. Similar to the findings of this study as a whole, participants viewed challenges as opportunities to better their programs and grow as leaders.

How Do School Culture and Leadership Impact Program Achievement?

Similar to previous research questions, the findings discovered here cannot be discussed in isolation from one another. As revealed throughout RQ5, participants articulated leadership and culture as two complimentary constructs that consistently overlapped during interviews. Directors established and maintained successful organizational cultures through routine leadership behaviors. Meanwhile, culture reinforced expectations and values that allowed successful programs to sustain achievement over time. Culture did not arise because of a singular leadership practice. Positive organizational culture resulted from the process through which leaders established high expectations, shared ownership, held students accountable, collaborated with stakeholders, and maintained student-centered priorities.

Culture was reinforced through the leadership practices established by participants. Throughout the interview process, each director expressed that their

program did not operate like typical urban schools because students felt a sense of pride, belonging, and tradition; were held accountable for their actions; and worked collaboratively with peers, directors, and mentors to achieve high expectations. School culture contributed to participants' ability to sustain long-term success because it allowed students to continue feeling connected to the band program even after graduating high school. Participants explained that their programs maintained positive organizational cultures by coming to school ready to work, supporting their peers, and collaborating with teachers and parents.

Echoing decades of previous research on educational leadership, participants conveyed high expectations for their students. With regard to urban schools, many scholars have commented on the practices that transformational leaders engage in to improve school culture. These behaviors include articulating high expectations, modeling priorities, and inspiring others to work towards a common vision (Craig, 2007). As leaders of successful urban school band programs, participants expressed all of these characteristics by communicating high expectations and motivating students to achieve at high levels. Although directors held students to high standards, they continually provided words of encouragement, support, and mentorship when needed. Successful directors did not lower their expectations for students because of socioeconomic status or academic failure. Instead, they empowered students by expressing the belief that they could do anything they put their minds to.

While many leadership theories have discussed the value of shared decision-making and collaborative practice, few mention the concept of shared ownership. Participants talked at length about how students, administrators, parents, alumni,

booster organizations, teachers, and community partners took ownership in their school band programs. Successful directors operated under the assumption that everyone involved had a responsibility to the program. Students were not only accountable to their band director but their peers as well. Parents helped with transportation, alumni stayed involved, and teachers and administrators worked to support the music program. This shared sense of ownership fostered a culture in which everyone did their part to help the program run smoothly.

The final theme of RQ5 discusses how positive school culture allowed each director to sustain success over many years. Each participant described their band program as a positive culture that students were excited to be a part of. Although participants built positive organizational cultures, band programs actually helped improve the culture of their schools. All five directors discussed how band created school pride and allowed students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community stakeholders to interact with one another in positive ways. Unlike other programs at school, band was seen as something that all students were able to succeed in. School culture not only helped participants sustain successful programs, but improved the culture of their schools.

In conclusion, the findings from Research Question 5 reveal that leadership and culture are intricately linked. Leaders influence culture by creating high expectations, developing shared ownership, and holding students accountable. Positive school culture can then sustain a program's success by keeping students engaged and connected to the school band program. Unlike other programs at school, band programs encouraged relationships to be formed between students, teachers, administrators, parents, and

community partners. Last, school culture ensured that participants would be able to pass their program on to someone else. Years from now, when these directors are unable to lead their schools' band programs, participants can rest assured that their program will be in good hands because they have worked to create a strong and positive school culture.

Research Question 5 addressed how organizational culture supported by leadership influenced long-term success. The themes that emerged showcase that directors built high expectations into the fabric of their school's band program culture. While culture cannot be reduced to leader behavior alone, participants showed that leadership directly contributed to their school's culture. Students were held accountable for their actions, work collaboratively with their peers, supported each other on a personal level, and came to school ready to learn and work hard. School culture not only pushed students to be the best musicians they could possibly be, but better people. Program culture helped participants sustain success by allowing students to feel connected to their band program even after they graduate. Unlike other programs at school, band was able to build school pride and positively impact school culture. In order to ensure longevity, directors created positive school band program cultures that they could one day hand off to someone else.

Additional Areas for Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the variables that contribute to the development and sustainability of successful urban high school band programs. Analysis of the interview data, observations, field notes, and supporting documents revealed that successful urban band programs are sustained through

intentional leadership practices that extend beyond musical instruction. Although each research question addressed a distinct aspect of program success, several overarching findings emerged across the study. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that successful urban high school band programs are built through collaborative leadership, meaningful relationships, administrative advocacy, organizational resilience, and positive school culture. Rather than functioning as independent concepts, these leadership practices work together to create environments in which students and programs are able to thrive despite the challenges often associated with urban education.

Intentional Leadership Drives Successful Urban Band Programs

The most significant finding of this study is that successful urban high school band programs are intentionally developed through effective leadership rather than favorable circumstances. Participants consistently described leadership as extending beyond musical instruction to include relationship building, strategic planning, advocacy, collaboration, and organizational development. Successful directors established clear expectations, empowered others to lead, and intentionally created environments that supported both student and program growth. These findings suggest that leadership serves as the primary mechanism through which successful urban band programs are developed and sustained.

Relationships and Collaboration Create Organizational Capacity

A second major finding is that successful urban band programs are built through authentic relationships and collaborative partnerships. Participants consistently emphasized that sustainable success depends upon meaningful relationships with

students, parents, administrators, alumni, booster organizations, colleagues, and community members. These relationships foster trust, increase stakeholder investment, strengthen communication, and create shared responsibility for program success. Rather than relying upon one individual, successful programs intentionally distribute leadership and cultivate collaboration throughout the organization.

Success Is Defined by Student Growth Rather Than Performance Outcomes Alone

Participants consistently defined success through a holistic perspective that prioritized student growth, leadership development, character, and life preparation over competitive accomplishments alone. While superior ratings, championships, and musical excellence remained important indicators of quality, participants viewed these achievements as products of effective leadership rather than ultimate goals. Successful directors measured success by students' personal development, academic achievement, leadership abilities, and their capacity to succeed beyond high school.

Resilient Leadership Enables Programs to Overcome Challenges

Participants acknowledged that urban band programs frequently encounter challenges related to funding, staffing, recruitment, scheduling, equipment, and public perceptions of urban education. However, successful directors consistently responded to these obstacles through resilience, adaptability, advocacy, and collaborative problem-solving. Rather than allowing external barriers to determine program quality, participants leveraged community partnerships, administrative support, and innovative leadership practices to create opportunities for student success. These findings demonstrate that resilience is a defining characteristic of successful urban band leadership.

Positive Organizational Culture Sustains Long-Term Success

The final major finding is that positive organizational culture serves as the foundation for sustaining successful urban high school band programs over time. Participants consistently described cultures characterized by high expectations, accountability, collaboration, shared ownership, belonging, and school pride. These cultural characteristics were intentionally established through leadership and reinforced through daily interactions among students, educators, administrators, families, alumni, and community stakeholders. As organizational culture strengthened, programs became increasingly sustainable, allowing excellence to continue despite changes in leadership, student membership, or external circumstances.

Collectively, these five major findings illustrate that successful urban high school band programs are sustained through intentional, collaborative leadership that places student development at the center of organizational decision-making. Leadership, relationships, administrative advocacy, resilience, and positive organizational culture were not independent variables but interconnected components of successful organizations. Together, these findings reinforce the central conclusion of this study that sustainable excellence in urban band programs is achieved when multiple stakeholders work collaboratively toward a shared vision of student success.

Leadership and Teamwork Discussion

The intent of this qualitative case study was to explore the practices which contribute to positive organizational leadership areas that drive successful urban high school band programs. Findings from the interview responses, observations, field notes, and supporting documents indicated successful urban band programs result from

intentional leadership practices that focus on areas outside of musical improvement. Although each question yielded important discoveries related to a particular theme of successful leadership, there were five major takeaways that applied across the entire study. Together, these findings show successful urban high school band programs are established and maintained through collaborative leadership practices which encourage positive relationships, administrative advocacy, organizational resilience, and school culture. Instead of working independently from one another, these components of successful leadership complement each other and develop learning environments where students and organizations can flourish in spite of common urban education challenges.

Intentional Leadership Contributes to Success in Urban Band Programs

The primary discovery throughout this research project was that successful urban high school band programs are built through careful planning and leadership, not chance. Study participants described leadership as including many areas that go above and beyond teaching music. Successful leaders invested time in getting to know their students, building relationships with stakeholders, planning for the future, advocating for their programs, collaborating with peers, and developing their organizations. Successful directors set high expectations for students and others, allowed others to lead, and purposefully developed environments that were conducive to student and organizational growth. These themes suggest leadership is how successful urban band programs are developed.

Authentic Relationships and Teamwork Strengthen Urban Band Programs

Another main finding was that successful urban band programs require strong relationships and collaboration. Study participants repeatedly pointed out that successful urban programs could not happen without positive connections to students, parents, administrators, alumni, booster organizations, colleagues, and community members. Relationships helped to establish trust, empower stakeholders, improve communications, and develop a sense of responsibility among everyone connected to the program. Instead of shouldering the responsibility alone, successful band directors led others to create leaders.

Participants Defined Success By Students' Personal Growth

Each participant defined success in a similar manner. They viewed successful programs as focusing on students' personal growth and development more than competitive outcomes. Features such as concert ratings, championship titles, and musical skill were still important because they reflected a quality program. However, many participants did not view these as the end goal of music education. Directors considered their programs successful when students developed skills that would help them grow as leaders, better themselves academically, and succeed after graduating from high school.

Successful Directors Overcome Challenges With Resilient Leadership

Each participant agreed that urban band programs face many challenges not frequently seen in non-urban settings. These challenges included financial constraints, staffing limitations, recruitment efforts, scheduling, equipment, and the public's perception of urban education. Despite these challenges, all participants overcame

setbacks with resilience. If something did not go as planned, successful directors adapted to their surroundings. They asked for help when needed and worked with administrators and the community to better the program. Successful directors did not let obstacles define the quality of their programs.

A Positive Program Culture Ensures Programs Will Continue to Improve

The last key finding was successful urban high school band programs must have a positive culture. Participants described program culture as an environment that contains high expectations, accountability, collaboration, ownership, belonging, and school pride. A positive culture was established through strong leadership and cultivated daily through interactions between students, music educators, administrators, family members, alumni, and community stakeholders. As positive culture grew, the program became more sustainable and could continue to be successful regardless of leadership or student turnover.

Together, these five findings show that successful urban high school band programs require strong leadership that works collaboratively with other stakeholders to focus on students and their needs. Leadership, relationships, administrative support, resilience, and positive school culture were all areas that worked together to create successful urban band programs. These areas did not act alone, but rather supported each other in order to help students achieve a level of success that will last a lifetime.

Implications

Band directors, school administrators, school districts, college/university leadership, and other stakeholders within music education can use the findings from this study to strengthen urban band programs and promote music education in urban

communities. Although the participants varied in their professional experiences and educational contexts, they each provided valuable insights about the intentional leadership practices that have sustained successful urban high school band programs. Urban band directors build collaborative partnerships, maintain a positive culture, develop students as leaders, and center their practices around the needs of students. The following implications discuss recommendations for practice based on themes that emerged from this study.

Implications for Band Directors

Band directors can use the findings from this study to cultivate leadership skills that will improve their current programs or contribute to the success of future programs. Participants in this study modeled effective leadership practices by centering their programs around relationships with students, their families, administrators, alumni, and the community. Successful directors empower students to become leaders while providing opportunities to grow as musicians and people. Although band directors cannot control many of the systemic issues that affect students in urban communities, they can ensure that their program builds each student up and prepares them for life after graduation. Band directors should approach their work with students from a strengths-based perspective that values music education as a tool for empowerment. Directors can connect with like-minded educators through professional organizations, conferences, and local events.

Implications for School Administrators

School administrators have the ability to impact school culture, empower teachers, and provide students with opportunities to flourish within their educational

environment. Participants described administrators who advocated for music education and built strong partnerships with their school band directors as essential to their success. Schools can support band programs by fostering school connectedness, maintaining high expectations for students, and celebrating program accomplishments. Administrators should do their best to provide financial support for these programs, attend performances, and collaborate with directors on decisions that affect music education. Educational leaders have a responsibility to guide students and teachers while creating an environment that values diverse educational opportunities.

Implications for School Districts

Because band directors reported unique challenges based on their school's location within urban settings, school districts should examine their policy decisions to ensure urban schools receive equal support from their district. Sustainable urban band programs require financial support from school districts for staffing, facilities, equipment, transportation, professional development, positive school culture, and more. District leaders should encourage collaboration among music teachers and create partnerships with community organizations that can strengthen music programs. When educators work together with administrators and community members, they can better serve students and address the educational challenges that exist within urban communities.

Implications for Higher Education

Music teacher educators can strengthen teacher preparation programs by equipping future educators with the skills to lead successful music programs. Participants in this study identified successful leadership practices that have been cultivated throughout their careers. Higher education institutions should provide future

music teachers with experiences in urban settings and prepare them to address future challenges. Teacher educators should discuss and demonstrate effective leadership practices within the music classroom and field experiences. Although musical and pedagogical knowledge are important components of music teacher preparation, educators should also view leadership preparation as a critical aspect of their program.

Implications for Urban Music Education

While there are many articles and books discussing challenges within urban education, this study highlights how successful urban band programs thrive in spite of some of these challenges. The findings illustrate that educators can approach their work from an asset-based perspective that empowers students through music. Rather than acknowledging the financial and community challenges that exist within urban contexts, participants focused on strategies to recruit and retain students, support teachers, and maintain positive school culture. Although organizations like NAFME have developed platforms to address inequities in music education, there is work to be done to ensure all students have equal access to music. Researchers should continue to recognize and highlight successful strategies being implemented in urban schools districts.

Recommendations

Drawing from the results of this research, recommendations for practice are proposed to aid in the progression and continual success of urban high school band programs. Suggestions for applications are based upon the experiences of study participants. The recommendations below are designed to guide band directors, school administrators, school districts, higher education, and community stakeholders in empowering music programs in urban schools.

Recommendations for Band Directors

Urban band directors should be mindful leaders that balance the teaching of music with the development of leadership skills. Program structures should be designed to build meaningful connections with students, families, administrators, alumni, and community members while allowing for shared leadership opportunities within the organization. Directors can build a successful organization by establishing high expectations and meaningful leadership opportunities for students, creating a recruitment and retention plan, and intentionally developing a culture of accountability, collaboration, and student ownership. Directors should also continuously advocate for their program through outreach to community partners and regular communication with school leaders.

Recommendations for School Administrators

School administrators should view the presence of a band program as an asset to student achievement, school culture, and community connection. Administrators can empower music educators by publicly advocating for programs, providing opportunities to collaborate with other school leaders, offering support when organizational problems arise, and including directors in school-wide initiatives. Whenever possible, administrators should prioritize resources that allow directors to provide high-quality instruction. Effective leadership can come in many forms, so administrators should also foster cultures of trust, open communication, and collaborative decision making.

Recommendations for School Districts

Districts should work to develop policies that allow for equal access to quality music education within urban schools. District leaders can empower music educators by

providing professional development opportunities that include training on educational leadership, organization management, program advocacy, and community building. Districts should also encourage collaboration with other music programs, grant-writing opportunities, and partnership building with community organizations. Additionally, districts can work to provide access to equal instructional materials, transportation, facilities, and equipment.

Recommendations for Higher Education

Higher education institutions that prepare future music educators should include leadership development in teacher preparation programs. College coursework can include lessons on organizational leadership, school-community partnerships, educational advocacy, communication, fundraising, and program management. Universities should also place students in field experiences with successful urban music programs in order to learn from experienced educators who demonstrate strong leadership skills.

Recommendations for Community and Stakeholder Involvement

Community organizations, alumni groups, booster organizations, local businesses, and family members should be encouraged to partner with schools to support band programs. Study participants agreed that successful organizations share the responsibility of supporting students. Schools should focus on creating partnerships with stakeholders that provide financial support, mentoring, volunteer opportunities, internships, and community advocacy. By strengthening partnerships with community stakeholders, schools can better support students and increase the sustainability of their music programs.

These recommendations highlight the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders in maintaining successful urban high school music programs. School leaders can strengthen their music programs by building cultures of high expectations, supporting directors and teachers, and actively seeking out opportunities to partner with community stakeholders.

Future Research

While this study makes a valuable contribution to this area, further research is necessary to replicate these findings in different contexts. The following recommendations are provided for future scholars who wish to conduct this work. Researchers should attempt to replicate this work with larger and more geographically dispersed samples. Participants in this study included accomplished educators within one context. Further research spanning several states, school districts, and regions of the country could identify whether similar leadership practices influence successful urban band programs within different education systems. Cross-case comparisons may also reveal contextual variables impacting program development.

While this study focused on urban band programs, future researchers should investigate successful band programs in suburban and rural settings. Comparisons of leadership practices between urban, suburban, and rural band directors may allow for more generalizable conclusions to be drawn about the ways in which contextual variables shape leadership, organizational culture, and program longevity. Such studies may help scholars identify practices that are common across successful music programs as well as practices that are unique to specific contexts.

Future scholars should seek to include a wider range of stakeholder perspectives. While this study aimed to investigate the experiences of successful band directors and educational leaders, students, parents, school administrators, booster organizations, alumni, and community members also have important roles in creating successful school band programs. Future studies that include these stakeholder groups may lead to more comprehensive findings about how leadership, collaboration, and organizational culture relate to successful school music programs.

Consider pairing with researchers who focus on longitudinal research designs to study how successful urban band programs are cultivated over time. While cross-sectional case studies can provide detailed descriptions of music programs at a specific point in time, longitudinal research could illuminate how leadership practices, organizational culture, student leadership, and program outcomes develop across multiple years. Such research would allow future scholars to study how leadership transitions impact long-established music programs.

Investigate how collegiate music education programs are preparing educators for these types of leadership roles. Participants in this study discussed engaging in leadership behaviors that extend far beyond the responsibilities of teaching music. Successful directors also behave as organizational leaders, advocates, fundraisers, community ambassadors, and administrators. Explore how educators are being prepared for these types of roles in school music programs. Additional research should address leadership in collegiate music education programs. Such work could influence music education curriculum and better prepare future educators to excel in school music programs.

Employ mixed-methods and quantitative methodologies to continue studying these relationships. As a qualitative investigation, this study provided valuable descriptions about participants' experiences. However, quantitative research could examine how common these leadership practices are across a large population of music educators and could identify which leadership practices predict successful program outcomes. Using a mixed-methods approach could lead to more comprehensive conclusions about successful school music programs.

Research that addresses these recommendations will continue to build on the current body of literature related to successful school music programs, urban music education, and educational leadership. Future studies that take place in different contexts and include additional stakeholder groups will create a more complete understanding of the leadership practices and organizational variables that facilitate successful urban high school band programs.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this qualitative case study that should be acknowledged. This does not mean that these limitations invalidate the research, but they should be taken into consideration when discussing the scope, transferability, and understanding of the findings. In addition, it should be made clear that views about administration came through the participants' views and not directly from administrators who were not band directors. The following limitations should also be considered.

First, qualitative case studies typically involve purposeful sampling of a small number of participants. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, which seeks to understand the lived experiences of participants rather than create statistical

generalizations, this study does not claim that the findings are representative of all urban high school band programs. Rather, the findings of this study provide a detailed description of leadership practices and organizational characteristics that promoted program development and contributed to sustained success in the case of this study.

Second, the participants in this study were sampled based on their experience as successful urban music educators. Purposeful sampling was an appropriate method to fulfill the purpose of this study, but it also limits the extent to which the findings can be understood as characteristic of all educators. District and program leaders who are experiencing lower levels of success or who work in differing educational contexts may identify different leadership practices, challenges, or measures of success.

Third, this research was situated in one city within one state. Policy, administration, funding, community support, and student populations all vary by school district and state. As such, readers should acknowledge the contextual nature of this study when comparing its findings to their own educational settings. In keeping with other qualitative research, the intent of this study is not to generalize findings but to promote transferability through thorough description.

Fourth, data were collected using mainly semi-structured interviews with the assistance of observations, field notes, and document analysis. While data triangulation contributed to a well-rounded and credible set of findings, interviews were rooted in personal perception and experience. As with any interview-based research, participants may have placed additional emphasis on certain experiences and omitted others or may have reflected on experiences differently today than when they occurred.

Finally, the researcher functioned as the instrument of data collection and analysis. As the sole researcher, my background and experience listening to and working with urban students provided context that helped to inform my understanding throughout the research process. Practice also meant that I needed to pay particular attention to researcher reflexivity. To limit potential for researcher bias and maximize rigor, I collected multiple sources of evidence, followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process for thematic analysis, and triangulated my findings with the help of participant interviews, observations, field notes, and supporting artifacts. These practices supported the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of my study and allowed for a systematic, reliable, and transparent analysis process.

Although these limitations should be acknowledged, they do not detract from the valuable information this research has to offer regarding successful urban band programs. Participant experiences were rich and full, multiple sources of data were used, and thematic analysis was systematic and comprehensive. Understanding how leadership, collaboration, administrative support, resiliency, and organizational culture can combine to create a successful program can encourage future investigation into topics that were not fully explored in this research project.

Conclusion

Qualitative case study explored how directors of successful high school band programs develop and sustain urban programs. Interview questions focused on topics related to how successful programs are built, measures of success, administrative support of music programs, overcoming challenges in urban settings, and contributors to long-term program sustainability. Five participants who were highly qualified urban

band directors and music administrators were recruited via purposive sampling. Data were collected through interviews, observations, field notes, and document analysis. Transcripts were coded using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model of thematic analysis. Results indicated that successful urban band programs are intentional organizations built through leadership practices that foster relationships, collaboration, student development, administrative advocacy, resilience, and positive school culture.

Research contributes to existing scholarship by providing evidence that cannot solely be explained by musical knowledge, funding, or chance. Although each participant's story was unique, they all expressed similar sentiments about what makes directors successful. Successful directors were described as educational leaders who developed positive relationships, empowered others through distributed leadership, advocated for students and music education, overcame challenges with resilience and creativity, and cultivated school cultures where students could excel as musicians and as people. Together, these leadership practices create an environment where students feel empowered to do great things both inside and outside of the music classroom.

Results of this study work to dispel the deficit ideology that often plagues conversations about urban education. While participants experienced and described challenges related to underfunding, staffing, recruitment, scheduling, school policies, and public perception, they each approached program building with an asset-based mentality. Leaders built partnerships within the community, fostered collaborative relationships, held students to high expectations, and developed organizational systems that encouraged students and stakeholders to have a vested interest in the success of their program. This finding suggests that challenges often associated with urban

education can be perceived as opportunities for school improvement and organizational development.

One of the novel ideas discovered during analysis was the focus on leadership as a shared responsibility. Participants described successful organizations as those in which students, parents, administrators, alumni, booster organizations, instructional staff, and community members were all responsible for maintaining a successful program. This finding adds to the theory of organizational leadership by illustrating how urban music educators reinforce shared leadership and positive organizational culture. Further, this study extends the literature on urban music education by providing insight into how collective leadership practices affect long-term program sustainability.

Additionally, interviews revealed that leadership practices influence organizational culture, which serves as the lasting legacy of a successful program. Positive school culture was defined by participants as an environment of trust, accountability, collaboration, belonging, pride, and ownership. When students felt as though they were an important part of something larger than themselves, they were more motivated to contribute to the program's success. Years after participants either graduated or left their urban schools, they described how positive organizational culture was the critical factor that sustained their programs. This finding establishes culture and leadership as interrelated concepts that influence an organization's ability to succeed over time.

Like leadership, the findings of this study can be applied to educational settings beyond music. Building relationships, fostering collaboration, advocating for students and programs, developing resilience, and intentional culture work are practices that can

be shared by administrators and educators across school contexts. As schools attempt to reimagine education post-COVID, administrators, teacher preparation programs, district leaders, and policymakers can learn from urban band directors who have discovered that successful educational organizations require leaders who value people just as much as they value academics. Therefore, this study contributes to music education literature and advances the conversation surrounding leadership in education.

Finally, it does take a team to develop and sustain successful urban high school band programs. Program success is not maintained by a single excellent director and is not dictated by financial resources or luck. Successful urban high school band programs result from teams of directors, students, administrators, parents, alumni, booster organizations, and community members working together to improve the lives of students. Directors who work alongside their students to build authentic relationships and purposefully cultivate a positive school culture can create programs that thrive for generations. As demonstrated by each participant's story, successful urban band programs have the ability to change students' lives, empower school communities, and shift the narrative of what can be accomplished in urban schools.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval – Exempt Determination

April 17, 2026

Jane Kuehne

3348446852

kuehnjm@auburn.edu Dear Jane

Kuehne:

On 4/17/2026, the IRB reviewed the following submission:

Protocol Information	Submission Details
Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	It Takes a Team: A Case Study on Overcoming Challenges and Cultivating an Excellent Band Program in Urban Education
Investigator:	Jane Kuehne
IRB ID:	STUDY00001228
Funding:	None
Grant Title:	N/A
Grant ID:	None
IND, IDE or HDE:	None
Documents Reviewed:	• Interview Questions, Category: Data Collection Form; • M. Griffin Email Script, Category: Recruitment Materials; • M. Griffin Information Letter, Category: Consent Form; • M. Griffin Protocol Form, Category: IRB Protocol; • Vendor Vetting Approval_ATLAS.ti_COE Use_Mar 2026.pdf, Category: Vendor Vetting Documentation;

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. This determination is valid through 4/17/2029. The IRB has implemented a three-year determination period for Exempt submissions to better manage the active research portfolio.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in HRP-103
- INVESTIGATOR MANUAL.

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a modification in the Endeavor system.

Sincerely,
IRB Administration
540 Devall Drive
Auburn, AL 36849
irbadmin@auburn.edu
(334) 844-5966

Appendix B

Interview Protocol Questions

Interviewees have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interview. Interviewees also have the right to terminate the interview at any time. When they do, their answers will not be recorded.

Urban Teaching and Your School

1. When did you first start working with urban schools? What made you want to teach in an urban environment?
2. How would you characterize your school and community?
3. What resources does your program have access to (band instruments, funding, staffing)? What resources do you wish your program had access to? Defining & Measuring Success

Defining Success

4. How do you define success within your band program? Is it determined by product or by number of students involved?
5. What indicators do you look at to measure the success of your program? Are there students
6. thriving in your program that may not be reflected in your band's overall performance?
7. Describe a successful student in your program. What does he/she look like beyond their musical skills? Behavioral/Attendance Challenges
8. What are some challenges you face as a director that you wouldn't find in a nonurban school setting?
9. How do you deal with challenges such as student transiency, irregular attendance, and lack of prior knowledge?
10. What do you do when you don't have enough budget for instruments? Culture Building &

Student Engagement

11. How do you manage students who have other priorities/conflicting commitments outside of band (sports, jobs, etc.)?
12. How do you excite kids about band if they've never been exposed to a concert or marching
13. band?
14. How do you allow students to share their own cultural backgrounds and identities through music?

15. How do you retain students in your program? (i.e. if you work at a school with high turnover)
16. How important is parent and community involvement to the success of your program?
17. How do you build strong relationships with school administrators?
18. Do you work with outside organizations (local arts organizations, universities, professional musicians)? If so, how?

Teaching Practices

19. Do you approach teaching music differently with your urban students than you would with students in other settings? If so, how?
20. How do you effectively teach students who may be at vastly different playing levels?
21. How do you balance working on fundamentals with keeping students engaged?

Personal Successes, Thoughts, Philosophies

22. Describe your proudest moment as a band director. What allowed you to make that happen?
23. What's the toughest lesson you've learned while directing bands in urban schools?
24. If you could give one piece of advice to a band director who is new to teaching in an urban environment, what would it be?
25. What do you wish your administrators (or the people in power) understood about running a successful band program?
26. What would you change about the way band programs are run/administered in urban schools?
27. Is there anything that you believe to be true about your program's success that people don't typically talk about?

Appendix C

Transcripts

All names, places, or other identifying information are replaced with pseudonyms in the document. Artificial Intelligence (AI) was used to help with this process. All transcripts in this appendix were first transcribed by hand and then, specifically for this appendix, an AI tool (Gemini) was used to remove names of people and places and replaced with generic placeholders like "University 1."

Participant 1

(00:38) All right, so let's go ahead and get started. I know we was talking a while before we actually started recording, but my first question is, when did you first start working in urban schools and what made you want to teach in an urban environment? My first time actually working at urban schools was about 2017. It was during my actual internship.

(00:59) I was a member of [University 1]'s band. And I was going to some of the local high schools with a part of me being essentially trying to recruit. But I was also given the opportunity to work with some of the local high schools in [City 1], now known as [High School A], which was at the time [Former Name 1] and [High School B], which is, I can't think of their name now, but they have a new name as well. So my first time- [High School C].

(01:21) [High School C], yes. My first time working with urban schools as just without being paid as a teacher or anything like that would be in [City 1] in 2017, 2018. My first time actually being with a program of my own would be 2020, which is where I came to [High School 1]. Okay, so what do you find as far as joy in teaching, I guess, black kids or in the urban environment?

(01:47) What kind of joy do you feel you can get from that? One, just seeing that they have an outlet, something for the kids to do outside of being in their situations on a lot of our youth in the black community, especially our male youth. They have a lot of opportunity to get in trouble, but opening the door to be able to give them some opportunity to do some things and just being able to relate to them. and tell them, you know, it's somebody else like you, but look where I am now, and showing them that I was in your shoes a couple years ago.

(02:19) Being that example. Yes, and now I'm your example, and just seeing their growth. This is my first year having a couple kids graduate since I've been a teacher here. That's crazy.

(02:30) Right, and just being able to see a lot of them graduate music education-wise, accounting majors, and seeing that they were kids that didn't even, some of them didn't even want to go to college, and I gave them an opportunity to march in college and pay for school and become a music educator because they loved what I did for them. You make it cool for them. Yeah.

(02:51) Heard that. Okay, so my second question is, how would you characterize your school and community? Like, how would you describe it? In [High School 1], I have a mixture.

(03:03) of cultures. We are an IB school, so of course it's typically thought of as where there's smart kids, it's easy, but we have a lot of different cultural backgrounds that we have to relate to, seeing the fact that we get students that are zoned to other areas all over [City 2] from the east side to the west side to the north side to the south side. We even have now in our program because we're IB school, we even have kids that come and travel almost 50 miles away, 50 minutes away just to get to school.

(03:33) So speaking on cultural aspects, we have a lot of diversity when it comes to relating to kids. You have kids that come from a more, you know, rough background and then you have those kids that are on the side of they're more wealthy and have a better- A little bit more privilege. Yeah, privilege. Yeah.

(03:52) So bringing those kids to meet the same mindset and goal and standards is kind of a great task here. It does take sometimes about a year for the freshmen as they come in as freshmen for us to get them there, to break them out of their comfort zones. But by the time they are, you know, sophomores, juniors, they've actually blended and culturized themselves into a [High School 1 Student]. And it kind of fits them as well as being around in this area, being close to [University 2].

(04:20) they have a lot of chances to collaborate and go down to work with the [University 2 Full Name]. What resources do your program have access to? Band instruments, funding, staffing. What resources do you wish your band program had access to that y'all do not?

(04:42) We are also a Title I school, so we do receive a lot of our instruments and things like that from donations or from, of course, the school board when they get any funding in. [Administrator 1] has recently got funded a lot of the [City 2] schools, as you know, with instruments. Who is [Administrator 1]? Our fine arts consultant at [School District 1].

(05:07) She has recently funded all of us with new instruments across the city. I've recently gotten a couple of donations, and this goes along with your last question about community. I've gotten recent donations from some [High School 1] alumni that stay in the area and they just love hearing us practice. So for instrument purposes, we have gotten a lot of donations of just wanting to help grow the program.

(05:32) What I do wish I did get more of would be things like band uniforms, things that we need replenished, like water, snacks, things like that. Things that throughout the year, especially in the summertime, kids would need more help with. Those items and keep them healthy during the hot months. Yes.

(05:54) And then after the halftime, they need that water. Exactly. Um, also, uh, just, uh, for the less privileged, uh, you know, families, you know, some, some kids just need some financial support. So a couple of donations for it to help with them.

(06:10) Just trying to get them to keep the band moving because it doesn't move for free. Okay. So this is going to be a loaded question. Cause I got asked this during my dissertation, I'm being very formal, but very informal about what's going on.

(06:24) So the question that I had to answer, I'm going to ask you now, how do you define success for your band program? So at an early age, I defined success as it was this perfect sound and everything was just straight discipline and it was like this, you know, this picture-perfect idea of a band. It was a grounded band. Yeah, basically, yeah.

(06:49) [High School D], back in the day. So, essentially, I grew up now knowing that, you know, and even talking to other colleagues, including yourself, you know, that just try to cherish your small victories. And realizing how those small victories come together and overcome a larger victory. Yeah, you have those moments where you have those, dang, it wasn't what I wanted, dang, I didn't really like it. (07:14) But just seeing, like I said earlier, watching my kids develop and getting better at this craft. And even myself, like iron sharpening iron. The better they get or the more I want them to get better, I gotta go research. I gotta go call [Director A] and say, hey, How do you get them trombones to sound?

(07:31) Stuff like that, I think is community growth, not just in my program, across the city, is what I see as success. I don't believe in success being granted to just one specific location. I believe success should be casted across a wide variety. So for me, success, I think that it comes with what are you doing?

(07:55) To make this situation better, and where have you come from? Okay, so say when they asked me that question, I answered it in this way. A lot of people met success through victories and I won grand champion, I got superior NPA, but every program isn't built the same. So I measure success, it's kind of one of the reasons, one of the reasons I chose you because one, you are successful when it comes to being adjudicated through concert band and marching band.

(08:25) But also, I measure success by the energy of your students. So say for example, when I do [Music Event 1], I work with your students in [Music Event 1], they have a certain type of air about them, about their program, the type of pride they have. And I feel like that's a success within itself. You know what I'm saying?

(08:42) Because there's a lot of bands out here that don't care, band students don't care nothing about man. So the fact that, you know what I'm saying, that kids really enjoy being in your program is a success within itself. And also being able to perform and perform at a level that the community can be proud of, the students can be proud of, you can be proud of. One of the things that I want to mention, just to piggyback off of what you said, I remember we did a PE.

(09:07) And you had some words, I can't remember whether you had a couple of words there or more like a phrase, like a motivation. Just like how we had a motto, I made a mistake. We called our program the [Motto Phrase 1]. So even when I was in school, that's what my director called it.

(09:23) They took it away and I brought it back, got the name back. When I realized that they were just so excited about having something, you know, for themselves, I took that, that [Motto Phrase Part 1], that's where we get the [Abbreviation 1] thing just to make it kind of cool. Yeah, cool.

And you talk about our pride.

(09:39) that P in the pride it actually has an acronym that we all you know it's in between my program but it stands for something and it goes to the success because it also has something to do with us being great test takers okay um so and that being a test taker means you have good preparation so yeah hey hey okay all right so going on to the next question What indicators do you look at to measure your success for your program? Are the students driving your program that may not be reflecting your band overall performance? I start with, the first thing I want to know is, I test my band a lot to see if I have to stand in front of them for them to perform.

(10:26) I want my band to be able to, if God forbid, I pass out or something like that, [Director A] can go stand over there and help that band, because for one, that lets me know that I've prepared them properly to function without me. Because you know, of course, we're bandwidth, we're professionals. We know when we stand in front of our band, some things aren't ready. But with us being there, kind of guiding them through stuff, that we can get what we want out of them.

(10:50) But essentially knowing that I can step away from you, and you can do this without me. I can walk away and you can teach this now without me having to spoon feed you everything. You can go learn a section or you can go be a part of, you know, a section. So my, I guess I would say they're the learning curve, watching where they are in the learning curve.

(11:11) Okay, cool, cool, cool, cool. All right. Are there students driving? thrive in your band program that may not be reflected in your band performance?

(11:24) Yes, because we're an Ivy school, a lot of my kids, they don't necessarily get, they get their, you know, credit and they get the recognition that they deserve when it's due. But I feel like they do a lot more than what is recognized because it's so many academic things that they also do on top of it. So on the music side, like, Yeah, they're doing all these things, but they probably only get celebrated for this many things. Compared to doing all these, but on the academic side too, because we're IB school and AP, everybody has to take AP now.

(11:56) Everything on the academic side stacks. So it's kind of like when they do get a chance to get celebrated on it, I do think they do. Okay, next question. Describe a successful student in your program.

(12:09) What does he or she look like beyond their musical skills, behavior, attendance, and challenges? Um, I think, uh, for me, I have a couple of kids. When you asked that question, I had like three or four kids that came in my mind. And, um, if I could combine them all to make the perfect student, um, it's the, because I have a couple of kids that will take initiative and sometimes they'll come to me and they'll say, Hey, I want to run a rehearsal.

(12:35) Can I get on the box today and teach and work on this and clean up the concert zone? So I think that student that notices where, you know, there are flaws in the programs that falls in the program we're working on at the time and want to take the initiative to go in and make better. That's one of the characteristics that I would love them to have. The drive to have that mother instinct, cuz you can't always be, you know, right gun hole on, you know, I'm gonna go and I'm gonna do it this way.

(13:03) I'm gonna do it that way, you know, and it gotta be that way. Sometimes you gotta learn how to relate to someone or you gotta understand they may come to school today, they may have been on all night. So having their mother, motherly, I'm saying motherly instinct, you know, to be able to relate to people, as well as understanding the discipline aspect behind it and not, you know, a good balance between that, not letting the kid get over on you, but also understanding, you know, okay, hey, you know this, so.

(13:31) Musically, of course, they look into more than just marching band. I got a lot of kids that don't necessarily, they love marching band, they do it, but that's not their primary, you know, love, like I got some kids that their love is jazz band and concert band and they don't necessarily always get a chance to do that much in the city with the high demand of everybody wanting to rent some bands. You know, and I'm sure you get it, you know, it's almost like we in marching band season all the time, so.

(14:01) Essentially, those kids that just show more of a musical appreciation than just, you know, what's fun to the natural ear. To take it to the next level. Mm-hmm. Okay.

(14:14) Next question. What are some challenges you face as a director that you wouldn't find in a non-urban school setting? Um... Hell, yeah.

(14:26) I know. I know. That one tough right there. You got a good one there.

(14:29) Yeah. Um... I would start with, um... And this is going to sound very, very, very, it's going to be a peaky one.

(14:39) If you don't like it, we can take it out. I'm going to say it, and we're going to make sure it needs to be said. I feel like right now, it's very important to remember that the people working have to have mental space. A good, clean, clear mental space to be there for those kids.

(15:02) And I'm going to speak on this from a past story, and I'm not going to mention the director's name that this happened with in my past, throughout my career. I watched a director that I loved when I was growing up, and great teaching everything and all that stuff, have a really, really rough summer, family-wise. We came back in the fall, and that director was not the same. He couldn't produce the way he was, and essentially, that held him from being the best version of himself for his students.

(15:32) So essentially, just... Understanding that we're not robots. Yes, we love to do what we do, and we're gonna do, and we're gonna fight, and we always had that drive. But understanding that sometimes our mental health is very important.

(15:46) If I'm not there mentally, then I can't be aware, not just musically, but just in the safety of my kids. Let me challenge you, though. So you feel like the people, as they say, over the mountain, they'll go through those mental health things? Oh, I don't necessarily say they don't go through the mental health things because I feel like they got their own versions of those mental health things.

(16:07) I think I'm more so speaking on the aspect of the demand of what we have. Me speaking, like you said, they always want the damn one. I mean, they always want their marksman. They always want their marksman, yeah.

(16:20) And me speaking with some of the Over the Mountain directors, I actually know at [High School E], their main director very well. One of the things that I noticed was he

said, y'all got three assistants. So, you know, in the building, you know, yes, indeed. So, you know, just just saying that, you know, in [Director A], he doesn't know he got to call me from [High School 1] to make it over there.

(16:42) You know, just like in the building, having to help, you know, is what I'm saying. They kind of have that gap. But for us, it's more so of a demand on. When that band move, it's on [Director A], it's on [Interviewer/Director B] every time compared to them.

(16:56) Even with concert, getting ready for a performance assessment, state evaluations, everything like that. It's kind of a difference between being able to delegate as a head director and say, hey, you know, you're going to work on an African band today. And then next week I'm gonna work on rampage because even then I got time to sit back and I can come listen to you while you work on rampage and say, okay, so there's gonna be some issues I might have. To properly plan for those things, yes, I do believe they have their own versions of the stresses and even just keeping their kids engaged.

(17:26) But on our side, I feel like- If it ain't us, it's nothing. Exactly. Yeah, I feel like you nailed that one. First of all, you nailed all the questions.

(17:36) I don't want to seem like I'm going kind of like too hard on them, but essentially, because I do believe in, you know, that everybody got their own versions. You know, even in the black community, you got your own versions. Yeah, it is what it is. If it don't seem right, I'll take it out.

(17:52) It's OK, we'll get it done. Right. How do you deal with challenges such as students irregular attendance and lack of prior knowledge. So pretty much getting a student that's not well versed in band or just have attendance problem.

(18:11) So I hate to say it like this, but a lot of my band that I have built over the time, they come in without prior knowledge. Me and you were talking earlier, we were talking about how the elementary programs, when they took that out for a long time, we didn't have kids that were interested in bands. A lot of the kids that I get in, most of the time, I'm going to walk around saying, hey, what you doing at school? Because I see, and a lot of times I go around, I walk around school just to notice, see, like, okay, that child look like they're on their cell or like doing it, like they kind of, to their cell.

(18:42) Yeah, let me pick them up. Yeah, so I'm like, let me go talk to them and say, like, what's up, what's your name? And I kind of get to know them and... A lot of them never played an instrument in their daily life.

(18:51) Some of them might have did like choir. Some of them may have took a piano lesson or something like that. But for the most part, like when it comes to instruments, I always get it in like that. And I kind of start with this, the approach I take with those kids not having with the prior lack of knowledge of music.

(19:08) It starts with me getting them comfortable with me and I'll teach them how to hold the horn and all the things that I want to make sure that they know that I want to make sure I can put off on nobody else. Like, oh damn, you dropped that trumpet. I told you not to hold it right there. Stuff like that.

(19:19) I make sure I control it. But once it kind of gets past, they can get a buzz out of their mouthpiece, stuff like that, or a sound. I kind of try to use pure teaching. Part of the reason for that is because think about it like this.

(19:31) When did you learn how to play an instrument? that was, you know, way younger. So relating to, and like I said, I talk about relating to people. That student that I probably just taught how to play an instrument two or three years ago, maybe I had to say something or maybe I had to get that student that's coming in, you know, to catch on to something real quickly because they just did it compared to

(19:51) us who, yeah, we're doing this every day, but, you know, we got our mind on every instrument and band compared to, you know, like this person who's been doing milliphone or trombone specifically for, two three years they have a little more you know time to sit down and figure out problems so okay um pretty much peer teaching and then what about what about the attendance do you have a problem with attendance um yes um how do you overcome that uh I kind of overcome it because on the outside it looked good. We still, even now, I'm having attendance issues. And it's not just the kids don't want to come or things like that.

(20:30) It's this program, this school, they're busy, they do everything. Our kids do everything, lawyer, doctor, you know what I'm saying, everything. they essentially have to learn how, and that's a part of me helping them as well, learning, teaching them how to balance their schedule, which is big for, especially students going to college a lot. That's why we are a college readiness school.

(20:53) So we are preparing students to go to college and be prepared to live like you're in college now. So essentially trying to get them to understand how to balance it is how I overcome it. So I might tell them, okay, well, if you gonna miss, Monday, you know I'm saying hey make sure you hit Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and if you can't come on one of them days When can you come and see me and we can get some time to work on this day.

(21:16) So it's essentially like yeah overcoming I ain't gonna say I've mastered it, I'm still trying to figure out how to get around it, but for the most part it's just Kind of working with them. You're being more flexible. Yeah And then I'm gonna say this, I'm gonna give credit to this and I know this to everybody, I want to give credit to my parents. They really do Support a lot with that because again, I mentioned it is like a lot of like people in the area like a parking lot.

(21:38) You got some kids that come out of your area too, but a lot of your kids and they stay in that general area. All our kids, most of them stay 25, 30 minutes away. So getting them here for practice and stuff like that, we have long practices. So sometimes I may say I'll be at the band room from eight to three.

(21:58) and I may only have my full band from like 12 to 1, but the rest of that time is just when they, you know, free, so. Okay, yeah. Sounds like you figured it out. Trying to.

(22:12) What do you do when you don't have enough budget for instruments? Um, I start with trying to examine what I do have, whether that is not working. Um, I'll try to see if I can myself work on some things or I can reach out to some people, see if they can work on some things. Um, after that, who do people usually reach out to?

(22:34) Um, of course, I hit up [Technician 1] first. He is actually with I can't think of the name of the brand right now. No, he wasn't here with Perc. It's called BAC and...

(22:48) Not BAC, uh... [Uniform Company 1]. [Uniform Company 1], yeah, [Uniform Company 1]. He's always [Uniform Company 1], but he also is the city's, [School District 1]' instrument technician.

(22:58) Okay. So, he kind of comes out once or twice a year to schools across the city to work on instruments for us. He'll come for a day from about 8 to 3. And he'll just work on whatever you bring to him, whatever way.

(23:12) And we don't, we don't, it doesn't come out of our accounts, obviously. So I'll reach out to [Technician 1]. And it's been working through? [Administrator 1], our phylogist in Jamesport.

(23:25) Usually we have to set up a date with Scott, but they've already talked to him and set it up. As far as other people outside of Scott that I would reach out to, I would reach out to other schools in the district and just ask them things. I might say, hey Griff, I'm missing a mellophone, I need a bass drum, you think I can borrow? And just see what I can borrow throughout the year, kind of networking.

(23:49) Just basically networking and who you know and making sure you keep good relationships with people. You scratch my back, I scratch yours type relationship. I always look out for you, you always look out for me. Um, other people that I have reached out to state representatives.

(24:03) Um, I have, um, one of our assistant coaches at the school is Senator [Politician 1]. So he does, uh, come in and help out a lot sometimes. And there are other state representatives that we are actually working with now currently trying to get to start helping with donations as well. So, okay.

(24:23) All right, as you already answered this, but I'm just gonna throw it back out there. How do you manage students with other priorities, commitments outside of band? Yeah, we're just working with them. And I will say this too on the other side of them because I do want to make this known.

(24:39) It doesn't always work out well with just working with them. I do have a couple of students that, you know, we can sit down and we can talk and we can say this is what we're going to do and they don't uphold the end of the bargain because a lot of these kids, and I don't know if you deal with this too, Just last week I had a situation where I had a student that actually got fired because they had to come to a mandatory rehearsal. during school hours and they wouldn't, they couldn't go and leave school hour time to go to their job and the job fired them.

(25:16) So in that situation, you know, sometimes it's like, I'll try to figure out like, okay, so who's going to make, who's going to take the biggest hit in this situation? Because I am the adult in this situation. So at the end of the day, I can figure, I'm sitting at the top, if that person wants, if that job want to be paid with the kids, stuff like that, sometimes I'll make a decision, you know, to say, okay, you need this, and I know life hard. Can you do this for me?

(25:38) Give me 10 minutes on it. Hey, send me a recorded video of you practicing. So, you know, sometimes that works, but a lot of times trying to get them to uphold their end of the bargain does not work. Okay.

(25:48) Yeah. I'm going to ask you two more questions, and then we're going to have to come back to it, but if you don't mind, just continue this on the Zoom or something. Okay. That's fine.

(25:56) Okay. Because I got to go back to the program. Okay. How do you excite kids about band if they never been exposed to a concert or march band?

(26:07) I start with trying to, you know, just genuinely ask, you know, hey, are you considering this? If they kind of seem shaky or off, I try to figure out why. And once I hear their why, I try to see if we can come to a consensus about, you know, changing that why, their hypothesis to something else and get to a conclusion. And then I offer Hey, if that doesn't work, I really hate to say this, but I learned it from the people that do timeshares.

(26:36) I was like, I'm gonna keep offering you until I run out of options. Hey, that's my job. Hey, I can drop you \$1,000, but you still have to pay me \$2,000. So, essentially, I offer coming to the band room and just coming to check out practices or, hey, we got a game this week.

(26:56) I don't want you to play now, I just want you to come rise again with us and just see. Sometimes you got to sell the product. And you said it best in something else I heard you say before. Sometimes you got to sell the project.

(27:08) And another one of my mentors, two of my mentors, they believe in this. And that's Dr. [Mentor 1] and Professor [Mentor 2] at [University 3]. They've always said to me, you know, hey, you got to keep your band looking good. You got to have something for these kids.

(27:24) You got to keep them excited. You got to keep them in good stuff. What do these kids want? They want to look fashionable.

(27:27) They want to look stylish. They want to have fun. They want to travel. Like, yeah, I want to get all that stuff after that.

(27:34) But essentially, it's just trying to make sure that I let them see what I'm telling them, big guy, rather than just saying, yeah, this is a great plan. We're going to be a family. You're going to have fun. Go to the game.

(27:44) Woo! OK. So the last one I'm going to ask you during this session, because we just pushed for time for right now, and I'm sorry about that. No problem.

(27:53) How do you allow students to share their own cultural backgrounds and identities through music? Um, I have a lot of kids that I let actually get arrangements in and pass out some arrangements when they do them. Yeah, we take time to go over them together. I have people on my staff, you know, kind of assist them and say, hey, you know, this, that, and the other.

(28:16) I also, for my dance committee, I only approve. I let them, that's full on them. They pick songs. If it's a song that I feel like they can't do, if I can figure out a way to do

the, you know, the cleaner side of it or something like that, because, you know, just keeping their ideas fresh, I'll figure it out.

(28:36) If not, I'll tell them to go back to the drawing board because it's just not doable. But just giving them, and I learned this from a literature professor at [University 1], the word agency. Making them feel like they gotta say so in their success. It's not just, you telling me to do this, you telling me to do this when I need it.

(28:56) Yeah, when it's time for me to need some stuff, when I gotta do certain things, when I have those demands, yes, this one is done. But for the most part, the things that I can give them that freeway or that leniency to do, I will allow them to express, even with shows. My first evaluation show, Actually, and I know you gotta go, I'm gonna go ahead and say this.

Just a quick rundown.

(29:14) My first evaluation show was actually done by my students. My first graduating class of seniors, [Student A], [Student B], and [Student C]. At the music, they actually chose those songs. They wrote them.

(29:29) They came back and they did sectionals with the kids and all that. They asked me to do this as seniors. They said, we want to do a show. I said, like, I was like, y'all want to do a show?

(29:38) And I was messing with them. I was like, y'all can do a show. Y'all can do an evaluation. They were laughing.

(29:41) And then I met my first, not my first, my second evaluation. I was like, y'all want to do a show? Y'all can do an evaluation. So I figured they, you know, they didn't really take what I said into consideration.

(29:50) They just, it's just a joke. They came back that summer and they literally, I'm serious, they had like music, a notebook that they had tried to draw out some drill stuff, but then went to ideas and they had like a whole bunch of random parts and stuff. Essentially, it wasn't taking away from what they did. We just took their ideas and helped them see it on the field.

(30:10) And actually, both of them just passed their practices this year. So essentially, you know, That's why I wanted to bring that up in that statement. Just letting them learn how it feels to be a band director. That made them feel good, and then to actually win, no offense to nobody, but to actually win that year, with my students doing it, you know?

(30:34) Hey, there it is, yeah. You got it there. But you know, essentially, it's just the essential fact of seeing your kids be a part of that success and being able to compete with other professionals. And that's why I'm saying, that's why it meant so much to me, because those are my students.

(30:52) And they did something against people who were doing this crap for years. So just essentially, I can't wait to see what they're gonna do in 10 years. You see what I'm saying? So essentially, that's why I wanna say, I give them agency to learn from their mistakes now while it's not their fault.

(31:07) Because at the end of the day, if we hadn't won that year, who fought it? It's on me, right? But I trusted them, and I said that I'll take my platform, and I'll take a chance on y'all. Because at the end of the day, I already had this good, positive energy from knowing that I gave my students a chance, then to have that.

(31:24) Now I'm gonna cut. Hit break. Cut, break.

(00:02) Yeah. Hi, how you doing, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B]? I'm great, are you? I'm doing all right.

(00:09) I apologize for running out of time earlier today, but we're going to finish this interview via Zoom. Once again, like I said, anything can be omitted from this interview. You can choose to be anonymous or not, but I gotta be able to answer these questions more. And then two, I gotta be able to find artifacts and make sure everything is lined up with each other.

(00:32) When I came to your bedroom earlier, I took, I made the note to take pictures of your trophies and other stuff like that. So I have pictures of your trophies and I observed just the interactions in the bedroom today. I'm just letting you know. All that can be omitted if you want or you know what I'm saying.

(00:51) It is what it is. Perfectly fine. Anything that's good for the cause. All right.

(01:00) Okay. So let's start it back. So. All right.

(01:02) Question number nine, how do you retain students for your program? Part of it is through one, taking the time to realize that I'm not bigger than the program, that it takes me to understand each of those kids are different, they're made up of a different DNA. Each of them got different blood in them, so they think differently, they move differently, they react differently. So just getting to know them, And taking that time to learn what brings happiness to them, how to help them overcome challenges, face challenges, even just having life lessons for them, conversations with them.

(01:41) And going through stuff like that, just the relationship. So I would say just having a good relationship with my students, whether it's about band or whether it's about real life things. That's not a good experience, obviously, but I feel like the more important side is through making sure you build that relationship with them. How important is parent and community involvement to the success of your program?

(02:09) Extremely important. When it comes to getting on those trips, you never know what's going to happen. Just like we got called for [District Evaluation 1], you know, last week, our [District Evaluation 1] that all the [School District 1] schools have to do in the spring, we all go and get adjudicated. They send buses, we go get adjudicated at [High School F] by judges and get rated.

(02:32) We had a mishap with our scheduling because of testing. So that kind of created a problem for me to leave on time, and I didn't get a chance to feed my kids. And this kind of happens a lot when it comes to some of the events that we do as a band, because you never know when they need us, but their lunch schedule got to start at 12. So if we had to leave at 11, then we not going to be back till after 2.

(02:51) then you know they don't get a chance to eat. I can call them parents and say, hey, we need to make this happen. And for the most part, they figured it out. Not just

even that, like even just having the engagement of being able to communicate with parents during practice, my band Booster Presidents and Co-Vice Presidents, just being able to communicate with the parents while I'm at practice so they can't come in and interrupt.

(03:12) That helps a lot, you know, with practice times, not having to interrupt or me get off the box and stop teaching or someone had to stop teaching for us to go. talk to the parents. They handle a lot of the things like, you know, if a kid get a little boo-boo on the arm or something like that, they'll, you know, help him get a band-aid, clean it up, get him water, all types of stuff. Just those, I hate to say it like that, but those things that, you know, as a kid growing up, your mom did for you, all those things.

(03:38) So I know my band moms definitely for sure. And my dads, they help with a lot of the equipment. Carrying stuff in games, helping us, they find equipment for us and we need to transport the equipment. They always got a truck, somebody got a truck, they're gonna load it up and they're gonna hop in their truck together.

(03:52) and they're going to put it in their truck together. Community-wise, kind of the same difference. My school is kind of connected to, like I said, [University 2]. In the early interviews, it's connected to [University 2], but on the other side, we are connected to the neighborhood.

(04:05) So sometimes, because I'm respectful, it's a couple of neighbors that have newborn babies. And you know, that can be, I know you know that, that can be a little difficult. with a band coming outside practicing every night. So even sometimes just me being respectful enough to tell my band, like, hey guys, we're going to sing tonight because the baby already asleep.

(04:22) And sometimes she'll just say, hey, if the baby wake up and others will too, you know, it's fine. They give me certain nights. So working with them, with that Norris Utterness, a lot of times they'll just walk over and donate cases of water. They come sometimes and just say, hey, y'all sound amazing.

(04:38) And, you know, just coming to tell the kids, they'll come out there. I seen one lady come out and dance you know why the kids are playing they love they stop playing and say hey like you know have enjoyment and so that just it made my kids feel like somebody else appreciated them outside of people that need them essentially so yeah. Now the next question actually is a is a fun one to me because it can be viewed in so many different uh aspects I guess but how can you build a strong relationship with your administrators?

(05:11) Okay It's crazy because me and you, we got a similar band director that taught us a lot of similar lessons throughout our career, even though you came in 2008 and I came in 2015. One of the things that stuck with me from our Dr. [Mentor 1] is that essentially you make sure you keep them in good graces with you. So if they need something and it's an emergency and you can figure something out, even if you can't get them everything, they won't offer them as much as you can.

(05:44) And show them that you're willing to help them and you're willing to go the extra mile. So when they call for them last minute performances, or, hey, I got this, hey, can you do this? Hey, you got a couple kids do that? Trying to make sure I can Not always

give them everything, but I can show that I'm dedicated to trying to fulfill some of those purposes.

(06:02) So it kind of gives me the asset to when I need some, you know, I go X. And it's crazy. I started out that way because of Dr. [Mentor 1 alternative nickname], and I go to a PD from a coworker of mine, and that was one of the things he talked about. about administrators, you know, making sure you try to do, hey man, you got to do this, I got to do this.

(06:20) So, you know, essentially that busy schedule, sometimes it turns into a blessing because when I need, you know, we need extra practice, we need to get the kids out of class early for evaluations because I ain't had a field all year and we need to try to get a show together, stuff like that, different things like that. It just helps out when I need to find funding. It ain't no problem for her to get on the phone.

(06:42) Dr. [Principal 1] is my principal. Ain't nothing funny on the phone that calls somebody, hey, my magnificent band that y'all always need to do something, you know, blah, blah, blah. So essentially it's just about making sure you keep a good rapport with them. And then outside of that, I will say this, a lot of people don't think about this, but making sure y'all know what special days, like when it's Mother's Day, Um, when those days when you're not at the school with them birthdays, you know, and just in general, you

(07:11) know, if you know that you see that they may have a face that ain't the usual happy, you know, bright face, or you can just tell something that's different about their spirit, you know, just asking them sometimes like, hey, you good? You need some? Yeah. Because they are human, just like how we get frustrated, they get frustrated.

(07:28) So if you think about it, we got a band full of 150 people. They got a school full of 150 people, plus all the other people and our other coworkers. So essentially, just being understanding. All right.

(07:41) Do you work with outside organizations, like local organizations, universities, or other professional musicians? Yes, I have done a couple of professional performances. We performed with [Artist 1]. We've done some things with [Artist 2].

(08:00) Recently, we've done some things with [Artist 3]. And I had a couple of kids do a performance with a school. He's a former [High School 1] alumni who was growing up as a rapper. I don't remember his name.

(08:16) They did do a short performance with him. He's been pretty big in Atlanta. As far as schools and organizations, [Fraternity 1], [Sorority 1], National Honorary Fraternity and Sorority at [University 2], [University 4], [University 5], [University 1]. [Chapter Name 1], which is my home, they've all at some point given us a helping hand or come up and just even come to just want to say, hey, let's run sectionals.

(08:49) [University 2] band students, even their concert band students have come and just offer, hey, I want to get some experience. And I know we hear y'all practicing down the street all the time. So we just wanted to come over. You mind if we have some sectional time with them?

(09:02) Or just talk to them? And sometimes I tell them, I don't even want y'all to have sectionals. Just go talk to them about life. Talk to them about college.

(09:08) Give them some advice. So different things like that. They've come to our homecoming games and helped with donating water and presenting for our King and Queen Court. They presented the awards, helped carry things, and on Senior Night as well.

(09:24) They also help, they'll come so that me and the parents don't have to run back and forth doing all this stuff. We can kind of relax, take our pictures and line up. So a lot of different organizations have been a great asset for us. And I also do work very closely with my football team.

(09:44) Me and my football coach, we have a great relationship. So a lot of things we do outside of school together, like we go to some of the homes, like different homes around the city and just have the kids go and just come talk to some of the attendants there. Just spend some time with them, community service, and then we have a picnic together with the football team and the band, so. Yeah.

(10:06) That's pretty cool. Let's switch subjects a little bit. Do you approach teaching music differently in urban schools than you would in another situation? I think that I would approve it based off of the starting point of the situation.

(10:29) If a program was left in good standing, then I feel like, you know, we do want to push our kids regardless of what we think. We want to push them to be able to compete with it. So what better way to compete with it? If you got that qualifications, you got everything you need, then to try to not necessarily change everything to it, but try to add some of that into your repertoire.

(10:51) But if the program is not necessarily where it needs to be for you to do some of those things, I feel like you need to work on the foundation first and work your way to that. Um, I don't, I'm not going to say that, uh, urban schools don't necessarily have it because there are some urban schools that you can get in that I think you could go ahead with. And me being at [High School 1], uh, when I first got there, the program was actually broken down. I only had about five kids actually still in the band, and we had to go find everybody and try to get them back and beg them back and all that stuff.

(11:23) So my first year, I had some musicians that had not been in band a while. We started out doing basic urban school stuff. And I had to realize, okay, if I want to set myself above that and still, me being a [High School 1] graduate, still remember where I came from, because my band director would always tell me, we're a classy band, we can compete with those bands over the mountain. And when she said that to me, Miss [Director C], whenever she said that to us, we always locked into our mind, like, they're not better than us.

(11:52) So for me to hear her say that and get that mindset, I do believe in teaching some of that stuff to us because you never know where you might end up. I might end up there teaching somewhere over the mountain at a school like this, so I should be able to do that, correct? And what if one of my kids that I'm teaching as a ninth grader, you know, and I know you've had this happen, I'm sure just like me, and this has

happened, leaves [High School 1] as a ninth grader, and goes to one of those schools as a 10th grader and say, yeah, I was in the band.

(12:17) And then they come in, you know, they're not prepared and they came from me. So my job is to prepare them that once they walk out that door, they can go anywhere, correct? So essentially lifelong learners shit is where I'm going at this. Like you should always want to better yourself.

(12:31) So not just being stuck in there. Oh, I'm in an urban school mindset. How do you effectively teach students who may be vastly different on different playing levels? Like, say, for example, you have a kid that's all safe and then you have a beginner.

(12:51) For the most part, preparation about how we're going to get them there. Even when it comes down to me sitting down and talking to my arrangers, with a lot of our music, what I try to do is I try to make sure that we have parts in the songs that I know a typical beginner. And we usually know how fast we can get somebody to this level. And we'll kind of have those parts that we typically want them to play and still fill up the song and still feel like they're agency, like they're doing something for the band, which they are.

(13:21) They're helping the band. Because me trying to make them play all the stuff that everybody else doing, that ain't benefiting them because they ain't learning that. And then some of them, they lose confidence like that. So essentially, we try to build them up to that level.

(13:35) Usually by the middle of the season, because we do a lot of the same songs and we play a lot of the same stuff. They didn't went home and got excited because that person next to them doing this and then third and they asked them, how you learn how to do that? And they didn't went home and got curious, you know, and took it home and practice. And usually one day you come in the bedroom and I'm sure you'd have had that moment.

(13:54) You count off the sun and you're like, where that come from? You're right. All that hard work. I know I don't want to make the coach too drawn out, but I did have a baritone player recently.

(14:08) She was a beginner. This is her first year on baritone. We played [University 1]'s version of [Song Title 1] recently. That baritone part, I'm sure you know, being a low brass person, that ain't the easiest thing to play.

(14:21) So at a performance recently, I looked up and I'm getting ready to count it off because my principal wanted it. Remember we talked about early administrators. We got to deal with it. We want to make them happy.

(14:30) I want to hear [Song Title 1]. I looked up, I said, Lord, I don't have but one baritone, and it's her. And she's the beginner. So I was sitting there, and she's up there excited, like, no, Stuart, yes, yes, yes.

(14:42) And I'm like, and I'm looking at her like this, and something just said, trust her. And I looked at her, I walked up to her, I said, you sure? She was like, this the one song I got, Miss Stuart. I said, oh, well, I said, hey, if it goes bad, I said, I promise you, just stop playing.

(14:55) I'm going to fix it. I was like, just follow me and watch me. Man, I'm not going to lie to you. I counted the song off and when it got to the airport where they loop it over and over again, I was so scared.

(15:04) And she actually played it and held her own weight. And I was just like, Wait, you've been able to do this all year? I was like, nah, I want you doing this on everything. I want you to get your tag covered.

(15:14) This your favorite song though, so you like this song. And it's like all year long, we've been running to this course with her like, come on, we need you to try. And now I see that she is trying. We just got to figure out how to relate.

(15:25) So that was a great moment for me to just watch one of my beginners. Yeah. OK. All right, so I got 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 questions.

(15:39) All right. Take your time. I'm trying not to do so long with it. It'd be invaluable.

(15:43) No. OK. It's fine. It's fine.

(15:44) All right, so how do you balance working on fundamentals and keeping students engaged? You know, fundamentals can be the, ugh, I need long songs. Ugh. Yeah.

(15:54) The long songs, all that. I hate to say it like this. It's a mix of both. Kind of sort of like I had to make it a task for them.

(16:02) And I also had to figure out a way to make it fun. Like today, actually, when my band class came in after you had to go to Europe, we got the same band class time, obviously.

So when they came in, one of the things I did today, I was working on them with chromatic scales, playing the entire range of the horn and going all the way down, talking about playing scales in different octaves. And they were getting kind of tired, and I could tell it was getting drawn out of voice.

(16:28) So I started making it a competition. I was like, Let see who can play that chromatic scale without breathing. Who can play the thing without breathing that many times? How many times?

(16:38) Who's going to breathe the most? It started with that. Then I just randomly started making different challenges across the band room. I could just tell they was getting excited.

(16:45) Like, oh no, I can do it. But see, this is the thing. It was also against me. So at this time, I'm getting all the different instruments, and I know it's a bad thing for a person to play different instruments when you're supposed to do all that stuff, but anything to make my kids get out of what I need.

(17:00) So I got a baritone up here, I got a mellow up here, I got a trumpet up here, I got all this up there, and I'm picking them up, and I'm playing them, and I'm challenging all of them. And see, the thing is, it ain't about me really winning. Because at the end of the day, I know that I'm going through the different instruments and I ain't going to be the best on when I get on them. But essentially, it was about them being excited and saying, oh, yeah, I did this better than Mr. [Interviewer/Director B].

(17:20) And they don't realize that's what I want you to do. That's my goal. So essentially, it's just about trying to make it. fun and trying to find a reason.

(17:28) And then sometimes I try to implement it into some of the songs we play. If it's something that I know for a concert band I kind of need that we're going to do for a piece, I try to implement it in some of our marching band songs, songs that I know they actually listen to on the radio or so that they're very familiar with stuff like that. Parents may have played it.

(17:46) So I try to implement some, try to make sure my staff who put that in the song so that when it comes to concert band, all I got to do is say, hey, remember [Song Title 2]? Hey, remember? I was like, hey, play this part. And sometimes I even start with that.

(17:58) I'll be like, hey, they'll be on their concert horns. And I'll be like, instruments up, one, two, three, four. And they look at me like, rams and that's how we you know that's like that's marching band like what you doing steward and then steward we kind of i counted off and i'm like no key and they're like why is he doing that now and i'll stop him at that part and i'll be like okay now i want y'all to play that again just that part and i you know i'll stop him at a party and i'll be like okay now we can look at this piece may everybody go to measure 64 on 64 that's

(18:23) the same exact thing it's just a different note So, why you can play that rhythm now, but you can't play it... Oh, so let's work it out. So, you know, essentially just trying to find ways to keep them engaged. And it's a developing process because the world changes.

(18:40) Even when I was in high school, we had [Vintage Social App]. They got [Modern Social App]. So, you know, just trying to stay relevant. I get on [Modern Social App] a lot and just go get on [Modern Social App].

(18:48) Sometimes I get on the TikTok, the band's [Modern Social App] account, and this is my way of staying in tune with them. And I'm scrolling, trying to see what they're interested in.

Sometimes I go look up, hey, what's interesting facts on [Modern Social App]? what's interesting facts that I can go over with my kids and just like random stuff like Westin and I'll try to figure out a way to actually do that in a professional environment because everything you know it ain't necessarily good for students to do like you know it's

(19:13) stuff that'll actually injure stuff because folks don't really know where they're going but I'll take aspects from it like okay I like this idea and I'm gonna make it my own and make it safe and make sure it's Chris proof in other words so yeah it's fun Oh, the task part. I did forget this part. The task part is I do assign some certain things for them to do, go home and do like videos or things like that on [Learning Platform 1].

(19:41) So sometimes it's really every like once every month I have like a list of things that I want them to do and I send it out on [Learning Platform 1] and there is no rush. It ain't about getting in. I don't got no due date on it because essentially I still want them to do it. I don't want them to think, well, it's over with.

(19:56) I don't want to do it. I have different stuff like play the chromatic scale, play your B flat, play F concert. This week we playing this like we doing different. Hey, I want y'all to do long tones.

(20:06) I just want to see you playing long tones for 10 minutes, record a video and post it on [Learning Platform 1]. Simple stuff, you know, stuff like that, so. All right, so I'm going to ask more personal questions. Like I said, the answer is in the best of your ability.

(20:24) Here we go. You ready? Yeah. Describe your proudest moment as a band director, and what allowed you to make that happen?

(20:33) Proudest moment as a band director? Honestly and truthfully, right now, I would say that it would, I got two of my proudest moments, only because of where, it's situational. This year, We faced a difficult task, which was we didn't have a field to practice on. But I figured out a way to get a field shot on the field every...

(21:01) every, you know, week and stuff like that. And when it came to evaluation, I think I talked to you about that. We couldn't use the field that we did, you know, use when we couldn't get there at all that entire week. And just by a miracle chance, God blessed us.

(21:16) And they just so happily put the turf down that Saturday before evaluations. And we went out there and put a show together in one day. And, you know, you know our program, The Miracle Band. It's crazy.

(21:28) Me and my staff sit back. We was like, bruh, whatever we ended up having a Miracle Band because we went into the contest thinking that, you know, and not necessarily that we were at a disadvantage, but like not, not basically being mad at nobody or not saying that it's on anybody right now. We just going to put on a show and have fun and enjoy it. And I even told the kids that, so for us to actually come out successful, you know, it, that was a very proud moment for me.

(21:53) But I think one of my proudest moments is that first class I had, what I was talking to you about, Genuinely, because like I said that I taught those kids and I motivated them to want to be teachers and now hearing all them saying that they passed the practice and since I talked to you today, I actually had another student reach out to me. He's actually done. And he's past the practice.

(22:15) So that's another one of my music educators that's coming back to [City 2]. So just understand truthfully, that's why I said I got two. And I want to say both of them only because I know that one's going to be long lasting. This one right now is short because it happened this year.

(22:28) But that one right there, just knowing that I had some kids that I motivated to join the music educator world with me and seeing them progress and be successful in life and even becoming section leaders in band programs. I think I've got somebody in just about every band program in the sweat right now that's been either a section leader or an assistant section leader as of right now. Literally. Being able to get on Instagram and social media and see them.

(22:58) living these great grand lives. I got a kid that was at the Super Bowl performance with [University 6]. I got a kid that went to the White House. I got the kids that did just, you know, [University 1 abbreviation] State, the men in California did all the stuff.

(23:09) So it's just knowing that I was a part of helping them get some of these magnificent moments. I think that's my proudest thing, getting my kids to the next level. I think seeing them at the next level, being successful at the next level. What do you feel?

(23:25) What do you think? allowed you to make that happen? Mostly growing up, seeing that a lot of people our age, they didn't necessarily have a platform to one, try to test out like their ideas and knowledges about things or see what, you know, like, you know, having agency in the program, like when you asked me earlier, how do I allow them to put their own staple in?

(23:55) Growing up not seeing that happen, a lot of times everything was like, nah, you're going to do it this way, even with me being a student. Like, we got to do it this way. We got to do it this way. And just knowing that I had some great ideas and not to down my bandwidth or nothing like that, because we did win evaluations in one year.

(24:10) But those other three years, I felt like some of the ideas that me and some of the other students had would have just gave us that slight competitive edge that would have put us above the other programs, only because we knew what they were doing. And her mindset was that we're us and we're going to stay us. And I love that she taught me that lesson, for sure. But just that mindset of knowing when I was a student, now I'm an adult, so I understand it.

(24:35) But knowing that as a student, that hurt me so bad, like knowing that I can't, I felt like I couldn't fight. I felt defenseless, like I wasn't fighting for myself, in other words. I didn't want to have my students feel that way. So I wanted to have that platform.

(24:49) And just knowing how it felt to hear get a phone call, I don't even know if it was a phone call, I think it was a text message, I don't remember, from you, when you were at, was it [High School G], if I'm not mistaken? And just asking, you know, hey, you wanna, can you come help, you wanna, blah, blah, blah, like, hearing that right there, like, made me feel so good, because I feel like, as a young person, like, in the youth, growing up at that time before, like, recently, a lot of the youth didn't get a chance to try to learn, and by the time they did get a chance to learn, they 30, 40. So, you know, at this point, it's kind of like some of them that gave up.

(25:22) I got a lot of friends that gave up because they can't get a chair, they can't find nowhere to go, and they can't do nothing. They were great. It's some people me and you know. So just making sure that I always got a door open for them, kind of because of what I saw and how it affected me and impacted me.

(25:41) And it made me motivate me to say, I can take what you're doing, as a base and a foundation, and I can show you how to build a house." See, because at the end of the day, they always talk about how you can take a horse to the water, but you can't make him drink the water. At the same time, if you ain't never taught your horse how to drink water, how you expect the horse to go to the water and drink it? So essentially, it's kind

of like, I want to teach them how to do everything, not just, oh yeah, I took you to the water, I got you here.

(26:12) You know what I'm saying? How you figure that? Yeah, exactly. I'm going to wait on you to do it.

(26:17) I already trained you before we even came out, before I started taking you out to public to the world. I already taught you. So essentially, now I feel like those kids, they have some of the greatest ideas because some of them have even arranged for their programs. I got one that arranged a song for [University 6], got one then to put a song on the box at [University 7].

(26:34) So essentially, that mindset and that motivation of me putting in them and instilling in them that you're going to do this show, and we're going to do this, and this is how you got to do it. Okay, look, think about it like this." And I never really made them or told them what to do. I kind of just came back and said, okay, I feel like right here is missing something, and it's kind of empty. What you think?

(26:53) And then I kind of asked them questions to really get their opinion, because I didn't want to make them think it was empty. I wanted them to tell me why I was saying it.

Because now, guess what? They don't need me to sit next to them to hear this stuff, because they sitting there like, dang, what I want to put right here?

(27:06) And even, I'm going to just be 100 with you. two of them arranged better than me right now. And you already know what I'm talking about. I got a kid right now in the band, I can't even scratch the surface that he right on.

(27:19) Just off of me giving him two pieces of advice, which was, hey, I love everything that you're doing and I get it, but remember these are human beings. So they got there to play it, but you gotta make sure that it's playable. So I challenged him to take one day to just go in the band room and try every instrument out just to see what was the stresses of each instrument. And he came back with his laptop so happy.

(27:46) I got these songs, why don't you listen to them? I ain't have time today." He sent them to me. And I'm sitting there looking like, oh, he fixed all this stuff. He even went back and changed some of his rhythms and fixed formats, how it looked, stuff like that.

(27:58) So just to know that I can still impact somebody that I know I already still got. He all the way up here still, but I still can find a way to benefit him. It goes a long way. What do you wish your administrators understood about running a successful band program?

(28:22) I'm sorry, you froze up just a little bit. Can you repeat it? I said, what do you wish your administrators understood about running a successful band program? that it takes practice to do some performances.

(28:40) Sometimes they come to me and they just want, you know, this performance done and we probably ain't went over something in months. And they like, hey, we need you to do this right now. And it's like, you know, I'm telling them, oh, I can't. You know, they said, do that right, right now.

(28:52) Like, can I get a second to go work on it for, you know, this, that, third. And I feel like they'll give me a chance most of the time, but sometimes it's like, they like, nah, forget it.

It's okay. They'll be all right.

(29:01) And they tell me, just go on. I get up there and I'm like, bro, I really don't want to do this, but this is my, let me count it off. And then they come look at me and be like, oh, okay. So it's kind of like one of them moments where I'm like, I try to say, I told you so, but you insisted.

(29:16) So, you know, sometimes you just got to let them see it for themselves. So I think recently they've kind of learned a lesson about that. And they've worked with me a lot more when it comes to stuff like that, because they try to let me know ahead of time, you know, about stuff like that. And essentially that when you are, the band kids don't necessarily get the praise that other kids get throughout school.

(29:43) And I'm not just saying band kids, I'm going to say fine arts kids. They don't necessarily get praise, the praise that other kids get throughout school. And essentially because even like with the [District Evaluation Abbreviation] evaluation, as you know, this is the first year they broadcasted it like that. Just getting the public view a lot of times is about, you know, when they at the games, it's about the football team.

(30:01) Yeah, they see them at halftime, but then, you know, they don't really see what they're doing in the stands. They don't see all this other stuff. So, essentially just learning to make sure that you give them their flowers while they're there and make them feel good about what they're doing. So, I'm not saying that they don't do it because they definitely do it, but just doing it a little more will make the kids more excited to do a lot more for the school and the program.

(30:27) Okay, this is going to be my last one. Is there anything that you believe to be true about your program success that people don't typically talk about? The importance of being able to delegate. I feel like a lot of people take the I'm-the-head-band-director-of-the-job mindset, and they lock it there.

(30:55) And they don't think that they want to be in the front. They always got to be in front of the band. They don't want nobody else input and stuff like that. I feel like being a great leader also is becoming of you being able to delegate throughout your program.

(31:11) So when it comes to my staff, I'm gonna speak specifically on that. When it comes to my staff, I have people that I know are good at specific things. I have people that I know are very good at writing ballads. I have people that I know are good at writing those krump songs.

(31:26) I know that I have people that are good at doing drills. I know I have people that are good at things like that. So instead of trying to over consume them, telling everybody to do everything, just understanding how to manage. And I don't want to say micromanage because a lot of people take that as negative, but micromanage each of those sections helps me because now rather than me worrying about the overall part of the overall organization and the whole program.

(31:54) I got people that's going to different places handling different things at the same time and I can kind of go oversee and tell them hey okay now I don't necessarily like that you know let's look at this let's try this and you know get my input there and we can have a conversation throughout that and even just um having that that same relationship with not just the adults in the program but the student leaders in the program. knowing what kids are good at what. Like knowing, okay, when I need all the band kids to come in the band room and sit down and not say nothing, who I'm going to send.

(32:23) Knowing if I need a part worked on or if I want somebody to go get on the box and count the songs that are going to work the music and actually know what to fix and all that stuff, I can count on them. So just knowing Knowing my program is what I'm going to say is the overall answer for that. Understanding every aspect about it, because you are the head band director, but it's not about me being seen. It's not about me being the only person that gets the praise and the credit, because at the end of the day, I'm going to get praise and credit regardless because it is my program.

(32:51) I'm going to get just as much praise and credit with delegating them as I would get standing in front of the band doing everything. So essentially letting other people feel agency and feel like they're a part of something. I don't got to always be in front of the band on certain stuff. I don't got to always count something off.

(33:06) I don't got to always go and work on this part. I don't got to always do that. Yes, I want to have my mindset on and I want to go. I'm going to go oversee it and I'm going to go check in.

(33:16) I'm going to go review it and I'm going to have the last say so at the end of the day about what's going on. But essentially, putting people who are good at what they're doing in those spots keeps me from having to go change a lot of that stuff because they already know what my mindset is because In the summer, we sit down and we have a little chill session where we sit down and we just talk about everything that happened the past year and all the stuff we did and didn't like. And then I get in my mindset and I tell them what I want.

(33:42) So now they already technically on the page with me. They got a month or two to think about how they want to wrap their mind around what they want to do. And then when we come back, I do run into the issue of not getting my kids all the time during band camp because we testing in school. So some of the kids don't come to August and something like that.

(33:56) But for the most part, when we come back during band camp, everybody already know. It really ain't even though, I don't got to sit down to talk or none of that. I'm with the drum line. I'm over here.

(34:06) I'm getting the band and taking them out here at this time. Sometimes they make sure I remember stuff that I got to do because me and you both know when it comes to paperwork and all the other stuff [School District Abbreviation 1] have us doing a lot of times, that stuff, they might hit us up last minute in the middle of practice. Like, I need this right now. Hey, I need this in right now.

(34:23) So we got to stop and do it. knowing that they all got my back and that the machine is still going. I talked to you about that earlier, like being able to walk away from it and go handle everything else. And it's still back there.

(34:34) The machine is still going. So I feel like that's one of the most important parts of keeping my program flowing, having that hands up. That was amazing. That was an amazing answer.

(34:46) First of all, I want to say thank you, man. Thank you. Thank you for your time. Two times in one day.

(34:55) Hey, you can be the third one if you need it. I appreciate it. I appreciate your time. I appreciate you, man.

(35:03) Yeah. Only got anything to say before I start recording. Uh, I just want to say I appreciate you for considering me for this opportunity. Uh, I myself see you as a successful band director.

(35:16) So to have given me this opportunity and, you know what I'm saying, to speak and looking up to you. And even I mentioned this earlier, you know, you being one of the first people to call me, even asking me, do I want to work? You know, that does, it does mean a lot for me. So I do appreciate this opportunity.

(35:31) So let me tell you one thing about me, man. You keep me humble, boy. It was, yeah. And you got to get some of that Allegro.

Participant 2

(00:01) All right, so we get ready to start this interview. Like I said, you have the right to refuse any questions. You will be recorded if you can, if you say anything or is a question that you don't want to go out there to the public, I can scratch it. Also, you can choose to be anonymous if you choose.

(00:16) Do you consent to this interview? Yes, I do consent. Okay. All right, so let's get started.

(00:22) All right, so my first question to you, when did you first start working in urban schools and what made you want to teach in an urban environment? So my first year teaching at Urban School was 2012. I taught at [High School 2] down in [City 3], Florida. Of course, a child coming from a very urban area, you know, low economic area, I always had a calling to teach our kids.

(00:46) I feel like I always want to empower us to be better and give us the gifts that is needed to be successful in life because somebody did it for me. And so I always had that pull and that calling is a big reason why I went to HBCU for my undergrad to get that enrichment, that culture feel. And so I always had a feel, you know, always a drive and a push to want to teach, you know, our urban students, our students. Okay.

(01:08) How would you characterize your school and community? I would say this, I would characterize this community as a community that's a little bit of everything. You know, we have those that don't have much, you have those that have a little, and you have those that have a lot. So you get a little bit of everything.

(01:28) So you have to teach everybody. This is a community of hardworking people. They work very hard. They believe in the things that they believe in.

(01:37) And when they support you, they support you 100%. And so I think that's something special about this particular area. Okay. What resources does your program have access to, such as band instruments, funding, staffing?

(01:51) What resources do you wish your program had access to? Well, I would say due to COVID, we've been able to utilize some recent funds to purchase instruments and other resources needed like digital boards and things like that. Of course, we had to work very hard to get new uniforms, which we're about to receive. The things I would say I wish we had, we used to have where each kid was allowed a certain amount of money, and that was given to the programs to purchase instruments and keep maintenance and things like that.

(02:24) Those things are no longer around, and I wish that we had those. I feel like it's important for us to make sure we're maintaining the equipment that we have and the resources that we have, because if not, it won't be available anymore. Did y'all have the same ESSA fund that [School District 2] had or everybody had for COVID? Yes, absolutely.

(02:44) Alright. How do you define success within your band program? Success in this band program, I believe, comes in multiple folds. First of all, I believe in leadership, student leadership, and I feel like if you can get a student going from just entering to a program and then eventually become a leader, that's success.

(03:03) The more leaders you have in the program, the better your program is going to be, the more mature your program is going to be. So I believe that's important. So having high numbers of students trying out for leadership positions. Second thing will be of course the pedagogy that goes with making sure the students know what they're doing.

(03:20) A lot of times our students can, they're smart, so they can do things but not necessarily know what they're doing. So if you can get them to know exactly what they're doing, I feel like that's important. And then the third thing I believe is very important that students are participating in outside activities outside of what you offer at your school. That's all county, that's all state, that's all city, that's honor bands, that's community church performances.

(03:43) If they're doing outside things outside of what you offer in your program, they're becoming well-rounded. A well-rounded student is always going to be more successful. Wow. What indicators do you look to measure success in your program?

(03:57) I know this sounds weird, I like to gauge those things off daily assessments. So we go through and we do a thing where I require all students to know their scales. Well, what we do is I put everybody on a board and we go through, I give them a certain amount of time and you have to go through and play. If we can get all your skills to play all 12 major scales, which we know they can do at minimum that they can do pretty much anything.

(04:18) So that's a big indicator how many, what percentage of the band knows their 12 major scales or know the basic fundamentals of the instruments and I use that as an

indicator. Describe a successful student in your program. Man, I'll give you a reason. I have a student named [Student D].

(04:38) [Student D] came to me his sophomore year, spring of his sophomore year, never played trumpet ever before. [Student D] did everything I told him, worked very, very hard. [Student D] right now has received over \$500,000 in band scholarships. Not only that, he'll be attending the great [University 1] on an advanced scholarship.

(05:00) But again, we're taking a kid who didn't know anything, right, to now has gotten, you know, is doing well enough where he's been able to get the multiple scholarships. And we know, yeah, you can get scholarships due to bare minimum, but to get that level of scholarship, that means you can play very well. And so that's a perfect example. And again, him being able to do 12 major scales, performing in outside activities, trying out for all state, doing all county, that shows that level of success.

(05:27) Okay. What are some challenges you face as a director that you wouldn't find in non-urban schools? And I know quite well because I taught in also non-urban schools. I would say the bigger thing is getting people to understand exactly why you take what you take so serious.

(05:49) A lot of times people see band as not something that serious, but it is, right? Band is a life changing sport activity that students participate in and it changed their life. It can propel them on a direction of being a very popular or famous person in their life. And so some of the challenges I think is it's getting everybody, getting people to buy in the level of resources.

(06:14) And I would say sometimes the academic competitiveness of the students that you may be working with. Those non-urban students are already well, they are well-versed, they can use a high level of vocabulary, which makes them stronger critical thinkers. These are some things we have to build within our students in the urban area. Absolutely true.

(06:33) Absolutely true. What are some challenges you deal with, such as attendance or a lack of prior knowledge in students before they get here? Ooh, good question. I would say definitely prior knowledge is the bigger thing.

(06:48) A lot of times I'm receiving, I'm starting to get students now who haven't been in band for long. We had a system where the kids in this particular feeder pattern would start in sixth grade. What we're noticing now, a lot of students are now starting in seventh and eighth grade. Well, you know that one year, it makes a huge difference.

(07:06) And as I was telling you before, I'm starting to get a high number of students who are joining band in high school. So you think about all of that time that we've not been able to develop them and so I'm noticing that becoming a challenge in regards to keeping the quality of the program at the level that we're used to seeing from this particular program. What do you do when you don't have enough budgets for instruments? Great question.

(07:31) I reach out to various organizations. Sometimes we have to go on social media to make a plea to get alumni and those that support the program. It hasn't been a challenge. When I first got here, [High School D] had deplorable instruments.

(07:48) It was no SF fun at that time. And so we were having to reach out and use funds for transportation to buy a new tuba, using money for uniforms to go and purchase a clarinet.

So we were having to take money from other areas to buy equipment for students, which we know hinders the exposure of the program because we can't get out and travel and do the things that we needed to. But I believe we need to do whatever it takes to make sure that kid has something in the hand.

(08:18) That's true, absolutely true. How do you manage students who have other priorities or conflicting commitments outside of band? I'll tell you, it was a challenge for me as a younger director. I have softened up a little bit because our kids now in this modern era, they like to do multiple things.

(08:37) And that's not bad. The only caveat to that is when they're trying out other things, it's taking away from the opportunity for them to get really good on something that can possibly provide financial opportunity for them in the future. But I've learned to, a lot of students who go out and experience things because if your program is attractive, they ain't gonna go nowhere. And that's not proper English, but they won't.

(09:00) But I believe sometimes if you do hinder them, sometimes that will cause some unrest in your program and doesn't give the students an opportunity to figure out how great your program is. And I've seen in the past where students will leave and go and do another sport. And because your program is at the level it is, they always come back. So I believe that you need to be flexible.

(09:22) How do you excite kids about the band if they never been exposed to concert or marching band? Great question. I take them. I travel.

(09:31) We travel a lot. We're probably one of the well-traveled programs out there. I believe you need to expose them. You need to take, if they are not into concert, you need to take them places to show them what concert band can do for you.

(09:44) And that's exposure. So I believe in getting them out, getting them travel, and then you have to continue to show them why it is important. Concert band sets up the marcha band. Although we do marcha band first, concert band sets the marcha band up.

(09:57) Okay. How do you allow students to share their own cultural backgrounds and identities through music? Good, and that's true leadership. So we have a leadership team, we have a dance committee, we have different committees that allow students to be able to infuse their ideologies and their backgrounds into what we do as a program, and we take and utilize those to help enhance what we're doing.

(10:18) So I think that's important because right now, as we've seen across many places, the Latin community is improving. Those numbers are growing, and so we have to infuse them in what we're doing. And so doing that, you make sure you're you've been diverse with your leadership and your committees that you have within your program. How do you retain students in your program?

(10:40) Great question. Again, it goes back to what I was saying earlier, exposure. Kids like to be exposed. Kids like to perform in front of people.

(10:50) And I think that's the advantage of band against another sport because we can do it year round. And so I believe it's important to make sure you also keep your ears on what do our kids like. They may not necessarily like what we like. But we gotta make sure we're keeping our ears open to the things that they like, and we have to infuse those into what we do as an avenue to help teach them and make them better.

(11:14) How important is parent and community involvement with the success of your program? Extremely, extremely important. I would say that's probably one of the areas of the program I would still like to see improve in a program of this size. Personally, I would love to see 70% of the parents, but they'll tell you that's probably impossible to get that.

(11:33) But that's always the goal. Every year, if we can improve the percentage of parents participating because a parent who is exposed to what you're doing or what we're doing as a program, The more support you're going to have financially, and the more supervision and other things that you're going to get from that, that parent also can become a recruiter. How do you build a strong relationship with school administrators?

(11:54) That's a great question. That could be a bit touchy because it depends on the level of commitment from that administrator. Sometimes you have administrators who have come from the band world, they understand. Sometimes you have them, they don't.

(12:07) But they're open-minded. So it depends a lot on the administrators. I think it's important that you also expose that administrator to what you're doing. and make sure you're biting them out, you're making them a part of it.

(12:19) The other thing is to make sure you're giving your administrator credit for everything that your program does. Although they may not be intricate into what you're doing, make sure they get the credit for it, because that creates buy-in. I heard that, I heard that, before they lost bow. How do you work with outside organizations, such as other universities or professional musicians?

(12:40) Reaching out and again, we're talking about, you know, I think it's important we all do this as directors. We invite other directors in to work with our programs and to continue to give other information to our students to help us grow the program and that creates that dialogue and collaboration between the programs.

(00:11) How do you approach teaching music differently with urban students than you would with students from other backgrounds? Oh, infusing the background. The cultural backgrounds, that's the difference. When I taught students that were predominantly white, you have to understand culturally where they're coming from and how they approach music.

(00:33) And the same thing from an urban student, you use that to cultivate what you're trying to do. Because again, music knowledge is all the same, regardless of what your cultural background is. But you need to understand those tools and use those as a source to develop that. How do you effectively teach students who may be vastly different playing levels, such as you have a person that's off state and also you have a beginner?

(00:57) Yes, that's difficult and I would say as a director I'm still working on that process. I do believe you take your students who excel extremely well and you allow them to also help you develop the kids who are not developing as well. I also believe like as a director, you need to teach at least in the middle, right? You got high performing, you got low performing, but you need to teach in the middle so that way you're getting both.

(01:19) So those that high perform, they're always getting rigorous repetition, as well as those who don't perform as well, they're being increased because I always believe that you can't leave those that are developing behind because they will ultimately affect the overall program. How do you balance working on fundamentals and keeping students engaged?

That's a tricky one too. And again, it goes back to just using different techniques.

(01:46) And I believe that's important as a director that you go and watch other directors because we all have little techniques or a little tool things in our toolbox that we can use. And I think a collaboration of that causes you to have the ability to keep your students engaged. I think, again, it goes back to Educating your students on why you're doing what you're doing and why it's important. And I always believe when kids see the success behind it, they're gonna buy into it.

(02:12) But if you're telling them this, we need to do this for this reason, but they don't see the success, it's gonna be hard to have them buy into it. All right, now I'm gonna go into more personal questions. Okay. What is your proudest moment as a band director and what allowed it to happen?

(02:29) My proudest moment, I'll say my proudest moment is always at the end of the school year when we do senior signing day. And I have all of the seniors up there and they're all declaring what school they're gonna participate in. And even notch above that is how many students of that group, of the students, the seniors in class, how many of those are gonna actually be marching at the next level or continue to play the instrument? To me, that's the proudest moment for any director.

(02:56) Yeah, it's one of my proudest moments too. What's the toughest lesson you've learned while directing bands in urban school? Great question. I've learned that nothing is that serious.

(03:07) And that sounds very minimal, but I am learning that it's nothing that serious because sometimes we make things too serious and cause major issues for us. And I'm learning that, you know what, it ain't that serious. There's always a way around it or another solution. Take it.

(03:26) Man, you talking to a mirror right now. It seems like the older I get, you know. If you could give one piece of advice to a band director who is new to teaching in urban environments, what would it be? The best advice, and I'm sure any new director have heard this before, a new teacher, always ask for help.

(03:46) Always ask for help. And one thing I always learned early is always put your pride aside. And put your pride aside and always ask for help. Because it's not about your pride, it's about what you know and what you're going to instill on your students.

(04:00) And they are more important than your pride. And I had to learn that as an early director, reaching out. And the more I asked for help, the better I got, the better my band sounded, and the better people said, man, you're a good director. But it's because I had to get to the point where I felt like, you know, I have to ask for help.

(04:16) And we're not gonna always know everything. They teach us a lot in the school, they teach a lot in the book, but they don't teach us a lot in the classroom teaching. And I think that a big difference in those two. And I think it's important to reach out to people and ask for help.

(04:37) What do you wish your administrators understood about running a successful band program? It's a lot of work. It's a lot of work. Even with a successful program, directors or band staff still need support.

(04:50) A lot of times administrators see a successful program, they don't worry about it, because I don't have to worry about it, because they're doing well. But a successful program takes a lot of work, and the persons over that program need support. They need to feel supported. You want to make sure you highlight them.

(05:07) You want to give them resources they need, make their job easier, because they're already working extremely hard. What would you change about the way band programs are run in urban schools? Support, support would be the bigger things, support. And I'm talking about the totality of the program.

(05:29) We were talking about a feeder program, the recruitment process, starting programs at the elementary level and make sure there's a natural feeder pattern going on. Because I noticed in urban schools that directors have to work much harder to recruit. than our counterparts. And I think that's because not every level of the process is taking that level of music or band as serious.

(05:52) And I think that's what makes the job for the directors much harder. Is there anything that you believe to be true about your programs that says that people don't typically think about? This is the last one. Yes, I think people see the success of the program and not necessarily understand the struggle.

(06:11) Every single director that has their own program, successful or not, is working extremely hard. And this program and any program that's successful have the same exact challenges. The only difference is, is how you, how it's been handled, and how much administrative support they're receiving. That's the only difference, right?

(06:32) Some people see, if you got a smaller band program, and they see this program that has, we stay over 100. But what they don't understand is in order to stay over 100, you gotta recruit even more. It's no difference in the programs. It's just the level of commitment, the level of support, the level of buy-in that usually be the difference between the programs.

(06:52) And so I think that's the misconception of this program is that It's a hard job. I had another director say, man, I will switch places with you any day. And I told that director, go ahead, I'll switch with you. I'll let you come over and you do this for a month.

(07:05) And I'll go do your job for a month. Because when you go and you make that change, you see there's no difference. Both jobs are very, very difficult. And I always believe the more, right, the more, the more problems we have.

(07:18) That phrase, and so that's a misconception. But I do have very talented students here. I have very supportive parents. And we have great bones, because that's also important.

(07:31) How was the program put together and developed from the very start? That makes a difference 20, 30, 40, 50 years later. Man, thank you, man. No problem.

(07:41) This is awesome, man. Thank you so much. No problem, man.

Participant 3

(00:00) All right, is it recording? Yeah. How you doing, Mr. [Administrator 2]? Doing good, doing good.

(00:10) Doing all right, doing all right, doing all right. OK, so you are a participant in my study on successful band directors in urban education. The reason why you were selected is because my criteria were five years of experience, consistent success with band programs, and you got to be directly involved with band programs as well. And this, I told you, you have a unique viewpoint because you were a band director for what, 16 years, 16 years, right?

(00:41) Eighteen. Eighteen years. And then you've been an administrator for eight years, right? Right.

(00:46) OK, so you can see it from both sides. Right. Of course, anything that's we're being recorded and I may ask you to send artifacts or allow me to collect artifacts from social media or anything that in that way to present in my project as well as I already I can pretty much gauge the interaction between you and students and you and other band directors because I work with you.

(01:16) Right. Um, anything in this interview can be omitted. If you choose to be omitted, you can choose to omit the whole thing if you want to. Um, also you can choose to be anonymous or you can have your name out there, but if you choose not to be, if you choose to be anonymous, I have just, your name would have to be just purple or something that way.

(01:35) Um, like I said, you don't have to answer each question. You can omit it or just move on or just, like I said, totally, um, uh, say no, I don't want to do it. Okay. Okay.

(01:46) At any point. At any point so you can come back and say hey, um, can you take that out? Hey, I want to restrict my whole interview Yeah, I will do it only people who have access to the raw version of this interview is me And the principal investigator, which is [Principal Investigator 1] over music education at [University 8]. Okay.

(02:05) Okay. All right, so we can get ready to begin. All right, so I have a total of 25 questions Okay My first question is, when did you first start working with urban schools and what made you want to teach in urban environments? I started actually working with urban schools in 1999.

(02:30) Actually, I'll back up and I'll say 1990. I wanted to work with inner city schools because I was a product of an inner city school system. And so I started at [Middle School A] and then [High School H] and I learned a lot. I was a band head.

(02:54) I really loved band and I really wanted to play drums. Fifth grade, [Administrator 1] told me no, and she had my mom to go buy me a saxophone. So anyway, but I grew up through that system. I did not.

(03:12) understand back then how important band was to inner city students until I got into a position to start teaching. And unfortunately, I had an opportunity to start teaching at a high school. They just merged [High School H] and [High School I] in a brand new building, and they were hiring me right before I got my degree. I was very excited because it was still like my former high school.

(03:41) I did have a lot of people tell me, I had a couple people to tell me, supervisors, and different clinics that I would go to. I was at [University 2], went back and got my music ed degree at [University 2]. And so my music ed supervisor was telling me I should wait. There could be more offerings for me to be a band director.

(04:08) I was a non-traditional student, so I was about 27 when I started going back to school to do a music ed degree instead of my software engineering degree. And so in that instance, I'm like, well, you know, you want to wait to teach at an over mountain school because you just he's just saw the gift and things like that in me and that I can get a better situation, as he said. And so it kind of it really rubbed me the wrong way. It offended me.

(04:41) Because I don't know he didn't know that I this is the system that I grew up in and so I was out to prove To prove him wrong When I got hired I was out to prove him wrong that

hey, you know, you can have a great life band program in our inner city school system. If you apply yourself and if you plan and do all the other things, you can have a successful program. So that was my huge motivation to him to show him, hey, it can be done.

(05:14) How would you characterize the school that you work for? I know you work at [High School I] and [High School D] in the community. And was he working for both schools? Could you tell the difference?

(05:28) Yeah, the difference, the difference, the difference was, first of all, first of all, the difference was not actually social economic. It was a little bit different because in [High School I], in that situation, the finances were a little bit It was under what it was at [High School D]. [High School D], you would kind of consider them middle class to lower middle class, and then you had the lower social income at [High School I]. So finances was the difference.

(06:02) Enrollment was the difference because, of course, [High School D] had a larger neighborhood. surrounding them than [High School I] at that time, because there were like 10 or 11 high schools. So there were still, you see there are a thousand students there, but again, you just didn't have that type of backing as far as to choose from when it came to students. So, and then the feeder pattern was kind of dwindling because one

middle school only had like 200 kids and the other one had about four, and then they shut one down.

(06:38) So that was the big difference that I saw as far as that. When it comes to the behavior of kids, kids' behavior were the same. I had to chastise them and motivate them and do the same type of things with both kids. So the students did not make up.

(06:59) A student is a student to me, and they were you know, very good at listening. And of course, I had to, like I said, motivate them. The parental support was a little bit different. Of course, I had about 120 at [High School I] in the band.

(07:18) I would have about maybe 20 parents consistently as far as booster wise. I had 170 at [High School D]. So I would have now, I did have about, you know, 60 to 70 parents. that were constantly involved.

(07:38) So the parental support increased, of course, with the numbers, but the percentage was also different because [High School D] was still on their system where they're still coming off of it being a predominantly white institution. So some of the things that were still in place, they still had some of those things going. So that kept the boosters and the parental support up. Okay.

(08:08) What resources did your program have access to and what resources did you wish your program had? Of course, we all know the number one thing would be finances.

Because, I mean, the more finances that you have, the more things that you can do. You can expose the kids.

(08:35) For instance, at [High School I], the blessed part is when we moved into the new building, we did get new instruments and new uniforms. And it was kind of like four of each sort of thing like that. A little bit more on the trumpets and trombones, but it was minimum.

However, when the program, after my first year, about 50 to 60 kids in the band, then after that, it started growing.

(09:04) And so now you don't need more instruments. However, the resources just were not there. And so we would try to raise money, but there's not enough chickens out there to raise money to buy \$50,000 to \$60,000 worth of instruments that you need. So you have to get by borrowing something from the middle school.

(09:31) try to find a used horn here or there, you know, that you can probably get to. Same thing was kind of like at [High School D], however, the resources over at the county is that they were giving that the, we were getting about, we were getting at first \$25 per student would have to, they would pay for it to be in the band class. It was a course fee. So you were getting \$25 a semester from each student, which that generate funds for the classroom, different things that you need.

(10:08) And then the county started giving a stipend at the beginning of the year based on the number of students that you have enrolled in your band class. And so they would give

you like \$50. \$50 per student that you have on your enrollment. So we were starting out about \$10,000 as far as income.

(10:33) So I was able to buy a brand new drum battery. One year, I was like, OK, you know what? Now we can buy two sousaphones. And so we were able to actually replenish and start as far as our instruments.

(10:51) concern, I was able to do a little bit more with the county when it came to that. But the money resources were, you know, there because then a lot of things like trying to draw, trying to get different type of software. I really needed [Drill Software 1] at [High School I], didn't have the resources. When I got to [High School D], they were already reading off the [Drill Software 1].

(11:21) So again, I had to learn [Drill Software 1] so I can make sure that I stay with the days, keep up with the technology. And of course, technology is key, of course, in maintaining you know, maintaining and enhancing your band, your band program. So technology was a lapse when I was at, when I was at [High School I]. And as a whole in general, at [High School I] I had the assistant director, but he was a middle school band director.

(11:54) So he would come up in the evening times, which was still great, still great. At [High School I], I mean, at [High School D], it was two band directors at, the high school level, head and assistant. And there was a head and assistant at the middle school. So we had a staff of four instead of staff of two, which made a big difference.

(12:14) And so, yeah, resources like that are was very instrumental to how I was able to actually build different programs. So we're talking about 120, 125 at [High School I] and like 170 to 180 at [High School D]. How did you define success for your band program? Was it determined by the product, the number of students involved, or what was it?

(12:45) It was the quality. It was the quality of the product. And first, it starts with And I know some people don't really measure like that. But to me, I think it's a great measurement would be with MPA.

(12:58) And back then it was district, then state contest. And so that's a measurement of my program that says that, OK, they play with balance of sound. They got good tone. They have good intonation.

(13:10) They have great rhythm and a rhythm. with the program that you're playing. It's just, it measures all of the musicalities that, you know, you look for in a successful band. And so once that is down, and I'm like, okay, wow, that's great.

(13:31) I am doing the correct things to have a quality sounding band program, which that's what I measured it on. Now, because of the quality, then the quantity came again, because it kept, you know, people want to be a part of a winning program and they want to be a part of something quality. And so I've always based it on quality. Quantity will come.

(13:56) If you can make 40 people sound good, You keep adding more, again, you know how to handle that and they'll keep sounding good. If you can't get 40 instruments to sound good, to have the quality sound, it's going to be almost impossible when you

add more because then, of course, the more people that you have, the more problems that occurs.

It's easier for three trumpet players to play with good intonation and play together than 15. So if you can manage the little, then when the numbers come, then you're going to be good.

(14:38) You have to make adjustments, but still, you know what you're doing. So it's all about, and I always measure my program. With my program, when I first came in, I said, OK, this is the best program in this school system. So guess what?

(14:52) That's what I'm competing with. I want to be the best there. I still had those goals and things of that in mind. And then I also look back at last year and say, hey, I want my band program this year to be better than the band program that I had last year.

(15:08) OK. What indicators did you look for to measure success for your band program? The indicators that the rubrics for MPA, that was my measuring tool. Do I have good intonation?

(15:29) Do I have good tone quality? Those things are very important because that's what a quality band program is. If you don't have those things, you don't have a quality band program. That's just it.

(15:41) And so as I go along with warm-up and I say it's the beginning of the year and here we go, you know, marching season, I am trying to develop a quality sound, period. You know, I might have more freshmen in this year, so it's gonna, you know, so now I've got to I've got to grind even harder to make sure that tone quality and things of that nature is there. So that rubrics is really my main point. And how do I know that?

(16:12) How do I measure that? Because I record. I record my group two, three times a week. And then I go back and listen.

(16:21) And I'm listening as an adjudicator. Is that blend of that? No, it's not blending right here or intonation off right here. And so I take that rubrics and I compare and I listen to that performance and I grade the program based off of that.

(16:38) OK. Can you describe what a successful student look like in your program? A successful student is a student who continues to improve. Everybody's on, most students, you know, you have, and you can kind of group them.

(16:54) You have your superior students, you have your, you know, that are true instrumentalists, have that natural gift. Then you, most of your band, most of the band students are in the middle. They're talented, they can read music some, but they're not an all-state player, okay? And then you have the others that really want to be in the band, really want to play an instrument, They struggle because they really don't have that natural gift, but they work extremely hard.

(17:25) I'm going to meet you where you are. And wherever you are, the success of that student is as you have you improve. If you have improved, you might now can play, oh man, I could play three scales this year. um this student couldn't play any last year but now that student can play three scales now you also that you got an all-state player that can play all

12 scales chromatic and all of that okay great now that student right there okay what about all-state you made all-state

(17:54) okay you made the blue band okay this year strive for the white band next year strive for the red band strive for a higher chance you have to constantly set You have to constantly set new goals for each level of student. You have to set those goals for them. And then when I see that improvement, that's when I say, I say, you know, that student there is a great, is a good student because they are constantly, you know, constantly improving. Okay.

(18:30) What are some challenges you faced as a banner reader that you win at a non urban school? Say that one more time. Okay. What are some challenges that you face as a director that you think you would face at a non-urban school?

(18:46) At a non-urban school. Number one, finances. Number one, finances. Number two would be the percentage of talent level.

(19:03) And it's funny that you ask that because I was offered to interview for [High School J] when I was still at [High School I], and I think Dr. [Director D] was about to retire, and he was like, hey, why don't you put in an application for [High School J]? I have some pretty good influence right there. And so I started thinking, and I ran it over with Dr. [Mentor 3], who was my supervisor. He wasn't my supervisor because I was still with the city, but Dr. [Mentor 3] was at [University 4].

(19:38) And he was wise, and I would run things by him. And then by him being white, let me get his perspective on it. And so he's like, James, a good director is a good director. You're going to be the same guy.

(19:57) And I started thinking that but I have to I would have to change as far as okay I've got to now learn the community. What kind of music do they like? I've got to learn their marching style and well, I know it's you know course down I know core style, but what what does the community want when it comes to? Have time reduction.

(20:17) So I've got to but I grew up in urban school. I got a feel for that I didn't grow up over the mountain. So I've got to learn So that was going to be the challenge for me, not that I couldn't have done it. When it comes to the talent level, when it comes to students, you know, you have a lot of students that are over the mountain that take private lessons.

(20:37) So because they're taking private lessons, their individual skills are going to be, you know, on another level where I can come in the classroom and now I can pass out I can pass out a song on NPA, I can pass it out in January. And bam, you know, because they take private lessons, they're better readers, they better tones, you know, and all of that.

Money-wise, they got the top-notch instruments. So some of the things that we deal with as far as an urban school, you don't have to deal with a lot of those things over there.

(21:13) Because again, if you've got that, I can really now go to another level. I can play Esprit de Corps in about two, three weeks, you know, and pass it out because they can read, they got good tones. And again, because they're taking private lessons, you know, and then they got, again, the best instrument, you know, the best mouthpiece. So that

would be some of the challenges that I wouldn't have if I was not in an urban school setting.

(21:44) But what happened is, is that when we go on stage for MPA in an urban setting, I had a band director at [High School E] that said he had his kids to come in there and listen to the concert band. It was that [High School D]. Because he wanted to show them, look at these instruments and they're not top. He saw tape on some of them and this and that.

(22:08) He was trying to motivate his kids, over the mountain kids, because these kids sound like this. And they don't have the resources you guys have. But listen at them and how they're playing with passion and things like that. So he used that to motivate his kids because, again, over the mountain, you could become complacent.

(22:29) So I thought that was a great thing that he did. How did you deal with challenges such as attendance or lack of prior knowledge from students? Alright, so when it came to attendance, let me go back to when I first started out, I had about 32 names on a page for

[High School I]'s band. I just said, hey, this is my band program right here, and I'm going to make, which was almost pretty good for me because I'm starting out new.

(23:07) I don't know if I could have handled a band that was like 125, right? So by being that and how I handled student attendance, first of all, I started by divide and conquer. So I would have the horn players to come in the morning from 8 to like 12. And then that evening, from like 1 to 4, I had percussion and auxiliary.

(23:33) Because I was told, you know, I know the percussion don't have anything to do. They're going to cause you the most problems. So now I'm able to just focus on the percussion when they're there. And I have people there for the auxiliary.

(23:47) And so when it came to rehearsals, we always get them. I try to get them with the grade. You know, hey, you don't attend rehearsal. But one thing about rehearsals is that I made sure that rehearsals were productive.

(24:07) And I believe that when the kids see that there's a number one, that you have a goal, they know the goal. You've already set a goal and you've told them that and you've even put it on the board. This is our goal for this week. They feel that they're not wasting their time.

(24:27) that, oh yeah, we have a goal. You're going to have some that's going to be lazy, not going to come. But for the most part, you put this in place and then they see where we're going and then they see that they're improving. your rehearsal attendance will go up because you're not wasting, you're not wasting the time.

(24:44) I've seen some rehearsals is like, you know, it's a waste of the student's time. So it's like we're not doing anything. So I'm going to come to rehearsal until it's almost time to perform. So it's about making sure that you have a schedule, that you are, that you have broken the schedule down to where, you know, they can feel, they see that they are accomplishing something.

(25:05) Otherwise, we're just coming to band practice. What are we doing today? They don't know. Okay, whatever.

(25:10) When I'm not coming, I don't know what we're going to do. Then when you do, program starts to grow. because I talk about holding, being held hostage. If I have five trumpet players and two are out, it's like, oh man, I still need those two trumpet players.

(25:25) So trying to figure out a way to go and talk to them and motivate them and, hey, yeah, this is a team thing. You can't miss out and stuff like that. When you get to a point where I've got 20 trumpet players, and so I got three or four of them as alternates. And so you miss rehearsal, OK, then it's awesome to get your spot.

(25:48) And so I would have them to march behind a couple of trumpet players that's already in the show. Y'all start learning the drill, because somebody might miss rehearsal. And if they miss rehearsal, it's an unexcused rehearsal, then their spot is gone. So that helped.

(26:04) That helped. Tremendously. But you know, of course, when you have the numbers, you can kind of kind of do that. And then rehearsals, just sitting and talking to the kids.

(26:13) I mean, you know how important it is, you know, build a rapport with the kids to where they'll feel bad about missing rehearsal. You know, man, I let the band down. I let them [Director A / Nickname] down. So it's about making that connection with that student.

(26:27) and where that student, you've got such a connection to where that student, that student don't want to disappoint you. So that's really how I deal with it. [Director E] asked me one time, how do you get your band to practice on a Friday evening in January, on a Friday? I'm like, that's the climate and culture that we have over here.

(26:49) And you said that climate and culture, but again, I got that connection with the kids and they knew Friday. What he didn't know is that we didn't practice. None that week after school, I had different sex. I had whip wins one day, brass.

(27:03) I had what you got. So, you know, trying to show, and then we're not gonna, I don't want to take up every, you know, every evening from you. So Friday is the culmination of what we have done, you know, through the week. And they're gonna, and they were on point because if they're not on point, we're gonna have to just start having full band rehearsals two, three times a week.

(27:23) And so part of that motivation is, come on, y'all, let's be on point. Of course it is, you know, teenage kids, they, you know, of course they want their own time after school. So it's just, you know, different texts like that. But the number one thing is, is making a connection with the kids.

(27:40) Okay. What do you do when you don't have enough in the budget for instruments? I don't have enough, but in that budget for instruments, um, I beg and borrow. I beg and borrow.

(28:05) I let my, I go to the principal and let him know, you know, hey man, you got anything, you know, you got anything, I really need this trumpet, you know. I tell the boosters, you know, this is what we need. So, you know, we put on a fundraiser. Let's you know, this is what it's going to go toward.

(28:26) And and then, you know, down to the middle school, you know, hey, [Director F], you got any, you know, got extra trumpet, got extra baritone. We were always borrowing. concert tours from him, because we didn't have a four or five concert tours, but we had 13, 14 tuba players. So again, it's just, you know, and then if I didn't have it, if this person really wanted to play an instrument and I just don't have that particular instrument, I was always short on percussion.

(28:56) So I, you know, find them out in the percussion section, you know, and if it's a female, I'm like, OK, yeah, but percussion section, I'm gonna get you learn the mallets, you know, and things and things of that nature. You know, I started I pulled a clarinet player who didn't have the clarinet broke and don't have anything to get another one with. So she was happy, happy to still be a part. So she was like, yeah, I get back in and play the bells and the triangles and all that.

(29:29) How did you manage students with other priorities or other commitments outside of band? I try to compromise. And I've always had in my handbook about what's an unexcused rehearsal. Now, obviously, they can't march in the band and play football and play volleyball, because those seasons are the same.

(29:53) And so I had some students that will, bam, they'll be in the concert band, OK? Now, I've had some guys that play basketball, had some girls that play basketball and softball and baseball. And so, again, I was fortunate. you know, to have all the students in class, okay, for that hour and 20 minute class.

(30:21) And so I got basketball practice this evening. Okay, yeah, but make sure you stay on, you know, on your music. So again, I had time with him in class. And then also I go to the basketball and football and basketball and different baseball games like that to watch them.

(30:39) And so I'm really very lenient to those I say, you know, hey, you can make a goal that you know that might be an option for you also. And then some and I just be real with them. I'm like, you play. two minutes the whole game you know and I try to tell and talk to the parents and I'm like okay let's look at it I said what's the best option what's the goal he wants to play he just wants to play because it's fun but then he's not

(31:05) playing but two minutes a game um you know it's like um but if he takes that time and then dedicated toward his instrument, I said, again, I guarantee he'll get even more money. Now he's going to get a scholarship in band. He's not going to get one in basketball, not playing two minutes a game. He's not going to get one.

(31:24) So what's the goal? What's your goal? You want to return the investment. So I'd sell the parents on that too.

(31:30) But I do compromise. I talk to the coach and say, you know, and we're kind of working out, okay, I really need him on Thursday. Okay after school, he's in my class, but I need him on Thursday and we you know counter working out like that because I do explain to the coaches and do explain to the parents if that if you're quarterback and you miss Football practice two times that week. There's no way you gonna start There's no way you gonna start.

(31:56) I said, so again band is a band. This is sort of a sport also So, you know, that's how I dealt with that Okay How did you excite kids to be in the concert band and the marching band? And or marching band. And or.

(32:13) OK, OK. So marching band, getting them excited about that was, number one, the show that we're going to do. The show, the theme of it. And I get with the seniors.

(32:30) And actually, I get with the seniors and section leaders. And I talk about the idea of, this is the show I have. I present it to them. I tell them, this is what we're going to do with this.

(32:40) This is what we're going to do with that. Of course, I'm motivated. I'm excited and whatever. And then as soon as I'm like, mm.

(32:47) Yeah, that's that's okay. And, you know, I said, OK, I really didn't do a good job either at selling this or this is not a good show, because guess what? If they're not excited about it, they're not bought into it. I don't care how great a show you think it is.

(33:02) They're not going to pull it out. So I do motivate them, not let them hear the music, let them hear the original. And then once we get in there and we play through the song and we kind of get it, then they start getting excited. But I'm excited about it because And it's

natural, because I've been thinking about this and planning this probably since the beginning of the marching season of last year.

(33:28) And I started thinking about, and I'm listening, you know, I might be listening to the radio, I might be listening to something else, and I hear a song and I jot it down. Like, that sounds like a band song. So by the time we get to march, I've already got the full show. And so then I presented to them, and again, I'm selling it to them.

(33:49) I let them listen to the original, and I put them all together, the originals. And then, of course, a lot of the time, most of the time, I never had a problem. The only show that I said that I had to really sell was when I did a Latin show, when I did one of the [Composer A] songs. I forgot the name of that song.

(34:16) But anyway, we did like Faces, Birdland, Since I Fell in Love, and I forgot the [Composer A] song, but it was a pretty tough song. But I sold them on us being different. So whatever, I'm like, listen, man, we're going to be different. Last show, nobody's done it, man.

(34:37) I said, come on, let's get it together. And then we start playing through it, and like, oh, yeah, yeah. And it sounded real good. And then the response from the crowd, that's it.

(34:45) We got them. OK. How did you allow students to share their own cultural backgrounds and identity through music? Um.

(34:59) So, getting their input, it was maybe toward the end of me being at [High School D] that I started getting more Hispanic students. you know, and again, that rapport with the students, you know, and they sometimes open to me and say, Mr. [Administrator 2], can we play, can we play Maria Maria, you know, by this one? Can we play that started, you know, some songs? And I was like, yes, yes.

(35:30) Oh, yes. That's going to be different, you know. And so they were all, because of that, Again, building that rapport, they were comfortable with coming to me with suggestions and ideas. You just got to make sure that you have the relationship open so where they can, because a lot of times, they might not say anything because they don't think that you're going to be receptive to it.

(35:57) OK. How did you retain students in your program? One is getting them hooked on the feeling that they have when they accomplish something. When they win a contest, as I was telling [Director G] when he first took over at [High School D], I said, he was asking different questions, kind of like that.

(36:27) And I said, listen, the kids are actually pledging you. And I said, they're pledging you. I said, they're not going to buy all into you until you can prove something to them. And I said, when you win your first contest for your first best in class, I said, you got them.

(36:51) I said, you got them. I knew that at [Former High School Location] when they got they hadn't gotten superior rating at a contest in several years. So when they heard Superior Ray knows one one ones at that [High School J] contest, some were crying. They lost it.

(37:07) And from then and next contest, we got best in class. They got hooked on that. And so they were just I mean, they they want that feeling all of the time. Another tool I use was Spring Trip.

(37:23) They, every year they were waiting at the kickoff meeting for the year. They waiting on the announcement of where are we going to go on our spring trip? Because that's dangled over their head because remember now you got to do marching band and you got to do concert band in order to do the spring trip. You can't just do either or, you know?

(37:43) And so that how I kept the marching band up and then the concert band up. At [High School I], the thing was these jokers of course want to march. they didn't want to shun concert band. And they put a class here and put a class, but I go to the counselor and say, no, he could take this here and his here.

(38:02) And then now here they go, you know, like, what's going on? You got the class you need, but you're not going to, you know, you got to be in concert because this is we sit out and we really learn how to play our instruments. And I said, so you got to do both. Now, the funny part is it was the reverse that manner.

(38:16) These jokers, these jokers started wanting to just be in the concert band and they didn't want to march. So then I started tying again. I said, listen, for this class, I said, you have to be in marching and concert band. I said, because during marching season, we have different things that we're still learning, right?

(38:34) During marching season, you come in on the second end. There are some things that we've been doing, you know, um, in class that you, you, you're far behind on. I said, so you can't have one, uh, one without the other. I had to stop that bleeding because One year I had like five or six singers talking about, I'm just going to do concert band, which I knew that was a lazy thing.

(38:56) That was a lazy thing. I said, but I've got to protect this product because the marching band is really where you get most exposure. I said, you know what? I got to protect that part of it because that's my advertisement.

(39:14) How important is parent and community involvement with the success of your programs? It is huge. It is huge. I said that, you know, I had a good percentage when I was at [High School I] of that support.

(39:30) But again, different economic situation and things of that nature. And plus, again, it was the numbers and You know, you got where when you're an urban, you have some situations like I had a car that those parents working eight at times, they might, which is nothing wrong with working at [Retailer 1], but they might work at [Retailer 1] at nighttime, they might, you know, do this, do the third shift at, you know, at a factory or somewhere. And so I wasn't upset with those parents.

(40:03) What I did start asking them to do, and it did really kind of help, is that, what about your uncle? What about your aunt? What about those people? They can come up here and represent you.

(40:16) But the most part is that, but why are they there? Why would they want to be there? If you don't have a successful program, and some out there that's not, they don't care. They don't care.

(40:28) They're not going to get involved. We had 15 cars following four or five charter buses to [City 4] for a national championship at [High School D] for the nationals. And it just shocked me. But the thing about it, everybody want to be a part of one.

(40:44) This is the third. We're going for a three-peat. They love, they want to be a part of one. You could not find that one [Sports Team 1], Jersey, in the 90s or 80s.

(40:55) They wasn't winning nothing. Man, 2000, you turn around, it's Stelker, it's all of these [Sports Team 1] jerseys around. Why? Because they're winning.

(41:04) And so everybody wanted to be a part. So you have to have a product that the people want to buy, that makes them feel proud. I'm gonna wear my [High School D Band Apparel] shirt to work on Fridays because everybody know about [High School D]. So it's just building that when you build that product and it's a quality product Everybody wanted, I didn't have to worry about nothing.

(41:26) Those parents, like I said, and you and I talked about, they went out and bought a trailer, you know, because we were going to all of these events and we got a [Truck Rental 1]. And the parents like, we want to look, you know, we want to look good too. We want to have, you know, the trailer without the school on it and all of that stuff, you know. But the only reason that that really drove them is because we were going to different events and the parents were exposed.

(41:52) See, we're not going to those events. Them parents wouldn't know why. Well, why y'all can't keep using the [Truck Rental 1]? I mean, ain't no need to go out here and buy a note.

(41:59) You see what I'm saying? But when they go to those different places and they see, oh man, they look good. They look quality. That looks quality.

(42:06) Then the parents, you know, really, really kind of buy in on it, but it's your product. Who wants to bag a failing or a non-successful product? I'm sorry, they don't want to. You don't hardly see a [Fast Food Chain 1] close, not that [Fast Food Chain 1] is quality, but because of their track record, because of [Fast Food Chain 1]'s consistency, you hardly ever see a [Fast Food Chain 1] close.

(42:34) You hardly, if you talk about a fast food restaurant that has stood the test of time, it's [Fast Food Chain 1]. They've advertising, they've had different people behind them. So it's about your product that motivates the parents to be involved. Let me ask, well, Mr.

[Administrator 2], let me preface this.

(42:52) Is it possible I can get a part two, because I have a class coming in? Yeah, you sure can. You sure can. OK.

(42:57) This is going to be my last question. This is question 15 out of 25. Not bad, bro. I'm sorry.

(43:02) I know I'm long-winded, man. No, you good. It's great. This is actually great.

(43:07) OK. My last one on this portion is, how do you build strong relationships with school administrators? OK. Number one.

(43:20) is eliminating discipline problems in your classroom. Every time I turn around, it's a band student in trouble. Every time I turn around. So I eliminate that.

(43:37) The principals, maybe one time, twice in 18 years, I wrote a referral to the office. Only twice. The principal know, and they've already said, oh, he gonna handle his own. I ain't gotta worry about that.

(43:51) He's gonna handle that. And then, of course, outside the classroom, the teachers will call or email me or tell, hey, Johnny acted up in my class. Can you get him? they would send them to the band room instead of sending them to the office.

(44:04) Again, the principal appreciates that because, again, that's eliminating a discipline issue around the school. And so that's one way of building a relationship with the administrator without even saying a word to the administrator. Do different appreciative things. So on Fridays, I know on Fridays during marching season that All of us have a long day.

(44:32) The coaches, the administrators, you know what I'm saying? We there from 7.30 on to probably 11 or 12 at night. So what I had my drum majors do on Fridays is I went by and I had a deal with [Restaurant 1] and they would buy one, get one free that I got with [Restaurant 1] and I would get chicken biscuits. Right.

(44:52) And I will have the drum majors to deliver chicken biscuits to the two ladies in the office. All of the principals and then at least four for the coaches. you know, and let them know, hey, y'all, this Friday, you know, it's a long day. This is just a kickstart to your long day from the band, you know, then, you know, and that, you know, that really did something, you know, to them, like, wow, somebody else is looking out for me, you know, and thinking about, hey, I got a long day.

(45:27) Let me get a, you know, start your day off with a breakfast, because you get so busy. You're going to have that. So, right. I will go to the principal and tell the principal, maybe, you know, a couple of things you're doing, but I try to not barrage, you know, and then making the principal proud.

(45:41) When the principal stands up there, man, and your band is handling this business, those principals in love. Yeah. So keeping a quality program and keeping that discipline now, discipline, man, that's, that's a way to build, um, to build your relationship with them. And of course, any extra things that the principal wants you to do, you know what I'm saying?

(46:03) You're going to make sure now if the principal needs you to go, Hey, uh, there's a basket weaving contest on next week and I want the band to go play for this basket weaving contest. Yes, sir. I'm right. I'm right there.

(46:18) Yeah. Well, once again, Mr. [Administrator 2], thank you. Thank you for part one. Let me start recording.

Participant 4

(00:01) All right, now you've been chosen to be a participant in my study. I'm gonna go around take pictures of the band room, some things are going on in your band room. I selected you for this study because I look at you as a successful band director and been consistently successful for years. One of the criteria for my Study is having five years experience while having superior ratings over amount of time as well as As well as working directly with them Of course, I gotta record you and you can choose to take anything out you say you can say whatever

(00:44) by actual question and and you probably misspoke or anything. I can take that out upon your discretion as well as you can choose to be anonymous or not. You make sure the school is anonymous or not. I can code it in a way that would keep your identity safe as well.

(01:01) The only people that can see this recording or anything is me and [Principal Investigator 1] who's the advisor of music education at [University 8]. so it can be safe locked inside of an arbor drop box and it'll be destroyed after five years. Okay, like I said, once again you can choose to omit questions, you can choose to omit the whole entire interview, but I just want to let you know that this was going on and just yeah, we're gonna start the interview process. All right, all right, so our first question.

(01:34) When did you first start working at urban schools and what made you want to teach in an urban environment? Well, my first teaching assignment was actually in [County 1] at [High School G]. I taught two years at [High School G] before coming to [School District 1].

And what really made me want to come back to [School District 1] is I like to call myself a product.

(02:02) Because I started in third grade at [Middle School A], and I went on to [Middle School B] and went to [High School H] my freshman year. After then, my mom decides she wanted to move to [City 5]. And I ended up graduating from [High School K] in [City

5]. But I always wanted to come back to where I started from and see what kind of difference I can make in the system.

(02:31) Because I looked up to the directors back then and would always say that's what I wanted to do. OK. How would you characterize your school and community? I would say this community is probably more so on the downfall As far as having young people in the community, and the support is okay.

(03:00) However, a lot of people are moving out to the other areas of the city now. So enrollment is pretty scarce right now. We're a 4A school this year. And I know they did a redistricting or whatever for the alignment, athletic association or whatnot.

(03:21) But our enrollment is possibly less than 500. But as far as a lot of community support, I don't necessarily see it. And the way that happens is, you'll have a few people come around to support you, but you gotta do something for them in return. So I don't look at that as really support.

(03:48) It's about they're buying your time. They'll say, okay, we're gonna donate something to your program. But when they say that, yeah, it helps the program, but it's not necessarily helping the program. It's connected to something.

(04:04) Yeah, it's always something. They always want something. I definitely understand that. I know the church across the street from us asks us to do stuff all the time.

(04:13) We'll donate something, but this Sunday we have what we need. Yeah, for sure. What resources does your band program have access to, and what resources do you wish your band program had access to? I kind of wish every year my band program started out with So we can plan accordingly on our needs as far as music, instrument repair, equipment, things like that.

(04:50) But we don't receive a budget. Our budget is really whatever the students pay, band fees and fundraisers. The very few donations we may get, we really don't receive a whole lot. I've gotten to the point where I try to do what I can with what I got, or come out of pocket to buy, you know, for kids.

(05:21) But you don't receive a whole lot of outside resources. Now, the instrument repair, we get a guy who comes around maybe twice a year for repairs. But, you know, sometimes you need somebody at that time, at that moment. But if you don't have the resource, you know, the money to pay for that, It's true.

(05:43) How do you define success within your band program? Is it determined by the product or by the number of students involved? Okay, that's that's a good question. I think the success For me, it's determined by the product.

(06:15) From the outside, it's determined by the quantity. So I focus more on teaching the students that I have, not the students that I want to have. So I can only teach what's in that band room and study pretty good. a good product from what I have.

(06:40) Now, of course, I wouldn't mind having a 150 piece, 200 piece band, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's a good product just because we're here. So I focus more on the product, teaching the students, giving them the opportunity to, if they choose to, audition to go to a higher education using their talents. What indicators do you look at to

measure success for your program? Are students striving in your program that may not be reflected in your overall band performance?

(07:19) I think, for instance, I have this young lady who just started playing flute in August. And I watched her growth from August until And it's amazing the work that she has put in. She listens, she understands what I ask her to do. If she doesn't understand, she'll go in with the resources they have as far as YouTube and all these other different platforms that they can go on.

(07:52) She'll go, Mr. [Director H], I'm coming back to school. Mr. [Director H], I learned how to do such and such, but she has progressed so quickly. And I'm amazed at it. So I kind of look at, I look at individuals, where they were and where they are currently.

(08:16) I know my band program and I know what each individual is able to do. And I try not to judge them, okay, well this trumpet player made all state, but you barely can play your B flat. concert stage. I don't compare those two.

(08:35) You know, I take that student and try to get her or him to that point. If they can get to that point, fine. If not, I look at where they started from and I measure their success and how much growth. Now, the students don't see it that way.

(08:53) They want to go from here to here without putting their work in. But if I see growth, then I'm doing something right. Because from year to year, you get different students. And if you can continue to get the sound you want from your band and able to do well at some assessments.

(09:15) I don't necessarily use assessments as a There's a gauge for success, because just like when a student takes the ACT, they can have a 4.0 grade point average, but then they don't take tests well, it's not gonna show that that student has a 4.0. Same thing with band. They may play well within these four walls or whatnot, but then if they get in front of judges or clinicians or whatnot, that sound may not be the same. So I really don't, back to the question, I really don't try to gauge the overall program or overall students.

(10:02) I try to gauge each student as individuals. Would you be able to describe a successful student in your band program? I have a few. One trumpet player that I have is [Student E].

(10:20) He started in the seventh grade playing trumpet. And I won't take a lot of credit for anything. He's been successful. His work ethic is different from everybody else's.

(10:37) He asks questions that a lot of other students want to ask. He's auditioned for various honor bands. If he doesn't make the chair that he wants, He's gonna come back the next year and he's gonna work until he gets to where he wants to go. His first year of auditioning for Allstate, he didn't make it.

(11:03) He came back the next year to make it. So I would consider him very successful just because of his work ethic. And I have a few other ones that work at it, but I haven't seen any students that work at it like that. Cuz we can only do so much in the band, right, as directors.

(11:25) If that student doesn't have a desire to get better, they gotta want it. What are some challenges you face as a director that you wouldn't find in a non-urban school

setting? A couple, I have a few challenges. Let's say one would be the amount of parental support.

(11:53) Many of the kids, they'll come in and be in the band four years and I've never seen mama, daddy, grandmama, nobody. Now I may see somebody on senior night when they're celebrating on senior night, but prior to that, I don't know. who your folks are, where you came from. That's one challenge.

(12:20) And I imagine that's probably some issues in some other schools. But I know that's one main challenge since I've been in [City 2]. This is my 24th year in [School District 1]. Another challenge would be scheduling.

(12:41) And that's from when I started to now, it's still an issue as far as scheduling your student, the band students that you needed, that need to be in your class. I know we've gone from, we've had the straight seven day periods, then we had the A day, B day block. Now we're on the straight block, but it doesn't seem none of these the schedules or the matrices that they come up with benefits the band because they still won't schedule the band students the way they need to be scheduled. Like, you know, this semester, well last semester, for instance, marching band.

(13:28) I had my entire marching band in my fourth block. Okay, now this semester I probably had let's say a percentage, probably 30 to 40% of my band from the fall to the spring. And that's because they said, well, they have to take this class during this time. And it's not offered, but only on this period.

(13:56) But it just shows me that they put more into marching band. They want to see the marching band successful. But after marching band, they think our job is done. So scheduling, the rental support, And I would have to say financial support.

(14:17) We all know it's not cheap to run a bank program. If you don't have the financial support, and that's for any good thing. If you're going on to a football game, for instance, We're expecting, we have to pay for our own buses. And I like, me and my wife have this conversation all the time.

(14:42) We're a Title I school district. I guess I'll say 90% of these kids are on free and reduced lunch. However, they're expected to pay van fees, pay all these other fees. And then we're asking them for money to ride the bus.

(15:04) But then we're still a Title I school, and they're eating free and reduced lunch. So why are we asking them to pay for anything? And I've gotten to the point where I don't even stress the band. If you can pay it, fine.

(15:19) If not, fine. I'll figure out another way for each student to have what they need. So those three things, I think, three, four things. I can go on.

(15:28) Let me see what else I can add. I'm not going to say administrative support, because I think I have a pretty good administration that supports us. They do what they can do, but I would like to see a lot more. When they want us to perform, we've got to do it at the drop of a dime.

(15:53) But we need that support in order for us to be successful. So that's about it. financial support, what does that say? Support, financial support, financial support.

(16:12) Scheduling, administrate, yep. How do you deal with challenges such as truancy, attendance, lack of prior knowledge when they come to you, students? Well, I kind of get the kid where they are. I don't dwell on what they should know when they get here.

(16:36) That's something that, something, excuse me.

(00:03) Repeat that question for me. How do you deal with challenges such as truancy, of course, attendance, or the lack of prior knowledge when students come in? Well, let me start with the truancy, attendance. That has gotten to be really bad as far as students coming to rehearsals, because they have so many other things going on after school and different programs that they're in.

(00:31) And I like to get to, I mean, I've tried in the past, okay, you missed this rehearsal, you can't do this performance, or you missed two rehearsals, you can't do, you know, things like that. But the more I think about it, that worked in the past, but with the different changes in education and students, I can make a change too, so I encourage the parents to have their students here for rehearsals and things of that nature. But through the school now, if they're missing class time, I'll just send an email to the parent, contact the parent and say, hey, your student's missing these days. Can you send an excuse or whatever, and I'll forward that to administration so they can follow up with it.

(01:25) But as far as my after school rehearsals, I try to accommodate, be more accommodating to the parents. And I know sometimes they can fudge it and say, I got a doctor appointment, be in a beauty shop or something like that. So now when they say they have to watch a sibling and mom got to go to work, I understand stuff like that. But I just, if they miss and they miss something that we've learned, you may have to sit out this day.

(02:01) But I'm looking for other methods to try to help with that. Cuz I know different things are going on, times are hard for everybody. And they may have to do something for mom and dad after school. Let me ask you a follow up question on that.

(02:18) You say they will have to miss their performance if they miss rehearsal. Why do you choose to do that? And that's a good observation. That's something that I grew up with, even up through high school and even college.

(02:40) But that was then, and we were different. We were students, but we were different. But now, if you do that, either you may lose a student, they may quit. There's so much social and emotional stuff going on that may, you know, close you out and get depressed and things of that nature.

(03:08) So that's why I say I'm trying to figure out something. And we say that in the hand. It's in the hand. You miss a rehearsal.

(03:17) I very seldom fall through it, which is my fault. But when you have, like, for instance, if I had one of my top trumpet players miss, And they have an excuse, and I follow up with that excuse, and it's true. And I have one of my least or not as experienced trombone player miss. They don't have an excuse, but they missed and both of them missed.

(03:48) And I said, okay, well, this trumpet player can march, but this trombone player can't. I may know the excuse was not valid, but the kids won't. So they'll see that, and the first thing they'll holler is, you're showing favoritism. So you gotta be careful on how you manage stuff like that.

(04:12) But I still haven't figured out a way. I'm not gonna say punishment. Consequences. Consequences.

(04:22) Because like I say, you got different kids, they don't take consequences well. No, they don't. In the building or even in society. Yeah.

(04:33) So that's something I need to go back to the drawing board. What do you do when you don't have enough budget for instruments? Do what I have. We've been marching baritones for the past 10 years.

(04:54) They're playing on 20-year-old horns now, so all I do is put a Band-Aid on them and keep going. And keep moving. Yeah. Nothing we can do much on that end.

(05:12) How do you manage students who have other priorities, such as outside events, such as other sports or jobs, etc.? Well, I don't usually run into that problem during the fall cuz there's not too many other sports going on besides volleyball and football and then basketball toward the end of the fall. But I hadn't had that problem in the fall, but in the spring, I mean, you gotta give me some time. I get with the coaches and we'll say, okay, can I have them from this time, this time?

(05:45) And you get them from this time, this time. Because I know with our enrollment so small, everybody's fighting over the same kids. So adults have to come together to figure it out for the kids. Now, sometimes you get the kid that say, I can't miss baseball practice because coach says so.

(06:04) I'm like, well, what makes you think you can miss my practice? So then that's when the adults have to get together to figure something out. How do you excite kids about band if they've never been exposed to concert or marching band? Well, I noticed throughout the years that when I talk to the kids, they look at me as an old man now.

(06:28) They're like, oh, I just worked as an old man. So what I do, I use my students. I do the recruitment, to talk to them and get them excited and get them in there. Once you get them in there, and they experiment with certain instruments, then they see, okay, well, I may be pretty good at this.

(06:46) I encourage them, and they'll stick around. But I use the students more so now as far as, cuz I mean, I know social media and all that stuff. So the kids do more of the recruiting that will attract students. And I go down to middle school and talk to them so they can get familiar with me.

(07:08) But in the school, I let most of the students, my student leadership, let me call it that. OK. How do you allow students to share their own cultural backgrounds and identities through music? That's a good question.

(07:26) Hm. Well, that particularly happens, I would say, during marching season. You know, kids say, Ms. [Director H], can we play such and such, or can we do this, or can we do this dance routine? Of course, I listen to it before we even...

(07:45) think about doing it just to see what it's talking about because sometimes these songs get kind of graphic and offensive and things of that nature. So I don't need that on me. But yeah, I let them suggest and take their input on some of the music that we play during the fall. Even in the spring, it may not be something that's they're familiar with or culturally as far as where they come from.

(08:21) But I let them listen to some of our concert selections that I'm thinking about choosing, and I let them say, okay, I think we can play. They'll listen to it and like it, and I'll pull it out, order it just so we can perform it. But they have more, I guess, more of a say so during the fall. on some of the selections that we play.

(08:47) How do you retain students in your program? From year to year, it's a task. As I've spoken before on enrollment, I've got kids now saying, well, my mom won't let me go to [High School L]. My mom won't let me be moving to the east side.

(09:07) So it's kind of hard. Because when they come and it's the parents saying, well, they are thinking that this school is better than this school. They don't take their child to what they feel is better for the child. So the retention is very hard.

(09:25) Now, when I get kids in, maybe in the program one year, and they love it, or two years, and I know those kids are gonna be here. But you get certain ones that parents think it's a better opportunity somewhere else. The grass is greener on the side. Right.

(09:44) How important is parent and community involvement with the success of your program? I think it's very important. I'm not going to say it's to the success of my program because I haven't had much. Now I get select parents.

(10:04) that I can depend on from fall throughout the year, they stay with me to help. But I think the parental involvement is really important to the success of a school period. I have had a lot of it, but we open it up every year for those who want to participate or those who I want to offer some kind of assistance and go from there. But it's very important to have parents involved in the community as well.

(10:37) How do you build a strong relationship with school administrators? Well, I talk to them. I ask, can I meet with them so I can let them know my goals and desires for the program? And I'm lucky to have had an administration that They've been supportive of fine arts.

(10:59) They allow us, and that's the orchestra, the band, the choir. They allow us to do what we need to do to be successful. Now, as far as setting us up for success, That's a different thing, but they allow us to do what we need to do to be successful. So I have a pretty good relationship with administration.

(11:23) Do you work with outside organizations such as other universities or professional musicians, if so, how? One particular musician that comes around and helps us with jazz band throughout the year, all I have to do is give him a call and it's no charge. Some of the area, well, one of the area colleges, their directors will come out if I ask them to. Just having a good relationship with them.

(11:56) We don't have too many professional musicians that truly gig all the time. I know it's a couple, but I don't have a relationship. And I know the best way to do that is to get

out and go to these performances and things of that nature just to touch base with them. But we do have, I have a couple outside organizations that are coming in.

(12:28) Do you approach teaching music differently with urban kids than you would with non-urban kids? Now, since I've experienced both, I don't say approaching it differently because music education is, however, it's the discipline part of it and the background you have to take into account. Where these kids, where they come from and what kind of support they do have at home. Like when I was in the, and it's not a suburb, but it's a predominantly white school.

(13:12) And the students, it was more parental support. We had a, where one of the music departments, the music stores would come out and do the instrument fitting, cuz I filled my own program with 7 through 12. Instrument fitting, the kids come out, they'll sit around, they'll try different instruments, and the parents will sign the contract and rent the instrument. And in this district, I'm not gonna, I can't do that.

(13:47) Not because they're unable to, but parents, they have other things they need to worry about with that deal, where the school's gonna provide what you need. If they want you in the band, they can provide whatever you need. But as far as the teaching part of it, I hadn't seen a lot of difference as far as playing an instrument or a percussion instrument. Now the marching style, yes, that was totally different, but playing instrument, I feel was playing instrument.

(14:23) How do you effectively teach students who may not be vastly, wait, how do you effectively teach students who may be vastly different in playing levels? Let's say, for example, like you said, you had an all-state player, and then you have a player that's a beginner. So how do you go by creating an ensemble like that? I try to select music important to what I want to challenge my better players and challenge the beginners, but I wanted to where the beginners would stay encouraged and not feel discouraged from what I can't play that you know that I can't play that mentality.

(15:05) So when I'm selecting music or when I'm because the classes are more So it's a mixture of everything. You got beginners and advanced players. And what I may do is sometimes take those advanced players to pair them with the beginners, so they can work together. And instead of me standing over them saying you need to do this, the advanced players are able to play examples for them, or I can play examples for them.

(15:38) But I think those that peer, peer-on-peer work helps out in that situation. How do you balance working on fundamentals with keeping students engaged? They know daily. Before we even start playing anything, we're going to do fundamental work.

(16:00) Before we even get to any music selections or repertoire or anything, we'll start with warm-up tongue exercises. Lip slurs, brass, technical fingering for woodwinds and things of that nature. So it's included in our warmup. And sometimes they know when we come, they come in, they see those sound innovation books on the stands, they know what's about to happen.

(16:25) So, you know, it's understood. All right, now I'm going to get a little bit more personal. Describe your proudest moment as a band director and what allowed you to make that happen? One proud moment that I can say is the first year we made it through state music performance assessment.

(16:51) Because when I first got to this school, concert band really wasn't a, or the overall, it was more of a, I wanna say marching band focus that I saw. Then concert band was just concert band. They did it because it was done because it wasn't part of the overall program. So when I got here and we went to [High School J], no, [High School E] for MTA.

(17:23) One year we went in, we got two, three, three. And I think a three in sight read. And when we walked out of that building, I'm looking at the scores. And I tell the kids and I hear some gibbons, they thought it was funny.

(17:43) I took that to heart because either I did something wrong or they're not taking this, taking it serious enough. So I had to come back and try to change the culture as far as taking their craft seriously and wanting to put out the best product that we could put out. So I went back and listened to the judges' critiques and scores and went back and started writing down notes to myself what I could do better. And one, it was preparation, how I prepared, what I started when we were taking a piece of music, how I would break that music down.

(18:25) Am I gonna start with right notes? Am I gonna start with right rhythms? Am I gonna start with harmonic? stuff with my life, you know.

(18:34) And I went back and I broke down all of that stuff and started really preparing on my end first to better prepare those students. So I say I think I was proud the next year that we got all superior ratings from one year to the next because I had to self-evaluation, self-reflection on what I was doing. Cuz I can't blame the kids for not being successful if I didn't properly prepare them to be successful. And I think that was one of the more proud moments as far as being a band director.

(19:15) And that was maybe ten years ago now. What's the toughest lesson you've learned while directing bands in urban schools? Toughest lesson. First starting out, trying to be like somebody else.

(19:45) Trying to be like somebody else. Trying to steal somebody else's identity and not create your own. And that's hard when you see, okay, they're doing this over there, and you try to, okay, it doesn't work like that. You gotta create your own identity and make your own program.

(20:07) Cuz when I was injured, when I started out, it was [Director I] at [High School M], and [Director A / Nickname] was here, and [Director J] at [High School N], and they were just, They were doing what they did well, especially [High School M]. [High School M] was always known as this type of band, and they did it well. And I was at the smaller band school that closed seven years after I got there. So yeah, that was one thing, trying to be like somebody else.

(20:46) Okay. If you could give one piece of advice to a band director who is new at teaching, if you can give a piece of advice to a new band director in urban education, what would it be? It's a process. I mean, it's okay to go in with the high standards, but you have to start where the students are.

(21:11) You can't start where you want. I mean, where you want to be, it's the small steps. And you find that out when you start teaching, cuz that's something that you're really not taught. Well, I know I wasn't taught coming out.

(21:29) All the young guys come out with eyes wide open, we're gonna do this, we're gonna do this. And then you get in there and you realize it's gonna take some time. And just like a football program, you go in and expect to go in and win a championship, that very seldom happens unless you have a program that's already in place. When you have a director that's been at school for all these years and then they leave and retire, it's going to be hard for that next person to come in because they got to start their own, create their own legacy.

(22:11) I would say it's a process and don't What's the saying, we're on one bill every night? And make it your own. Follow tradition, but still make it your own program. Don't try to do what the previous director did.

(22:30) What do you wish your administrators understood about running a successful band program? Scheduling, time, and money. And in an urban district, only thing they understand is we put a lot of time in it. But as far as having your students and the money, you gotta get it where you can.

(23:06) What would you change about the way band programs are run or administered in urban education? Well, speaking for this district, I would like, you know, I know the students, they see more marching bands, whether it's on YouTube or whatever else they look at it on. And I'm starting, it's changing now because I'm starting to see more colleges put their jazz bands out there and whatnot. Some of these kids, they look up to the colleges and they want to be where those colleges are.

(23:39) However, Those colleges are more experienced players. They can put out a nice, stronger sound than the high schools, of course. And I wish I could change the mindset that, okay, we can't sound like [University 1] with these 60 homes. We can't sound like [University 6].

(24:06) tubas playing in treble clef. You know, so I wish just the mindset and they would see more of the overall music programs of some of the HBCUs and some just other programs, period. You know, they think, oh, it's marching band, marching band. These schools, if you're on a scholarship and you're going to college, And you a marching band, you best believe you're gonna be in a concert ensemble in the spring.

(24:37) I like to tell them that's how I, and the kids are bought into it. I like to tell them concert band is our weightlifting for the fall. They're like football team, they're going to spring training, they're lifting, lifting all spring. They come back in fall, they're bigger and stronger.

(24:55) That's how I let them know this is our weight training, this is our spring training. So I would just like to see, and I know it's just a time. Times change, but I just wish some of the other schools or some of the district would focus more on playing and not trying to mimic some of the sounds that I hear. The overplaying stuff, you know, and that's just a mindset.

(25:28) And I get a lot of backlash from my kids. Can we play, can we play? No, we're going to go with the characteristic tone and you'll try to stay in that characteristic tone and range of your instrument, you know. I got two players who just, you know, and I'm like, you are the base of the band.

(25:52) If you playing up there with baritone trombones, we empty down here and we have to have a foundation to sit on. If a house don't have a foundation, the house don't follow. And that's what we're doing. We're making the whole house come down on top of us because we don't have that foundation at the moment.

(26:14) that I just wish students would change. Not students, but just the mindset. You can have a great marching band, but I say you only have a great marching band if you have a great concert program in place. And that's high school now.

(26:32) College is different. But high school, I think you have to have a good concert program in place. My last question, is there anything that you believe to be true about your program success that people don't typically talk about? Say that again.

(26:50) Is there anything about your program success that people don't talk about? that we're not given credit for? Yeah, like they see your band, they see your band doing well, but they never talk about, like say for example, my band, they always talk about how well we

perform, but they don't understand how many hours we put in. Oh yeah, that was never, I mean...

(27:18) They never, I mean, my administration for one, you always got them ready. You always get some periods, but they never see the picture of the iceberg. They don't understand all of that, to get to that. So I don't think, and I think everybody looks at our program, I don't know why, but as an arrogant program or a stuck-up program.

(27:52) I've heard some, oh, [High School I] died on, god, they ain't gonna blow, they can't blow nothing. That mindset, and the kids, they take that to heart. They wanna crank, as they call it. It's crank, that's not the meaning of it, it's the aggressiveness behind it.

(28:08) But I've heard things of that nature, that [High School I] just, They're gonna do good at concert band, but they're not good at marching. And I'm like, well, we go to competitions and march band too and we get superior. So I try not to change the sound much from marching to concert. And the kids still are, I have to remind them that's not what we're gonna sound like.

(28:37) But it's hard when you got a band across the field that's They say crank and we don't crank back, but you can only play as loud or as full as the ensemble that you have. You can't play for something you ain't got. I don't know if that answers that last question. I appreciate it, man.

(29:01) And it does. And thank you so much, man. I just want to tell you how much, just even on camera, man, how much I follow you. And I don't really say it a lot, only because I just like to exalt knowledge from you.

(29:13) And you always, when I got here to [City 2], you was my mentor teacher in Lutheran District. And like I say, even your demeanor, the way you carry yourself, and even the way you're bearing before him is just really impressive, man. Like I said, I just had to get my flowers on camera before I even turned up. I appreciate it.

(29:33) It's all about the kids, but it's good to hear somebody see your work. Yeah, I see it.

Participant 5

(00:01) All right. How you doing, Mr. [Director K]? Doing well, sir. How about you, [Interviewer/Director B]?

(00:06) I'm doing all right, doing all right. Right now, you're being interviewed for the study of my dissertation, Successful Band Programs in Urban Education. And I view you as a successful band director because, one, I've seen you work throughout the years, as well as the kids that you produce and the band product that you produce as well. Of course, one of my criteria is for you to be teaching at least five years.

(00:28) work directly with black kids and work directly with our band program. You fit the description perfectly. And once again, you've been successful. Everything that's to be done with band, you've done it, okay?

(00:42) So I'm gonna ask 25 questions. Don't worry about the time as far as how long or how short it can be. Any information that you give me is a great help to me completing the study. Also, I want to tell you that, uh, you can choose, uh, for your identity to be confidential and you can, um, say, for example, I asked you a question and you ain't like the way the answer came out.

(01:05) I can omit it or whatever. You can omit the whole interview if you, if you like. All right. And I got to respect that and then do as your wishes.

(01:14) All right. Okay. All right. So let's get started.

(01:19) Number one, When did you first start working in urban schools and what made you want to teach in an urban environment? Okay, so it had to be, oh my god, maybe 2005, I think. I had just finished my student teaching at [University 1], and I had no more classes left. So after I had no more classes left, it was in December.

(01:55) So back in my day or our day, [University 1] only had one graduation, and that was in May. So even though I was finished with all my classes and everything, I couldn't graduate until May. So I was just at home in December, I had finished everything as far as my schooling goes. I was just waiting to graduate.

(02:17) So my mentor at the time, Mr. [Mentor 4], he called me up in February. And he said, listen, you're done with everything, right? I said, yes, sir. I said, I just need to graduate in May.

(02:32) He says, you have a job interview on Monday. And I went to the job interview, and it was for elementary. So I started off in elementary. And even though my certification was in instrumental music, so I had to work with kids at [Elementary School 1] in [City 6], [State 1], as well as, I can't think of the other one, but Miss [Administrator 3] was over that one.

(03:05) Lord, I can't think of the name of it. [Elementary School 2]. [Elementary School 2] and [Elementary School 1]. So that's where I started.

(03:13) And of course, in elementary school, you get a variety or diversity of different students. Of course, the older the students get, that's when it starts weeding out of whether you're going to teach the diverse kids or a majority group of individuals. So in

[City 6], it's very, very urban. After I did one year of elementary school, they moved me to the middle school, and it was called [Middle School C].

(03:50) And I built the program from there. And so after that, my mentor, he wanted to go into, of course, So he wanted to go into administration. He said, listen, I want you to take over [High School O], so I'm just like, okay. So of course, that's when it happened.

(04:18) And I stayed at seven, I mean, I stayed 17 years at [High School O]. And being there made me the band director that I am today. To go from a large ensemble And of course, you know, the older I got or the more years I got, people were leaving [City 6], onto my in droves, people were leaving. So that's why the band, of course, started to decrease because of, you know, people were leaving [City 6].

(04:51) They, you know, it wasn't attractive as far as job market concerns. So even though that was happening, I still tried to make sure to keep a certain standard. in regards to it. So, but I end up staying at 17 years, but that's how I, you know, that's how I got to [City 6].

(05:13) How would you characterize your current school and community? Oh, wow. [High School H] and [School Moniker 1], man. There it is.

(05:24) Listen, God couldn't have put me in a better place. And I mean that. The history here is outstanding. And when you have a history of greatness when it comes to urban setting, they expect that every year.

(05:45) There is no room for excuses or anything like that. Same like when I was reading up on [High School P]. Man, y'all, man, listen, your history is, You know, it's quite outstanding. And of course, after this interview, man, I'm gonna tell you what I've been reading on.

(06:10) You guys are the gold standard when it comes to education. Man, like I said, I was thoroughly impressed after I read what I read. But in regards to the van world, my community is, entrenched in the lives of every black kid that's in [City 2], every African-American kid that's in [City 2]. It is entrenched in, because back in the day, [High School H] was the only school that accepted black kids.

(06:43) Here. Here. All the [High School Q]s, all the [High School A]s, all the [High School B]s, they were predominantly white.

(06:52) So, here at [High School H] is not only, you know, a tradition in this community, it's like a staple of excellence. And they expected, they expect nothing less, which I love because it holds me accountable and it holds me to a certain standard. It's weird how, you know, the similarities between [High School P] and [High School H], [City 2], like being those, you know, before desegregation, how education was, Before, you know, before the 60s. Correct.

(07:28) What resources does your program have access to and what resources you wish your program had. All right, so the resources that I do have. Besides, you know, of course. We have.

(07:47) dignitaries as well as I don't want to call them higher ups. But when I say that, I mean, like different representatives, state representatives, senators, judges, all of them came to call. So they are huge alumni supporters. So anything that I truly, truly and

desperately need, I go to the one resource that everybody does not have in their school, the principal, because he knows everybody.

(08:24) He knows where I can get it. He knows how to get it. So I am blessed. Everybody can't say that.

(08:30) So let me go ahead and let me go ahead and tell you the difference between mine and theirs. Mine, if it's needed and if it's for the kids, I don't care if it's banned, I don't care what organization it is, he gonna make sure that we get it because at the end of the day, it's for kids. Now, Band specifically, he makes sure that he lets the community know his concerns of what the band needs. The band is definitely, of course, here growing.

(09:05) And again, to answer your question, because I might be getting off topic, but to answer your question, The resource that I'm happy that I have is my principal and people in the community and people that, of course, love [High School H]. That's my resource.

Matter of fact, when I did my band competition this year at the [Event Venue 1], [Corporate Sponsor 1] was my sponsor. And so, of course, everybody asked the question, how you get [Corporate Sponsor 1] to sponsor you?

(09:40) Well, my principal, he knows people. And so, you know, that's how they got in contact with me. And they've been having a great working relationship ever since with me. And so that one thing that dominates my resources is the people that are your I don't want to use the term higher ups because that's too lucid, but your administration, if they are backing you, it's a lot of things that you can get done versus an administration that

(10:17) does not care. And they, you know, they just want you to just get it done. Your job is 100 times easier. When you got an administration, they'll be like, OK, I see you working.

(10:28) Let me help you with this. Versus, oh, he going to get it done. I'm going to depend on him. And see, that's why a lot of band directors say, OK, this ain't the school for me.

(10:38) Let me go someplace else or get something better. That's why they do it. It ain't because, oh, they ain't give me no money. No, no.

(10:46) It's never. If money was the issue, we would have never got into this field. Let's be honest. If money was the case, no, bro, we wouldn't have went to [University 9] or somewhere, became engineers, electrical engineering, something that gonna get us money right out of college.

(11:01) No, what we do, man, is a definite passion. And if you don't have it, if your kids don't see it, no, you're not gonna flourish at all. But the resource that I do wish I did have, the one that I wish I did have was access to the people that control the money in the district. And let me explain when I say access.

(11:33) My my system, they want you to follow the chain of command, which is definitely acceptable. But it's almost like certain times. The chain of command, it's. it takes a long time to get to the person that can give you a definite answer.

(11:54) It might be, okay, you need to go talk to this person. After you talk to this person, okay, you need to go talk to this person. Okay, no, you need to go talk to this person. And by that time you're looking like, listen, these are things that I'm, like the money is not gonna go into my pocket.

(12:11) I'm trying to do this for the kids that, I mean, isn't this what it's for? Wouldn't you rather me be teaching than coming to find you about something that you hopefully would know about? Here at [High School H], the band has grown exponentially since I've been here. And the one thing that we need is uniforms.

(12:37) And people in the community are like, why the band always wearing wetsuits and t-shirts and shorts? Why don't they have uniforms? We don't have uniforms. We don't have enough to fit the entire program.

(12:51) So I don't mind helping to raise the money, but let's be real. These uniforms are never going to leave here once they are gotten. So why is the district not paying for the uniform? When we go places, like I state, I would love for my students to have uniform.

(13:13) It increases the pride in the program to wear a nice uniform. So like I state, hopefully that'll change in the future, but until it does, I will keep on making sure that my students get a quality education, that they get a chance to go to these different colleges and universities that they want to go to. And I'm going to do my job. I ain't going to complain about the things I can't control.

(13:39) That don't make you successful when you start quitting because you had a bad day or whatever that is. No, bro, that's some punk out stuff. Let's go to work. Get it done regardless of what they say.

(13:50) Because trust me, the one day that I get the yes, it's going to be all worth it. This interview has already got me hyped up already. OK, focus. How do you define success within your band program?

(14:07) Oh, man, that's easy. Graduation and continued success after you leave. Every band student that I've ever met that been a part of a quality program that the band director actually catered, those kids ain't on the street robbing people. They have a work ethic, man, especially in Irving.

(14:33) I ain't talking about the other. No disrespect, I don't know how they do it over there, but over here, Every urban or predominantly Black high school that marches traditional style, that has that work ethic, that knows about the sun, that knows about water break, that knows about, you know, three, four hours of straight practice without a water break sometimes, because you got to get it right. Every organization I've ever seen that has a program where they respect the band director and they love him, those kids go out, they get a quality job, they go out and get a job.

(15:09) They don't go robbing people. They don't do that. So how I base my success, it ain't that, oh, he got a big man. That means nothing.

(15:18) If when the kids leave me, they go and they be homeless or they don't have a work ethic or no discipline or anything like that. No, no, they get it all here. So when they do leave me, they were like, man, Mr. [Director K] told me, OK, well, I ain't going to cry about it. Let me go ahead and put my bootstraps on, strap them up.

(15:40) Let's go. So man, it's amazing. And you know what it's like, man, to see a kid, man, and everybody thought he was a problem child in the school. And then somehow, some way, he get in your program, and you mentor him.

(15:53) And now he all marching in a college band doing successful things. And then those critics that sit up there and say stuff like, Man, how in the world you did it? Well, he found out that I care. Well, she found out that I care.

(16:06) And when they needed you the most, when they wanted you to be there, you showed up. You would leave what you were doing in your personal life and go show up for them. And some of them don't have parents that do that. So when they see your face in the audience, oh, he really down for me.

(16:27) It makes the difference. I'm telling you and you know it. Yeah, it makes a whole difference to a kid man to see you there. Okay, what indicators do you look at to measure the success of your programs?

(16:43) Alright, so. I look at, of course, scholarship opportunities. I look at. Of course, grades, what their grades looking like while they're in my program.

(17:00) I also look at the work ethic of the individual while they're with me. That and parental support. Okay. The only time their parents show up is when it's time for them for like senior night, you know, senior night in the program when they have to, you know, of course, accompany them on the field or If I'm out in the community, and they know notice me a

(18:06) Mr. [Director K] and and I'm just like, how do I know you were such and such as my son of such and such as my daughter, and I'm just like, It's a pleasure to meet you. Oh my God. You know, hey, how you doing? And so, you know, they started laughing.

(18:19) They were like, I know I hadn't been at the meetings. I know I, I was like, listen, listen, listen. The fact that you know me or know of me is, is, is a relief because I'm sitting here looking, I'm just like, oh my God, am I going to ever meet this parent? And when I meet the parent, they meet me.

(18:41) there is a connect there that happens. And when the connection happens, all of a sudden, the parents say, well, since Ms. [Director K] been on me, because I ain't been in that, let me come to something. I'm going to come to your concert, you know, on such and such. Because I know if he don't see me there, next time he see me, he going to.

(19:01) And I will. I'm going to be like, listen, your child work hard over here. Please come see him. Please, please come listen.

(19:10) It would mean the world to him. So once all that comes into play, man, now you got the parents involved. Now you got a kid that actually wants to do it because trust me, when kids get to show out, when kids get to show out their skills that you or I've been teaching them, And of course, the crowd is there and all that stuff. Trust me, kids don't like to not perform.

(19:34) Tell a kid he didn't work hard and he can't perform. That cat will die right there. You'll have to call the ambulance. I'm talking about convulsions, everything.

(19:44) You'll have to stop the whole thing. So again, we know how far we push our kids. We do. And we push them that way because not because we're just mean or anything like that.

(19:55) We want them to be able to be able to adapt to any circumstance that's going to come. Whether it's high school or college, they have to be able to adapt. And hard times are going to come. Don't sit down and just let the hard times roll over.

(20:11) No. You get knocked down, get back up. And it's going to be OK. You ain't gonna get everything all in one swoop, you not.

(20:19) So that's where the time comes in. The more time you spend with a kid, the more time they learn, the easier it gets for them. But in the words of the great [Historical Figure 1], there's no progress without struggle. I know you already touched on this, but just a follow up question to the previous.

(20:45) Describe a successful student in your band program. Like what does it look like? OK, so what a successful student looks like? Is one that comes back.

(20:57) After they have left a year or a couple of years. And they come back and they tell you. What they are doing. And how your program.

(21:09) Has it made them evolve into a whole different person? I've had students that come to me and say, when I tell you, I'm so happy I stayed with your program, because when I got out there into real life, you know, everybody else was complaining. I'll be looking at my friends and coworkers. I'm just like, what y'all complaining about?

(21:28) It's just a little work. It's just a little work. What y'all complaining about? Y'all think y'all going to get this money for free?

(21:36) You know, let's get to work. And so it is absolutely, I absolutely appreciate the fact that when they come back, that they tell me things of that nature. It is a reverence to all the hard work that, of course, we as band directors do. Not only, you know, like I said, everybody, you know, we don't take days off.

(22:04) People don't realize that. If our kid get in trouble on Sunday, we're going to get a call on Sunday. Even though we're supposed to be with family, we're going to get a call. So, you know, and of course, you know, being married, you know, your significant other might be looking at you like, you got to pick up that phone, don't you?

(22:24) You have to pick up that phone, don't you? And you say, well, what if the person is really hurt? And the only person that they know is going to look out for is Mr. [Director K]. So, you know, it's a heavy, sometimes it's a heavy burden to bear and it's a hard cross to bear, but to answer your question, honestly, is when students come back and show you how successful they are.

(22:49) That's the criteria that I look at. Success, how they're doing well after they leave me, not before, because before we're supposed to be training them to get into the world. My success depends on what they do when they get out there. How do you deal with challenges such as attendance and lack of prior knowledge before they reach you?

(23:15) Okay. So, um, well, there are different technological apps now that help us as band directors. See, back in the day, they didn't have a band app or team reach and all that stuff. You know, you had to trust them to give them a piece of paper to take home.

(23:37) So you had to trust them to do that. And of course, you would leave out your band room and the paper would be sitting out on the floor. You lied. Somebody apparently ain't getting the message.

(23:49) So when they come up to me and talk to myself, well, I ain't even know this. How my child going to get penalized for this? See, now we put a stop to it with these band apps. So how I do it now is, of course, I work with [Learning Platform App 2].

(24:06) And I make sure all my parents, and I have meetings after meetings. I say, parents, if you do not sign up, If you do not sign up, you won't get the messages. Because I'm not sending 130 to 150 papers home. That's a waste of paper.

(24:26) It is. Technology is too, you know, we have evolved way beyond that. So as far as attendance goes, I make out their schedule and I say, listen, look into [Learning Platform App 2] and look at the calendar. And the phone will always let you know, hey, you got practice today.

(24:43) The phone will always let them know you got practice today. And so when parents know that we're, because we're, we're always busy, we're always doing something. So, the parents always look and the [Learning Platform App 2] out and they see it. And of course, once they see it, if, if any of the.

(25:01) Even if it's last minute, what I do with last minute students is when I say last minute, say for instance, I put it in there too late and [Learning Platform App 2] too late. And so they come up to me and say, well, I didn't know we were supposed to have our uniform and everything today. I said, well, I'm not going to penalize you for that because I did it last minute. And as a band director, you know, your principal come up, hey, man, I need you to perform this morning.

(25:24) You just like, yeah. Or, hey man, I need you tomorrow to do this. And your kids ain't gone home for the day. And you just like that.

(25:36) Because, of course, you know what comes next, them parents. How you going to tell us last minute? I got to watch tonight, Anna. I'm sorry, I'm not going to penalize your child if they have to miss it because it was last minute.

(25:50) And I make sure I put that not only, of course, on, you know, on my on my band, on the band or [Learning Platform App 2] out. But I make sure that whatever documentation that I give them to make sure because I make them sign that they understand everything to. See that, you know, that's how I keep them accountable as well as myself, but. That's the one thing that I use to make sure that attendance will not be a problem.

(26:22) Because once it's in [Learning Platform App 2], and I make sure I put in there early enough where, because I'm gonna tell you how I make sure that attendance isn't a problem, especially during football season. No jobs are allowed in my marching band during football season. If you wanna get a job, wait till after November, December. If they'll hold you spot on until December, you can go on back and do it then.

(26:48) Because see, practice time decreases once the football season is over, tremendously. Now, of course, then I go into my jazz band and of course that concert band music. But they have no excuses not to be at band practice, unless they sick or dead. And so I tried, I tried to work with my students.

(27:10) I said, OK, listen, I need you to be here every Tuesday and Thursday. On Mondays and Wednesdays, if you have a job, go ahead and do your job. The job started putting them in on Tuesdays, started putting them in work on Thursday. And I said, OK.

(27:25) Gotcha. So I cut the whole thing. So now, when my child can't have no job, he can't be in the band. OK, thank you.

(27:32) And I don't mean no harm, no disrespect. But they want to be a part of your program. You ain't trying to be a part of theirs. And that's what I had to learn.

(27:40) And I learned it the hard way. I did it. One year of college. And man, students would come, oh, I got to go to work today.

(27:47) But it's Tuesday. Mr. [Director K] just put me on the schedule. I don't want to lose my job. I said, OK.

(27:53) OK. So after that, I made sure, because I made a deal with him. But I made sure after that, it was over with. So now, my students at practice every day.

(28:06) And if they're not at practice every day, I tell them, OK, well, we'll see what happens on Friday. You know what that mean? We'll see what happens on Friday. So when we get ready to get on this bus, you know, we'll see if you need to get on the bus or you need to stay here in [City 2].

(28:22) See, when you talk to them like that, see, and then, like I said, I wait for parents to come talk to me about it because I said, did you sign this or did you not? I signed what that mean, that my child ought to be at practice. OK, well, now you want to go talk to the principal? And they don't want to talk to my principal about band stuff because he's going to say, did he get you to sign that?

(28:42) And you agree to it. See, that's why, again, that's another part. When you have a good administration behind you, and you got your documentation, and you put it in front of them, this is her name right here. She signed it right here, saying that her child understood, that she understood, and that her child is supposed to be at every practice.

(28:57) And I put on that all performances and practices are mandatory. They're not optional. They're not optional. If I got to go to work all these days and come up here just for you, you going to come with me.

(29:10) We ain't going to do it together. We going to suffer and struggle together. OK. How do you excite kids about band and never being exposed to concert or marching band?

(29:26) All right. So this. All right. So the one thing is, The students always expect the teachers to be, what's the word?

(29:42) Very professional. Yeah. They expect them to be very, very professional. And when I say that, I'm not saying in the realm of, you know, we are not going to be professional when we do our jobs.

(29:58) What I'm saying is they expect you to kind of be real uptight. real proper, real, real, I can't think of the next word that I want to use, but they think you are a square because you're a teacher. So when you do something out of the box, When I say out of the box, when you shake their hand, the way you dab them up, the way you greet them, the way that you talk, enunciate certain things to them that only certain kids will understand because that's the way their parents talk to them at the house.

(30:51) Because some students don't understand this. Stop. Don't do that. Some students don't understand.

(30:59) You have to say, hey bro, let me come up. Come up, let me, let me holler at you for a sec. Let me talk to you for a sec. See, when you talk to him, see the game changes then.

(31:12) So then they realize, oh, he got a little bit of flavor with him. He ain't the regular teacher. Correct. So, when my students want to join the program.

(31:26) And of course, I excite them by how excited I'd be that they even want to join. Because like I said, whether we like it or not, bro, if we ain't got no kids, we ain't got no job. Got no job. Yeah.

(31:38) We have no job. So we have to not only entice them, but make them understand, listen, it's going to be some work now. I ain't going to sit up here and tell you. Oh, you're going to come in, and the birds, and the bees, and everything.

(31:54) It's going to be all right. No. It's going to be some day that you're going to look at me and be like, what have you got me into, homeboy? How did you get me in this room?

(32:03) What was I thinking? And I tell the parents, and I tell the students the same exact thing I'm telling you. I said, that's what y'all, and everybody, you know, they laugh about it. But then I said, but on a serious note, you belong here.

(32:19) And I want you to show and prove to yourself that you do. Because again, you ain't out here by yourself. All these kids that are returning kids, they done been through it. And if we were as bad as you probably thinking that we are, why they still here?

(32:36) Why they still coming for more? Because they know it's gonna be worth it once you go through what you need to go through. So I have the real talks with them. I don't do the fake talking with them.

(32:53) This is the big one. I make sure, especially on songs, because a lot of songs they listen to, I don't know that stuff. I have no idea about it. But they'll come to me so excited.

(33:04) And you as a band director know, if you play something that your whole band want to play, they're going to remember it from the first time you teach it. You don't even have to teach it anymore. And that's the trick, to make sure you do some of what they

want. Not all, because a lot of cats don't want to do no concert van, but that's the trick that we can do as band directors.

(33:27) If you're my marching band, you're in my concert van. It is not an option, because I'm going to tell you, if you can't rock with me on, on, on, on, on, on [Composer B] or, or, or, or any other grace, [Composer C], but you can't rock with me on them. I ain't gonna rock with you on, on, on, on, on, on young, uh, young, young boy NBA. I ain't gonna rock with you.

(33:56) And so I taught their language and please excuse the expression, but I taught their language. Yeah. And so I said, I'll be using little things that they be using. I said, let me go and get you some tea.

(34:08) And boy, everybody just pass out. Everybody just pass out. They be like, Mr. [Director K], what you know about tea? So you have to speak.

(34:17) And they love to be around you because they understand that you want to understand who they are. Now, the reason I know all this information is because my students taught me. It ain't because I read a book or anything. No, I can't read a book about this.

(34:33) There is no book in the world that will put you in a position where you understand your kids more. You just gotta be there to experience it. So, and of course, in reference to your question, it is my students that end up teaching me how to motivate them. It is.

(35:00) It is them, because I listen to them. I hear what they're saying. And a lot of them, especially the ones that have never been in a marching band or concert band before, when they see your passion and they see their other peers, you know, getting into it, they want to be a part of that. They don't want to be left out.

(35:20) And that is something that I work with tremendously. because at the end of it, if you can not only enhance that student's knowledge, but gain their respect as well as their loyalty and their love for music increases, bro, they'll run through the brick wall because you told them to. Man, I hate, I know this is part of, we in the middle of the interview, but you just gave me a whole nother idea for a whole nother study, man. I'm sorry.

(35:57) No, you're good, you're good. Student motivation, getting to know. All right, sorry, I had to get it off. It's all good, it's all good.

(36:28) How do you allow students to share their own cultural background and identities through music? You already kind of expressed some of that during your last answer. OK, so a lot of things that I didn't, OK, so what I did not realize is the power of YouTube. Okay?

(36:56) So, there, my students, again, I keep on telling you, stuff that I learn, I be learning from my students. They don't know I be learning from them, but I'm dead serious. So, what my students do now, they will get on, I think it's called MuseScore or something like that, and they'll look up people of different songs that they like, and they'll learn to play it. without me, without me asking them to do it, or anything like that.

(37:23) And that shows me something as a band owner. As I'm looking at these kids, and they'll go get their friends. So everybody will go grab a horn and start looking at a separate part, and they'll start trying to play it together. So while I'm watching this, I'm just like, okay.

(37:44) So then that's when I get to decide, okay, this person is leading them, they respect this person. When he said, go get that instrument. And a lot of times, it don't even be the section leader. It don't even be the section leader.

(37:59) It'll be somebody in the section that's a good player, but they didn't got so involved in this music thing until they want to kind of experiment with it themselves. So to answer your question, when the students ask me, Mr. [Director K], can we have sections? I say, yes. When the drum major asked me, Mr. [Director K], this person want to try for drum major, you mind if we stay a little bit and show them a little bit of...

(38:28) Sure. When he said, Mr. [Director K], I'm having a problem with this solo part on this jazz piece that you gave us. You mind if such and such, can we practice over as a section? Yes.

(38:42) That not only motivates me, but it lets me know I'm doing something correct. You asked the question, how do I allow my students to share their culture with their peers, correct? All right, so their influence with, I don't wanna say influence over, their influence with those people that they play with is the power that they have when it comes time for them to leave. So what I'm saying, and just trying to wrap it all up at one time, half of my band don't know the names of each other.

(39:31) I don't know if you experienced that as well. I'd be like, [Student G], you know, and they'd be like, who is that? And I'd be like, it's a person that you play with every day. How do you not know their name?

(39:41) Mr. [Director K], we play together. We, you know, we play together. Well, what you think about it as a horn player? I don't even know her face right now, but I know I heard the name.

(39:54) I know we play together. That bewilders me, because at the band director, we got to know everybody's first and last name. Everybody's first and last name. Everybody's first and last name.

(40:05) But you sit here and play with the person and don't know that one person's name. But again, it's, I allow them to teach each other. And in allowing them to teach each other, they learn about each other's good, bad, and the ugly. So the culture that they bring to each other, it only enhances my program because, say for instance, Mr. [Director K], [Student H], he got in trouble in Ms. [Teacher 2]'s class.

(40:47) There are students that will go and take up for a student because of, you know, what [Student H] taught me. You know, he worked with me. You know, he ain't no bad dude. What did he do that was so bad?

(41:02) And it really, what it really does for, you know, band directors, I hope they feel the same way, is it allows us to let them chart their own path when it comes to who's going to be the leader, who are they willing to follow. These are the things that I love about my group when they come in and ask, you know, what band director don't want to

hear, hey, you mind we have sections? They do it for themselves. And the culture of it is It starts from you as the band director, whether you believe it or not.

(41:45) Because what they're in their mind saying is, listen, y'all really want to get flustered by Mr. [Director K] when we don't have this music on Monday. Let's go ahead and get this section. That lets you know that there's something that you said that they're getting. They know he ain't going to accept nothing but the best.

(42:05) He's not going to accept anything. He know we can play it. So he wouldn't have given it to us if we didn't know, if he ain't think we could play it. So they really, they honestly, they honestly teach themselves.

(42:21) They do teach themselves the culture of the program here. They do it, it's not me. I'm just, I guess you can say a standard holder. I'm gonna keep you at a certain standard.

(42:38) And everybody wants to get up to where my standard is. Nah, I didn't have that when I first got here. It took a while to sink in. But when they realized that I'd come in the band room, I'd be like, okay, I need you to play Carnegie Anthem.

(42:53) One, two, and it'd be one on by themselves, and they ain't practice. people would freak out, because I call it star day. One, two. So then, all of a sudden, it would be like, you know, you would see little messages on [Learning Platform App 2] at night.

(43:06) Hey, y'all go over that music. Y'all know Mr. [Director K]. You know he going to point at somebody tomorrow. You know, as soon as he get in there, I don't even let him catch a breath.

(43:15) They get their instruments out. I need you to play this. And I know they don't know how to play it. So then, now they're embarrassed.

(43:22) Now they're, because everybody's just like. And then the person starts shaking. Why is everybody looking at me? I'm like, that's not what I asked you.

(43:33) I asked you to play it. I said, why can't you play it? Well, I didn't. You didn't what?

(43:39) You didn't practice. Does that make sense? No. So then when you get that one, you ain't got to worry about the rest of them.

(43:46) Because you know what the rest of them saying? Man, ain't finna embarrass me like that. It ain't going to be me. So again, the culture, believe it or not, is driven through those kids.

(43:59) Because nobody wants to be embarrassed. And they get on themselves. I mean, they get on each other. When suddenly they hit a left foot, no, they probably hit a right.

(44:08) Hey, bro, what was that? We went over this. Or you see an A. No, you know that's not an A-flat.

(44:15) You know that's an A-natural. We went over this in sections. They hold each other accountable. And they'll get mad at each other, because somebody didn't hit a wrong note.

(44:23) They'll get mad at each other. But again, that's the culture and climate that you want, because they're holding each other accountable. And it starts, again, with the head dude in charge. So I let them.

(44:37) Now, of course, I don't let them get into no craziness. But at the same token, a lot of them, they've adapted to, well, I was wrong. So I need to go ahead and work a little harder and get it right. So it makes our job a lot easier when kids care.

(44:55) Because when your culture is, hey, we got to get it right. We want to do it right. We want to look good. We want to be the best.

(45:02) When you set that standard and you live by that standard, because again, you as a band director, you ain't going to put no music in front of your kids that sound bad. And you know the arrangement sucks. You ain't going to do that. You're going to put something in front of them and be like, OK, [Director A / Nickname], let's get it.

(45:20) And they want that. They want that. So when you provide them with what they want and provide them with the culture, and like I said, you ain't going to let them go too far out of the pocket or too far out of bounds, because as high school band directors specifically, we know we can't let our kids play certain things.

(45:38) We know that. We know that. We know that. But on the same token, if it's going to motivate them to sound good, be good, and do better, What else do we need?

(45:53) Let, uh, let me take a break because I have a class to walk in. Let me get them. Let me get them together. Give me one minute.

(46:01) Okay. One minute. I'm gonna pause it for one. Sorry about that.

(46:05) Mr. [Director K]. Now we're back. It's going to finish the interview. Uh, so far the first half has been, you know what I'm saying?

(46:11) Amazing. Like amazing. I hate to compare my interviews, but I think this was like one of my favorite ones so far. So, all right.

(46:19) So let's change gears a little bit. So my next question to you is, how do you build strong relationships with school administrators? All right. So my mentor, he said, when you first get to the school, you befriend three people, the principal, bookkeeper or the person that does your money.

(46:53) The third is the most important. The person that does your schedules. Oh yeah. Them three.

(47:02) All right. Because those three individuals have a close knit relationship. You can't have one without the other. Literally.

(47:12) The principal has to sign off on everything. All right, the bookkeeper controls everywhere you go. If she said, hey, you got the money to go, you go, he signs. So she got to be in contact with that person that does the schedule, that person, you make sure you feed that person.

(47:34) Because when it comes to this, I need such and such in my class. All right, Mr. [Director K], So now you've got the class that you want with the people in it that you need to be in. So the question is how you formulate a great relationship with the

administration. Sometimes your administration is going to ask you things or ask you to do things.

(48:01) And you're going to be like, OK, when I say OK, Say, for instance, all right, Mr. [Director K], I need you to do a basketball game. I need you to be here for the basketball game. Now, as band directors, you know, a lot of times they know you don't even leave that place till 7, 8 o'clock at night. They'll still ask you.

(48:24) And they don't mean no harm, but I'm going to tell you what I do to make sure. Because in our profession, you've got to get along. You've got to give in order to get. So I said, OK, I'll be there.

(48:37) What time do you need me to be there? I'll be overzealous about life. Say what you need me to do. And so when they see that, and they see you're already working, and the fact that you showed up because they asked you to, it means a lot to them.

(48:53) It means a lot to them because, again, at my school, we have one head guy, but we have four assistant principals. And what I've learned the hard way is this. The reason why they are the assistant principals at that school is because the principal wants them there. He needs a team to make sure to keep everything in place.

(49:16) So you better take what they say like what he said. Because otherwise, if you try to put one against the other, it ain't going to turn out good in your favor. No disrespect, it's just not. And here, that's why I say, I can't say about other places.

(49:36) Here, my administration understands, if I get into a student tail, They understand it. We know. He been telling them, don't do it. Don't do it.

(49:49) Now he getting into their tail. So as long as he don't do nothing to break no laws or anything, we don't have anything to say about it. And a lot of times, of course, well, all the times, I don't do nothing crazy. I put him to his aid.

(50:02) Let me talk to you for a second. But with him, and like I said, I can only speak about mine, but with my principle that I have, They appreciate what I do. They appreciate the fact that it's hard to find good band directors out there. They appreciate, they've seen what a program looks like without a good band director and how they wanted somebody different.

(50:28) So when you get one, you're going to cherish it. So my advice to anybody that's wondering or looking where to go as far as Except for [High School G], which [Administrator 4] found. Strike that from the record. Anybody that's looking for a good place to go, go to a place where the band sucked before you got there.

(51:04) Go there. Because once you do your magic and do your thing, they're going to be like, OK. We see the difference. We see the difference.

(51:15) We see the difference. So trust me, after you left, they saw the difference. They saw the difference. But to straight to the point of how do you develop a great relationship with your principal or your administration?

(51:40) Go to work. Be on time. Don't do anything that's going to embarrass them. Make sure that whatever you do, it shines a light on how they are a great leader.

(51:56) When you do that, you're gonna be, trust me, they're gonna come to you for things that they want you to do personally, as far as helping the school shine a little bit brighter. Because every time anything's out about you, it's all about how great you're doing, how great your program is doing, the things that you're doing for kids to make sure that they're OK. See, that's the thing. An administrator, especially a principal, the principal can't survive without good things in place at his or her school.

(52:33) Because they gonna think that they're not doing a great job if good things are not coming out. So the best way to make sure your relationship is good is to make sure that every time you play a note, every time you perform, it's always documented and highlighted. Because when they, man, [High School P] was out there and the Prince was saying, that's my band. Yeah, I sent them out there.

(52:56) Correct. Even, even, listen, even if they don't like you, Right. When it's about theirs and how well they're doing, it's... And so when it comes time and don't let it be where you're like, well, I think I done found someplace different.

(53:16) So I'm, oh no, you ain't going nowhere. Because again, good principles, good principles know, good principles know it's hard to find a good bandwagon. So just like I said, do your job and try to make sure that they look great as possible, even on your back for a second. OK.

(53:44) Do you work with any outside organizations like local art organizations, universities or professional musicians? OK. So I do work with them in the sense of to allow them to come and work with my students. I don't have all the answers.

(54:12) I don't. So, if I know a great trombone player that's, you know, right up there, hey, man, you mind coming and working with my trombone section? There's some parts that I'm not strong with, but I think, you know, you know a little bit more about it than I do. Would you mind coming and working with them?

(54:25) And they will. And the first thing most people say is, man, it ain't a lot of people that won't allow ego to get in the way of somebody coming and working with their kids. Now, if I don't know you or know your... know your pros and cons as far as being a good musician.

(54:44) No, I ain't going to let you in front of my kids just to, you know, hey, let's blow it. No, no, no, it don't sound good. No, no, you're not getting in front of my kids. But if I know you and I've seen your program, and I know what you can do within your own band room, so I can only imagine what it would be, please have at it.

(55:03) Let me watch you work. So whatever you're trying to instill in them, if it's something that I don't know, I hadn't caught yet, I'm going to copy that from you. So yes, I do, because again, I don't have all the answers. And as an educator and as a person that say I'm a good teacher, what type of teacher would I be if I didn't allow a person that could come in and do a better job than I could explain certain things, not come in and explain?

(55:33) We supposed to make sure that they are better, not to hinder them from the progress because I'm the band director. So nobody ain't going to teach you this but me. That's the craziest thing I've ever heard in my life. I 100% agree.

(55:50) 100% agree. All right. So the next question. Do you approach teaching music differently with Black kids than you do with other kids from other demographics?

(56:01) Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. Just because of that one word, the cultural background.

(56:08) Okay. The cultural background. Okay. So, um, I have gone to [High School R], which is very, very much mixed and diverse.

(56:19) Okay. Correct. Um, um, predominantly one way and they, they, they do a traditional style. I mean, core style marching.

(56:30) And so, we decided to get together one day and play a song together. It was written by one of their students. And so my students went over the song, they learned it. And so we got to the football game and we played it together.

(56:50) And they were amazed about how it sounded versus how it sounds when they play it. Now, of course, when I spoke to them and the way that I spoke to them, the students kind of looked at me like, this ain't the way Mr. [Director K] talk. Mr. [Director K], you putting on a front. No, go in like you would if it was us, messing up this part around here.

(57:17) And so I explained to them later. I said, no. I said, because their response to what I'm doing is going to be different to your response. Your parents are hard on you in this way.

(57:30) You respond because I do the same thing, the same way. The culture are different. Like when I've seen students from different demographics, when I say, hey, that's wrong. That is not great.

(57:45) What is going on with that? I've seen them break down and be like, oh, my life is over because I've messed up. And I'm just like, oh. So then I had to read, OK, listen, this note was not right.

(58:00) Let's try to do it this way. And then it was OK. But when you throw the criticism out there, to certain people, it's almost like certain death, because their parents don't do that. Their parents don't tell them they sound bad.

(58:17) They say stuff like, OK, we're going to get a little bit better with it. When a person comes in and says, oh my God, that is horrible. Their whole aura of being like, just like, oh my God, he said I was horrible. I thought I was good.

(58:37) Some parents, and let me be straight, no chaser on his envy. Some parents be lying to their kids. And they don't want to hear the heart. They don't want to hear the hard truth, the hard criticism.

(58:50) They don't. But again, that's why so many of ours succeed. Because they didn't hear, oh, you ain't going to be about that. Well, I'm going to show you.

(59:00) I'm going to show you. It's the cultural difference. And yes, I have to change the way I teach. Because otherwise, they're going to fire me the first day.

(59:09) Let's be real. And I've seen where, man, some kids be like, my mom say, I don't have to listen to you. No, and it don't be ours. Let me say that.

(59:27) It doesn't be the kids in the urban schools. OK. Let me clarify that. It don't be the kids in the urban schools.

(59:37) My parents say, I don't have to listen to you. In my whole 21, 22 years, No student has ever said that to me. Because the majority of parents say this, since you there and you in his program, you're going to do what he say. So that's it.

(1:00:01) How do you effectively teach students who may be vastly different playing levels? So say, for example, you have an all-state player, and then you got a beginner, right? My God. All right.

(1:00:14) Woo, Jesus. Okay. Now, if you can, if you can, only if you can, and this is what I do. They have allowed me the past couple of years to do what is called beginning band.

(1:00:35) And I'll put all those students that are not advanced players, I'll put them all in that one class. And we'll start from the bottom, from the foundation. Because eventually, they're going to turn into the players that are advanced. Right now, they're not there.

(1:00:54) And I'm OK with that. But if I mix the two, and sometimes I have to, but what happens is this. You already know the answer to this question. What's going to happen is this.

(1:01:05) The process of learning will be slowed down tremendously. Because the one thing I do not Can't have wrong notes when we can play right notes. Let's start right there. We're going to go over this one measure until we get it right.

(1:01:25) I'll spend a whole whatever on that one measure until it's right. Not because I'm anal retentive. It has nothing to do with that. I want you to understand what it is that you need to do to be a part of this program.

(1:01:41) And if I set the standard, if the standard is, OK, we're going to run over that, oh, yeah, it's not a big deal. That's what you're going to think you're going to get away with. But if I don't have to and I can put everyone in that beginning band class, oh, it's totally different then because I have the advanced students. And they've allowed me to have a brass class and a woodwind class too.

(1:02:04) So woodwinds that are advanced, they in that class. Brass that are advanced, they in that class. Beginning band student, let's go to this class. And we go through quarter notes.

(1:02:17) We go through the fundamentals until they reach that point where, I know this. I got it. And so those are the things that I do to make sure that practice is productive.

Because when you have students in there, mixed in with your students that are advanced, Not only does the learning process slow down, but your advanced students get bored and start doing stupid stuff that they know well they shouldn't be doing.

(1:02:49) And I'm not talking about getting up and moving around. I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about their focus stops. They done clocked out like, man, if you don't stop going over this thing, I want to play some music.

(1:03:03) But that's when I have to have that conversation with them. A, sometimes. This is what we're going to have to do. You know, I didn't promise you that every day was going to, no, I promise you that sometimes it's going to be a little struggle.

(1:03:17) So help me help them get through this struggle so we can move on. You can be a part of it or you can be a part of a problem. So once I explained it to them like that, that's where the word culture comes in. Then we'll talk about how do I allow the students to teach each other and stuff like that.

(1:03:40) That will place their culture upon them by, OK, well, since you're the best trumpet player I have, this is what I need you to do. Take him out here and work with him just on that one part and see what you can come up with. until I can get to them myself. Or declaring that player, hey, section leader, I need you to go work with her by yourself.

(1:04:01) And then we keep going. Or I say, those two, I need you to go work with them while we continue on with the music. Because if the majority of your advanced players know the music, it's going to help you tremendously. You know, when you put those other ones in there, oh, no, baby girl, we're going to work on this.

(1:04:18) We're going to work on it. No, no, no, no. And like I said, your job of teaching and how hard you Once you go through this process, what I'm saying is, it will negate all of the time that you have to spend on teaching one person. Because you got students that are going to be on the grind with them, trying to make sure that they have.

(1:04:42) And once you got that, man, you know. OK. All right. So this is my last couple of questions.

(1:04:51) All right. So this is more personal. OK. Describe your proudest moment as a band director and what allowed you to make that happen?

(1:04:59) Oh. My answer is going to be different from everybody else's. When I turned in my letter of resignation at [High School O]. Wow.

(1:05:27) I had figured out my worth. I had figured it out. I had plans, and I never told anybody but my wife this. I had plans to finish my whole 25 or 30 years at [High School O].

(1:05:44) That was my plan. I had been there for 17, so shoot, eight more. That's just like a drop in the bucket. That was my plan, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B].

(1:05:56) When I asked, when I asked, since I'm up here every day in the summer anyway, teaching kids, would you consider putting me on a 12-month schedule? When they looked at my face and told me, nah, that's a non-starter. And then I look around, and the football coach who hadn't been there two years, and his assistants are getting a pay raise, pay increase, and everything. I knew then.

(1:06:40) And I went, I was at the school when I found all this information out. I was just like, the principal said, man, they said it's a non-starter. I was like, Okay. And so I had told myself, okay, well, I'm gonna, I'm gonna go ahead and ride it out.

(1:06:57) Like I, you know, I knew I, I knew I was worth more. I knew it, but you know, I couldn't prove, I thought I had proved it. I thought I did. Everybody else, you know, they, they, I mean, people that started with me, they were gone.

(1:07:14) I was one of the, as they said, the last Mohicans. I was, I was the last person in the building, man. And nobody stayed at that school longer hours than I did. Nobody.

(1:07:27) And nobody would tell you, no, no, no, ma'am, it's, we're here at eight, nine o'clock. I got a call from a very, very, very, very, very special individual, Mr. [Mentor 5]. He used to be the assistant principal at [Middle School C] or [Middle School D]. And he was retired.

(1:07:48) And he asked me, he said, man, how's it going? I'm like, dog, I said, you won't believe what then happened. He said, would you consider leave? Now, before he asked that question, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B], I had never thought about leaving [High School O].

(1:08:01) Let me go ahead and tell you that. Never thought about it. I was just like, well, let's test the waters. And within 30 minutes, [Superintendent 1] called my phone.

(1:08:20) [Superintendent 1] looked at me, this is what he said. He said, Doc, he said, are you serious about it? He said, come up here for a meeting on next week. I said, yes, sir.

(1:08:32) Now, I didn't tell nobody, but the only person that knew this was my wife. I went, I had an interview with him. He said, Doc, if you want to be here, I want you. He said, I'll recommend you to the board as soon as they had a meeting.

(1:08:46) So he said, now let's get you switched over. He called, he said, I got a guy coming down to you right now. This is what I mean by, you know, administrators having good administrators. He called a guy.

(1:08:58) He said, I got a guy coming down, dude, doing the paperwork, fingerprint, blah, blah, blah, blah. I went down there that day, got it all done. Now this is Monday when I had to, when I had, now on my teacher's certificate, it said [School District 3] on Monday. By Thursday, it had [School Board 1].

(1:09:21) They were playing. He was not playing. He was not playing. By Thursday.

(1:09:27) That's what I had on my teacher's table. And so I called him that Friday. I was at a car dealership getting my oil changed. And he said, he said, Doc, go ahead and put in your resignation.

(1:09:37) Now, at this at this part right here, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B], like I was it had happened so fast. I did not expect it to. I'm being honest with you. I thought I had a little time.

(1:09:49) And so I had a meeting with my students. No. I did my resignation letter, I showed it to my wife, she made the correction on to make sure I was professionally correct. I went in his office.

(1:10:06) And he was a good principal, good principal, don't get it twisted. I took it in his office, and I said, he looked at me, he said, what is that? And I said, he said, please, Mr. [Director K], it cannot be no resignation letter. I said, yes, sir.

(1:10:23) He said, please don't leave. He walked out of his office and went to central office. They were having a meeting. [District Official 1] was having a meeting.

(1:10:33) They stopped the meeting, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B]. Because I would leave, baseline, I would leave. Man, they came out there, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B], they promised me the stars, the moon, and everything. But you made me go too far.

(1:10:52) You made me go too far to turn around, no. My whole teaching certificate changed, bro. I'm no longer a part of [School District 3] on my teaching certificate. So I told him, I said, I'm so sorry.

(1:11:11) And when I say that's my proudest moment, because I saw how much I was worth to me. They thought I wasn't going to leave. They weren't afraid because it's [Director K], he always here. But the reason why I say it was my proudest moment, I'm talking about personally for me, is because I seen the look on their faces when they figured it out, like we done lost something.

(1:11:40) Man, they put it all in the newspaper. It was everywhere. Somebody from the newspaper called me. Is it true you're leaving?

(1:11:48) Just like, yes, sir. Man, it was all over Facebook. Folks lost they mind. And it was too late then.

(1:11:57) It was too late. So when I got to [High School H], that was my extra motivation, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B]. That was my, I got to make sure that I showed them what they missed out on. So we went to AA.

(1:12:21) And you definitely doing your goddamn thing, man. So when I went down to [Parade Event 1], they put us last on purpose. And them same board members that wouldn't give me, that wouldn't even, let me tell you what they said. They said, I have nothing else left to say now.

(1:12:42) They say, you are definitely the standard. When it came to [Community Member 1], we didn't realize it, Mr. [Director K]. You got to forgive us. And the lady walked off.

(1:12:54) She saw the group, man, how they did. She was just like, we didn't realize. We did not realize it was going to turn out like this. When I tell you that was a proud moment for me, because all the work, all the late nights, all the disrespectful things that happened while I was there, all of it hit me like a ton of bricks.

(1:13:18) And it showed me how much I was worth. So now I don't, nobody can't tell me that I hadn't earned my place. So when I tell you on a personal note, it was personal for me because I validation came. But it came in a different form than what I expected.

(1:13:41) I didn't expect them to give me no props. I wasn't looking for that. I just wanted my kids to be great. But it came in such a way.

(1:13:50) The people talk, so they were just like, you came out here and showed up in [City 6]. They were just like, bro, I. I don't know what the hell we think. I'm talking about, I mean, city council folks, man, everybody was talking about it.

(1:14:04) And it came in the form of my students from [High School H] going out and showing their tale in a good way. So that, again, like I said, I know my answer is going

to be a little bit different than everybody, but like I said, it was because I found out how much, I found how valuable I was. See, if you look at yourself just as a normal individual and you don't know your own worth, you can convince students that they are worthy. But when the only thing they hear is, man, Mr. [Director K], he was in [City 6].

(1:14:43) And that's all they hear about [City 6]. My students at college, they were talking about you like you was a legend. I was just like, I said, I hope I did do something that was good. I hope I did do something that made them think a little differently.

(1:15:00) So it was my proudest moment because everything that I tried to put out there, they finally saw it. They finally saw it. And now they wish like hell that I would do anything to get there. That's what they're wishing right now.

(1:15:19) And so that's why I say the validation part for me as a director, you know. And now nobody can tell me it ain't worth it, no. You can't tell me that. You can't tell me that, no.

(1:15:32) No. So that's why I said my story might be a little bit different. Hey, man. I was going to text you immediately.

(1:15:39) You was like, man, you're an awesome storyteller, man. It was awesome. Thank you. OK.

(1:15:47) Next question. So I got to wrap my mind back to the thing, because I'm still... I want to have more conversation about that, but... Gotcha.

(1:15:56) Yeah. What's the toughest lesson you've learned while directing a band? Okay. You're not going to always get the students that you truly want to be in your program.

(1:16:16) That tough, man. That still hurts me to this day. To this day. You're not going to get the true students that you truly want in your program.

(1:16:28) You're not going to get all of them. You might not even get half of them. But the one thing I will say is, God going to send you what you need. Now hear me when I tell you that.

(1:16:41) God going to send you what you need. Just like right now, I'm, you know, I'm trying to, you know, and I'm telling, hey, send them all to me. Send them all. Send them all.

(1:16:51) Ain't going to turn that one around because I remember, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B], it was a time where I was big and supposed to come through the door. Yeah. But again, the hardest thing that I've ever had to learn as a band director, you're not going to get the kids that you want in your program. And they will be great for your program, but they don't see it.

(1:17:12) Only you see it. And that's the most jacked up part about it. Only you see, you see that potential. You see how hard they work at those other things.

(1:17:20) And you just like, bruh, if you just give me a chance to teach you, I will change your whole life. And they don't see it. But I'm going to tell you where your validation going to come in at. Just wait till they graduate.

(1:17:35) Mr. [Interviewer/Director B], I should have took you up on that. A lot of your kids I see out here, bruh, they doing their thing. They doing their thing. But that's, now, I ain't gonna lie to you, man, that really, it bothers you and it makes you wonder, man, am I as good as I think I am or I thought I was?

(1:18:00) Because you have, and they right there, they just won't go ahead and just commit to you just trying to make sure that they be great. Or you'll get them in there and then they'll give up before getting to the other side. Yeah. So, uh, I think that those two things, man, are things that, you know, mess with me.

(1:18:27) Okay. I want to have a look, man. We need to talk more, man. I feel, in this on camera or we can take this out, but man, I feel like we need to talk more because right now what you're speaking on is a lot of things that it's probably been dragging me down more than, I guess, the obvious things.

(1:18:47) You know what I'm saying? Like you said, you don't get the kids that you want, but you get the ones that God wants you to have. You know what I'm saying? Absolutely.

(1:18:55) It's deep. It's deep. I love it. Deep.

(1:18:59) If you could give one piece of advice to a band director who is new to teaching in black schools, what would it be? be who you are, not who your band director was, not who your favorite band director is. Listen, your name is on that certificate. You can't be who they were because they are originals.

(1:19:30) Young man just asked me just yesterday the same thing. He said, I'm looking to be a band director, Mr. [Director K]. And could you please give me some points? And I told them, I said, try your best to understand who your students are.

(1:19:48) Some days they're going to come in there, their parents going to piss them off royally. And if you jump on their head because they ain't do the one thing right, they're going to explode. You're adding to their stress. OK, so make sure you can tell when your student don't need you to mess with them and when you can.

(1:20:12) I said, but it's going to take time to look into those things. I said the other thing. I said. If you can make sure that you always be transparent with those parents.

(1:20:31) Tell them, hey, I need you, if you will, to please stay on them about this. Let your parents know. Do not let them quit. Don't let them quit.

(1:20:44) Don't let them quit. Because they will be sitting on your couch. I tell my parents this. They'll be sitting on your couch at age 30 because you let them quit.

(1:20:56) Show them how to go through hard, show them how to go through struggles. Show them how to go through hard work and make it to the other side. Because once they do that, they will be unstoppable. Some parents believe me, some parents don't listen to me.

(1:21:13) Now the ones that don't listen to me, they come back later. You know what, Mr. [Director K], I should've. But at the end of the day, you have to be who you are because God made you. God made you.

(1:21:31) And you have to realize that if God made you and your heart is set on being a band director, he wants you to be a certain type of band director that's built upon you. Nobody else. Listen, I can't beat [Interviewer/Director B] being [Interviewer/Director B]. You can't beat [Director K Full Name] being [Director K Full Name].

(1:21:51) You can't beat it. Nope. You can't beat a person being themselves. You can try all day long, but you can't beat them.

(1:22:05) So you're a special individual. Be you. You can take advice. You can try your best to mimic what they're doing.

(1:22:20) And when I say mimic, I'm talking about like, OK, he has a way to organize this. Hey, you're taking certain things and you're putting them into yours to make your job easier. That's fine. Being organized, making sure you have the right staff.

(1:22:37) But when you talk about your name, because, see, as the head of, I don't care if my dance line member get in trouble, they ain't going to go to the dance line coordinator. They're going to come to me. They're going to come to me. It's always going to depend on who you are as a person.

(1:23:00) Be who you are. Give them inspiration. Give them the respect that they need. Give them the love that they need.

(1:23:10) And at the end of the day, make sure you understand your value to them because you are valuable to them because you care. And that's it. What do you wish your administrator understood about running a successful badminton? I wish, I wish they understood that they need to pay for these buses when they want to go to these football games.

(1:23:46) No, that shouldn't come out of my budget. You won't be at that game. I'll be at every home game, because I don't ride no bus. I'll be at every home game, I don't ride no bus.

(1:23:59) But it's the way of the day, they want you dying now. Ain't gas going up crazy like it going? And see, I can't take no one bus no more. You know, it ain't Southside no more.

(1:24:13) No. No, it ain't. So I got to take two or three buses. And we ain't going down the street no more.

(1:24:19) And we ain't going down the street no more. We ain't going down the street no more. We ain't going down the street no more. We are not.

(1:24:28) We are going all the way to [City 7], to [City 8], to [City 9]. We had a game in [State 2] last year. And I understand it can't be all on the administration, but I do wish the administration would say to the superintendents, listen, if the ban is going to go on these buses, we need to take care of them because they are there for support. And in essence, you're asking us to fund our own job.

(1:25:11) To fund it. Because trust me, my president, he'll give me the world now. The one thing he does do, again, again, the one thing he does do, I'll tell him, listen, this is what I'm gonna need this year. He said, so if I get this, this, and this, you're gonna be at every game.

(1:25:29) I said, if you give me this, this, and this, I'm be at every game. And what it does, he might get me, he'll pay for a whole charter bus, he might even pay for two charter buses. But he'll guarantee, he's like, I got you now, but you told. And that's the deal we'll make.

(1:25:44) See, I can work with that. Versus you just saying, OK, Mr. [Director K], you figure it out. And see, I'll be like, OK, what money? And then the down part of that is, Imagine if your rebuttal is you talk to people that are in high authority, and then they get on him about, oh, you making the band go, and you know they ain't got no money?

(1:26:26) All of a sudden, your relationship with your administration goes down the drain. So again, what my principal does, and he, trust me, he does a lot. So that's why I'm not going to go against the grain with him. Because when I asked for Mr. [Interviewer/Director B], he come through.

(1:26:45) Mr. [Superintendent 1], I know you, when you're trying to go to [University 7], yes, sir. All right, we're going to give you \$10,000 on this bus. And that's the end of my discussion. So again, It depended on your administrative seat.

(1:27:01) Mine, I'm blessed with. But again, like I said, as long as I ain't gotta go see [Administrator 4]. And again, you can edit that part. I'm not going to [High School G], bro.

(1:27:10) I don't know how [Director L] dealing with it. I wish him well with it, but I know me. I know me. I'd be like, hey, you can have this, [Administrator 4].

(1:27:18) You can have it. All right, this is my last question. My last question. Is there anything that you believe to be true about your band program success that people don't talk about?

(1:27:36) Yeah. They don't talk about. The camaraderie. The arguments.

(1:27:49) The. the putting together of so many personalities to create entertainment. They have no idea how hard it is to get a group of girls to dance together and not want to kill each other in the stands because somebody missed a move. They have no idea what it's like to have a group here with you the whole week.

(1:28:20) Or somebody missed a day or two of practice because of unforeseen circumstances, and they're real circumstances. And then the person wanna ask, well, Ms. [Director K], you got a two-day minimum, so she can't perform this Friday. And they standing on business with that, because if it had been me, you would have kicked me clean, I feel. They have no idea how much they go through just to prepare for one game.

(1:28:51) They only see, and you know this, they only see the bright lights on Friday night. They don't see when somebody cuss at you or when you have to pull them to the side like, bro, what's wrong? Hey, what is going on? They are not going to talk about how much you do for the community.

(1:29:18) They're not gonna talk about that. When I say they're not going to talk about that, I go to different churches on purpose in the community. But it's in the community. And I make sure that my students understand why we're doing it.

(1:29:35) See, I want you to know that you can play marching band tunes. You can play them jazz band tunes. You can play them concert tunes. You can also play good gospel tunes.

(1:29:46) It can come from horns. I need them to understand that going to a church to play for a group of individuals that have never heard you play, when they hear you, not only do you create a fan base, but you create people out there like, man, how about going to people's churches? And when I tell you, they don't give you \$5 and \$20, bro. They give you a check for about \$1,000 and say, thank you so much.

(1:30:18) And you only been there 15 minutes. So when I tell you that people would never talk about that side because we don't try to exploit or anything like that, or they would never talk about how much we have to sweat and go through before we go to those games and get all that stuff together. I tell my students, before your first note on a halftime show, my heart drops down to my duke bone, bro. Because you always want that first note to be great.

(1:30:52) It's almost like you enter a song and a person come in at the wrong time. And you be like, oh, bro, you done killed the whole vibe. Right. You know, the things that the students, you know, they said, band directors are the worst at doing this.

(1:31:11) All right, let's do it one more time. Yeah. From the top. Sideline.

(1:31:19) They say we are the, Mr. [Interviewer/Director B], you said we're going to be the last time. Hey, I'm sorry, man. Hey, run it for me one more time. And so they say we the worst thing.

(1:31:30) They say we are the worst thing. And we are. And it's not because, and it's not because, again, we just being mean. But let's be honest, bro.

(1:31:44) We only get one chance to get that thing right at halftime. I mean, to get it right at halftime. Football, basketball, all of them, they got four quarters and all this to get all their mistakes that they made, they get a chance to correct it. We get eight minutes.

(1:31:58) Eight minutes, one time. So of course, our level of not only consistency, but repetition has to be up in the high numbers. It has to be. Because I don't want you to say we didn't have you prepared.

(1:32:16) So in essence of all of it, like I state, I don't think people talk enough about the things that we do for the community or all the hard work that it takes or entails just to put on an eight-minute show. See, they don't appreciate it until I tell my parents, I said, listen, y'all come and just chill out with me for one full rehearsal and see how much respect you'll have after that rehearsal. Nobody has ever taken me up on that offer.

(1:32:52) Nobody. But I'm going to tell you what they do say. Man, I don't know how Mr. [Director K] deal with that. I don't even know how.

(1:33:02) My hat's off to that man. Because he got to deal with these crazy. And let's be real now. Some of my parents crazy as hell now.

(1:33:12) But they ain't going to pull their child from the program now. They sure not. Them the ones that you can't get rid of. Hey, bruh, you better tell it.

(1:33:20) You better tell it. You better tell it. You better tell that thing, man. Because see, that's what's so amazing to me.

(1:33:30) You hate my guts. Listen, this is not you. You are not under a gun or anything. But my son loves it.

(1:33:40) Why does your son love it? I must not be that bad. I must not be that bad. Thank you, Mr. [Director K], for this awesome interview that you gave me.

(1:33:58) Like I said, man, I've been appreciating you from afar since the beginning of my career. You was my first football game in my whole profession. So my first performance was against you, man, and you left a lasting impression on me. And like I said, man, I view you as a successful band director, not because of the accolades, but because of the energy you have around yourself, the energy you have around your program.

(1:34:24) And the energy of students carry with them as well. Because when I taught them at Honor Band this past spring, they carried themselves with a different energy from the moment they walk in the door to the moment they leave. So I know that's coming from a culture of success, a culture of believing and understanding their work and how they move with it. So it's just awesome, man.

(1:34:46) Thank you so much, Mr. [Director K]. I'm going to start recording. And man, it was good.