A COMPARISON OF MUSIC LITERACY SCORES BETWEEN 6TH AND 7TH GRADE BAND AND CHOIR STUDENTS IN RELATIONSHIP TO PRACTICE REGIMEN, PRIVATE INSTRUCTION, ENSEMBLE MEMBERSHIP, AND STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO

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STEPHANIE BURTON B.B.S.

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DEDICATION

For my husband, Andy Burton, my children, Kendra, Kaleb, and Kooper,
and my parents, Nancy and David Cox, thank you for your
unwavering support and always believing in me.

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ABSTRACT

STEPHANIE BURTON

A COMPARISON OF MUSIC LITERACY SCORES BETWEEN 6TH AND 7TH GRADE BAND AND CHOIR STUDENTS IN RELATIONSHIP TO PRACTICE REGIMEN, PRIVATE INSTRUCTION, ENSEMBLE MEMBERSHIP, AND STUDENT/TEACHER RATIO

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The purpose of the study is to compare the development of music literacy skills between 6th and 7th grade band and choral students and determine what factors lead to higher achievement. Data were collected while surveying five middle school choir and band directors and collecting scores from their district's benchmark test that they administered to their 24 ensembles/classes at the beginning and the end of the Fall semester to measure their students' musical literacy. Results showed that the five groups with the highest gains in scores were four 6th-grade band classes (bassoon, trumpet, percussion, clarinet) and one 7th-grade band. Among these five groups, 100% were required to practice outside of class hours, 80% had a student/teacher ratio of 13:1 or less, and 60% had students that were either selected or auditioned. Thirty-eight percent of the combined membership of the five groups were enrolled in private lessons.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

According to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for Fine Arts (2013), there are four basic strands of musical foundations: music literacy, creative expression, historical and cultural relevance, and critical evaluation and response. TEKS defines music literacy in two categories: 1) a skill where students describe and analyze music and musical sound, and 2) a skill where students read and write music notation using an established system for rhythm and melody. The same music literacy skills are expected of all students on each grade level, regardless of the class or ensemble. Therefore, it is essential that sequential, skill-based instruction be provided for every music class (Conway, 2008).

The emphasis on music literacy in music education is not a new concept. The birth of American music education dates back to the early 18th century, when singing schools were established in the New England colonies in an effort to improve the singing in the churches. Various notational systems developed during the singing school movement, giving rise to the publication of pedagogical manuals by John Tufts, Hosea Holt, William Billings, Thomas Symmes, William Little, William Smith, Andrew Law, and many more. Lowell Mason successfully spearheaded a movement to have music included in the Boston public schools in 1836. Mason wrote the *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music, for Instruction in the Elements of Vocal Music, on the System of Pestalozzi* in support of the curricular goal of music literacy (Mark & Gary, 2007). As

music offerings expanded to include band and orchestra classes, an increasing number and variety of method books centered on music literacy skills became available.

Since the inception of public music education in the late 19th century, American music teachers have looked beyond their borders and adopted teaching methods from music educators in other countries, including Zoltán Kodály (Hungary), Shinichi Suzuki (Japan), Carl Orff (Germany), and Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (Switzerland). These various techniques have been incorporated into the American music curriculum to support music literacy instruction. Kodály was concerned with the creative, humanizing enrichment of life through music and considered the goal of music literacy for everyone to be the first step toward his ideal. He created a pedagogical system which focused on the use of singing to lead students to music literacy. In 1958, Suzuki introduced his Talent Education system, which centered on the philosophy that young children have the ability to learn much more than is normally expected of them. His method of observation, imitation, and repetition were the keys to musical development. Orff maintained that music evolved from speech, movement, and dance could become the basis of early childhood music education. Dalcroze stressed the importance of teaching musicality in conjunction with musical technique. While these methods vary in their approach, the desired outcome is enhanced musicianship, whereby students acquire literacy in music while working on performance skills (Mark & Gary, 2007).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Numerous techniques for teaching music literacy have been developed and researched to ascertain which methods are the most effective. Studies have targeted various age groups and ensemble types, utilizing a variety of procedures for collecting data, but few studies have specifically addressed the factors that determine higher achievement in acquiring music literacy skills.

Vocal vs. Instrumental Musical Skills

Approaches to teaching music literacy are diverse, depending on the instrument and the instructional setting. In her study of vocal and instrumental music majors, Garbisch (2014) found that varying levels of musicianship skills exist. Garbisch (2014) suggested that differences in pedagogical methods used by vocal and instrumental teachers may lead to the discrepancy in their skill development. For example, Gudmundsdottir's (2009) study showed that sight-singing abilities are not the same as those required for music reading, because they rely on pitch relations. Further, the pedagogical approach to developing the sight-reading skills of a pianist is different from the method of performing rehearsed material (McPherson, 1994). Differences in repertoire effect what musical skills are needed and mastered. For example, instrumental music uses more complex rhythms while singing and diction are unique to choral students.

Independent Music Practice

One of the primary pedagogical differences between instrumental and vocal ensemble directors is the implementation of required individual practice. Numerous researchers have discussed the importance of independent practice for beginning instrumentalists (Austin & Berg, 2006; Miksza, 2012; Whiteside, 2013). Miksza (2012) surveyed 6thto 8th grade band students to assess the motive, method, behavior, time management, and social dimensions of the theoretical model of self-regulation when applied to independent practice. The results provided evidence that the model of self-regulated music learning is a viable framework for exploring how instrumental musicians become self-sufficient learners.

Middle school students have to be taught how to practice. Austin and Berg (2006) emphasized the importance of sixth-grade instrumental instructors to teach their students how to practice effectively at home. Austin and Berg (2006) stated that a teacher should discuss how to structure a practice session, model the process of practicing a difficult piece, explain how to monitor progress and set goals, and assess the quality of student practice. Whiteside's (2013) investigation of motivational techniques to encourage middle school band students to practice revealed that it was vital for directors to stress the importance of practice techniques on a daily basis, to focus on intrinsic motivation, and to communicate with parents regarding their role in encouraging their children to practice.

In 2012, Smeltz conducted a study on her band students and she found that it is possible to increase the effectiveness of students' practicing without decreasing their joy.

Smeltz stressed the need to reframe a student's practice to facilitate lifelong, joyful musicianship.

Private Music Lessons

The connection between private lessons and musical achievement has been the source of a number of studies. Rostvall and West (2003) provided an analysis of the variety of interactions between private teacher and student and subsequent learning that occurs during private instrumental lessons. Band members who take private lesson students are more likely to excel in performance skills than those with little or no private lesson experience (Hamann, 1982, 1983, 1984; Hamann & Sobaje, 1983). However, Garbisch (2014) discovered that instrumental students were more likely to receive private lessons during a student's high school years, rather than while a beginner.

Sloboda, Davidson, Howe, and Moore (1996) found a strong correlation between achievement and private study among developing musicians. Killian and Henry (2005) found that a common characteristic of successful choral sight singers was enrollment in private lessons. Rohwer and Rohwer (2001) surveyed the Texas All-State band, choir, and orchestra members and discovered that 79% of the 498 participants took private lessons.

On the other hand, in a longitudinal study of junior high ensemble students, May and Elliott (1980) discovered that private lessons did not result in band or orchestra students receiving elevated scores on the Gaston Test of Musicality. Further, May and Elliot (1980) found that, while years of private piano lessons was a factor in the development of aural skills, years of private instruction on their instrument did not have

an effect. A study conducted by Sloboda and Howe (1991) revealed that the students with the strongest musical skills had taken fewer private lessons when they were young than the less-skilled students.

Strategies in Teaching Musical Literacy Skills

A vast amount of research has been done on the development of musical skills through the participation in a choral ensemble (Freer, 2008, 2009, 2011; McGill & Volk, 2007; Phillips, 2016; Stamer, 2002). Freer (2011) discussed the performance-pedagogy paradox in choral music teaching, where choral teachers must balance the quality of performance with the quality of education. Stamer (2002) researched the need for creating small ensembles within a choir to help create independent musicianship. In Freer's (2008) research of middle school choir directors, he discovered the importance of scaffolding language to generate higher skill development among students. Moreover, books have been written dedicated to the teaching of sight-reading and music literacy in a choral setting (McGill & Volk, 2007; Phillips, 2016). Studies have also been done on the development of musical skills through vocal training in a choral setting. Freer (2009) addressed the need for appropriate choral warm-ups to support the adolescent voice and build choral success. Warren (2001) discussed how the lack of vocal development taught in general music has affected musicianship skills.

Likewise, studies have been conducted on the development of musical skills through the participation in an instrumental ensemble. West (2015) offered activities for developing beginning instrumental students' abilities in three areas of musicianship: rhythmic ability, tonal ability, and creativity. Whitener's (1982) research of beginning

band students compared the comprehensive musicianship teaching approach to the performance-oriented approach and revealed that the comprehensive approach made a significant difference in many music literacy areas, such as interval, meter, major-minor mode, and auditory-visual discrimination.

Auditioned Ensembles

The requirement of an audition to earn membership into an ensemble is a common technique used by choral and band directors. Phillips (2016) maintained that it is important to audition students entering high school choir because adolescents tend to have a wide range of vocal maturity, technique, and skill. He stated that the audition process should be used to assess vocal range, vocal quality, sight-singing, part singing, singing technique, and confidence. Colwell and Goolsby (2002) stressed the importance of having two ensembles, one for top-performing students and one for students who need additional training in basic skills. Colwell and Goolsby (2002) posited that grouping the more proficient players in an ensemble results in accelerated improvement, creates a sense of pride, and instills a general positive attitude. Colwell and Goolsby's study did not address the connection between auditioning and higher achievement in musical literacy.

Minimal research has been done on the psychology of auditioning for an ensemble. Parker (2014) researched the process of social identity development in adolescent high school choral singers, which started with the student's choice to audition. Haworth (1992) researched a group of elementary music teachers to discern who among them lead auditioned or non-auditioned choirs, and the philosophy behind their choice.

Haworth (1992) determined there are conflicting objectives among elementary choir teachers: providing a positive musical experience for as many students as possible versus providing a higher musical quality than is possible in the general music class.

Student/Teacher Ratio

It is commonly known among educators that student-to-teacher ratio effects a child's achievement. The Center for Public Education (2018) documented several findings about reduced class size: a class size of no more than 18 students per teacher is required to produce the greatest benefits; minority and low-income students show even greater achievement when placed in small classes; experience and preparation of teacher is a critical factor in the success or failure of size reduction programs. Kinn (2015) found that when the state of Iowa reduced the amount of music staff in their schools, there was a negative effect on student academic success. Barrington (2017) stated the more individual attention a student receives, the more their learning improves, thus raising his chances for academic success. According to the Tennessee's Project STAR research, students with long-term exposure to small classes generated substantially higher achievement, and the longer that students were in small classes, the greater their gains. However, little research has been done on the effects of student-teacher ratio on students' music literacy skills in a music ensemble (Berliner & Biddle, 1995).

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research on the development of music literacy skills among middle school students is minimal, and does not address the teaching practices that lead to higher achievement. The majority of the research has focused on high school or university level students. Therefore, additional research focused on middle school music students can provide their music teachers with invaluable information about the most effective techniques and tools for helping their students achieve gains in their music literacy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to compare the development of music literacy skills among 6th and 7th grade band and choral students and determine what factors lead to higher achievement. The results of this study can provide band and choral directors with empirical evidence regarding what teaching practices are most effective. This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in the rate of development of music literacy skills among students who are required to practice independently?
2. Is there a difference in the rate of development of music literacy skills among students who receive private lessons?
3. Is there a difference in the rate of development of music literacy skills among students who were auditioned/selected for their ensemble?

4. Is there a relationship between teacher to student ratio and the rate of the development of music literacy?

Method

Participants in this study included middle school choir directors (n = 2) and middle school band directors (n = 3) and their ensembles and instrumental classes (N = 24) from two targeted school districts. While this limited the number of potential participants, in order to collect the data needed for the four far-reaching research questions, programs with specific criteria had to be used. To assess the effectiveness of practice outside of the school day, the researcher needed to use participants whose music programs had clearly defined guidelines regarding requirements for participation. Further, the researcher had to find specific schools with private lessons available for students who wanted training outside of the ensemble class. The researcher needed schools with varied student/teacher ratios in order to collect data regarding the impact of the number of students per teacher had on performance.

Middle school band and choir directors were asked to complete a survey using Survey Monkey (see Appendix A). In addition, they were asked to provide the scores from their district's benchmark test that they administered at the beginning and the end of the Fall semester to measure their students' musical literacy (see Appendix B). Questions on the test were based on the TEKS for 6th and 7th grade music students. Responses from surveys were utilized to help interpret the benchmark scores.

Data were reported in terms of a student's growth in music literacy from the beginning of the school year to before the winter break. A comparison of the level of

improvement among band and choir students was calculated. Other variables measured included independent practice, private lessons, ensemble audition requirements, and student-teacher ratio in ensemble or class. Directors indicated which student scores were included in the various categories aforementioned, along with the student-teacher ratio for each group of students' scores. A comparison of the level of improvement was calculated for the four variables listed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Middle school choral and band directors (N = 5) submitted student music literacy test scores from their 6th and 7th grade ensembles and classes. The following data provide an overview of the pretest and posttest scores, as well as the increase in scores.

Test Scores

7th Grade Ensembles

The Tenor-Bass Choir had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 32; *SD* = 25.86) and a fairly high posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 73; *SD* = 18.93), causing a large gain in score (see Table 1). The high *SD* (25.86) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge ranged from limited to extensive. The posttest *SD* (18.93) improved, but remained high.

The Treble Choir had the lowest pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 22; *SD* = 19.23) and the lowest posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 56; *SD* = 19.47), subsequently resulting in a small gain in score (see Table 1). The high *SD* (19.23) on the pretest remained almost the same as the posttest *SD* (19.47) indicating the student's baseline knowledge ranged from limited to extensive.

The Concert Band had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 25; *SD* = 15.88) and a fairly low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 62; *SD* = 26.53), resulting in a low gain in score (see Table 1). The lower *SD* (15.88) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge was more equal than the *SD* (26.53) posttest score.

The Symphonic Band had the lower pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 35; *SD* = 25.96) and a fairly high posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 77; *SD* = 16.93) and the largest gain in score (see Table 1). The high *SD* (25.96) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge ranged from limited to extensive. However, the posttest *SD* (16.93) showed an improvement in the range in knowledge, but remained high.

The Wind Ensemble had the highest pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 67; *SD* = 28.13) and the highest posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 96; *SD* = 2.26) and the lowest gain in score (see Table 1). The high *SD* (28.13) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge ranged from limited to extensive. However, the posttest *SD* (2.26) indicated that the students had largely achieved mastery.

Table 1

7th Grade Ensembles Pretest/Posttest Scores and Gain

Ensemble	No. of Members Taking Test	Pretest Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean	Posttest SD	Gain
Tenor-Bass Choir	14	32	25.86	73	18.93	41
Treble Choir	44	22	19.23	56	19.47	34
Concert Band	43	25	15.88	62	26.53	37
Symphonic Band	30	35	25.96	77	16.93	42
Wind Ensemble	9	67	28.13	96	2.26	29

6th Grade Choirs and Band Classes

The 6th grade music classes were configured differently in the areas of band and choir. The choirs were separated by gender, Tenor-Bass and Treble, whereas the band classes were separated by instrument—bassoon, clarinet, euphonium, flute, horn, oboe,

percussion, saxophone, trombone, trumpet, and tuba. Pretest mean scores were below 50% among all 6th-grade choirs and band classes (see Table 2).

The Tenor-Bass Choir had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 29; *SD* = 24.88) and a low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 51; *SD* = 19.86), indicating a small gain in score (see Table 2). The high *SD* (24.88) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge ranged from limited to extensive. The posttest *SD* (19.86) remained unchanged.

The Treble Choir had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 29; *SD* = 27.8) and a low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 41; *SD* = 24.07), showing a small gain in score (see Table 2). The high *SD* (27.8) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge ranged from limited to extensive. The posttest *SD* (24.07) remained high.

The Bassoon class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 18; *SD* = 1.5) and the highest posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 80; *SD* = 13), resulting in the largest gain in score (see Table 2). The low *SD* (1.5) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge was fairly equal. The posttest *SD* (1.3) remained low, indicating that the increase in musical literacy extended across the class membership.

The Clarinet A class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 9; *SD* = 3.2) and a low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 37; *SD* = 18.26), thus the gain in score was small (see Table 2). Clarinet B class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 8; *SD* = 4.3) and a low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 35; *SD* = 13.79) and a subsequent small average gain score (see Table 2). Both clarinet classes, Clarinet A *SD* (3.2) and Clarinet B *SD* (4.3), had a low *SD* on the pretest score which suggests that the students' baseline knowledge was uniformly limited. The posttest *SD* increased in both classes, Clarinet A *SD* (18.26) and Clarinet B *SD* (13.79),

suggesting a higher gain in music literacy among some of the students. The Clarinet C class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 11; *SD* = 2.44) and a high posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 64; *SD* = 6.32), resulting in a large gain in score (see Table 2). The low posttest score SD (6.32) suggests that the students' baseline knowledge equally increased.

The Euphonium class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 23; *SD* = 17.7) and a low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 39; *SD* = 30.46) and a small gain in score (see Table 2). The high *SD* (30.46) on the posttest score suggests that some students experienced little growth in knowledge, while others had a large increase.

The Flute class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 15; *SD* = 27.57), the lowest posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 22; *SD* = 26.98), and a small gain in score (see Table 2). The high *SD* (27.57) on the pretest score and the high *SD* (26.98) on the posttest score suggests that the students' musical knowledge ranged from limited to extensive.

The Horn A class had the lowest pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 3; *SD* = 3.96) and a low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 37; *SD* = 7.32), yet a large gain in score (see Table 2). The low *SD* (3.96) on the pretest score and low *SD* (7.32) on the posttest score suggest that the students' musical knowledge was equally limited. The Horn B class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 11; *SD* = 14.26) and a high posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 53; *SD* = 4.6), resulting in a large gain in score (see Table 2). The low *SD* (4.6) on the posttest score suggests that the increase in musical knowledge was fairly uniform.

The Oboe class had the highest pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 47; *SD* = 32.08), a high posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 52; *SD* = 10.01), and the smallest gain in score (see Table 2). The high *SD*

(32.08) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline musical knowledge was widespread, but the posttest *SD* (10.01) showed less variation in scores.

The Percussion class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 9; *SD* = 2.96) and a high posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 62; *SD* = 10.14), resulting a large gain in score (see Table 2). The low *SD* (2.96) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge was equally limited, but the posttest *SD* (10.14) showed greater dissimilarity.

The Saxophone class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 10; *SD* = 4.68) and a low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 34; *SD* = 17.81) with a small gain in score (see Table 2). The low *SD* (4.68) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge was equally limited. The posttest *SD* (17.81) indicates increased disparity in musical knowledge.

The Trombone A class had a very low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 8; *SD* = 6.26) and a higher posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 46; *SD* = 14.39), resulting in a large gain in score (see Table 2). The low *SD* (6.26) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge was universally limited. The posttest *SD* (14.39) indicates that the increase in musical knowledge was not experienced equally among the class members. The Trombone B class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 9; *SD* = 4.27) and a high posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 51; *SD* = 24.3), causing a large gain in score (see Table 2). The posttest *SD* (24.3) suggests a disparity in the class members' increase in musical knowledge.

The Trumpet A class had a very low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 6; *SD* = 37.35) and a high posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 66; *SD* = 14.42), causing a large gain in score (see Table 2). The high *SD* (37.35) on the pretest score suggests that the students' baseline knowledge was wide-ranging. The posttest *SD* (14.42) showed less variation in students' musical knowledge.

The Trumpet B class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 20; *SD* = 15.76) and a low posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 35; *SD* = 22.49), indicating a small gain in score (see Table 2). The posttest *SD* (22.49) suggested a broader range in musical knowledge.

The Tuba class had a low pretest score ($\bar{x}$ = 19; *SD* = 21.15) and a higher posttest score ($\bar{x}$ = 38; *SD* = 22.1), but the gain in score was small (see Table 2). The high *SD* (21.15) on the pretest score and the posttest score (22.1) indicates that the extent of musical knowledge was wide-ranging.

Table 2

6th Grade Choirs and Band Classes Pretest/Posttest Scores and Gain

Ensemble	No. of Members Taking Test	Pretest Mean	Pretest SD	Posttest Mean	Posttest SD	Gain
Tenor-Bass Choir	44	29	24.88	51	19.86	22
Treble Choir	62	29	27.8	41	24.07	12
Bassoon	2	18	1.5	80	13	62
Clarinet A	10	9	3.2	37	18.26	28
Clarinet B	11	8	4.3	35	13.79	27
Clarinet C	9	11	2.44	64	6.32	53
Euphonium	5	23	17.7	39	30.46	16
Flute	20	15	27.57	22	26.98	7
Horn A	9	3	3.96	37	7.32	34
Horn B	6	11	14.26	53	4.6	42
Oboe	4	47	32.08	52	10.01	5
Percussion	13	9	2.96	62	10.14	53
Saxophone	12	10	4.68	34	17.81	24
Trombone A	10	8	6.26	46	14.39	38
Trombone B	15	9	4.27	51	24.3	42
Trumpet A	11	6	37.35	66	14.42	60
Trumpet B	12	20	15.76	35	22.49	15
Tuba 6th	7	19	21.15	38	22.1	19

Effect of Required Practice on Test Scores

Viewing the results of the pretest and posttest score through the lens of required practice provides additional data regarding the score gains. Among the five 7th-grade ensembles participating in the study, only three required the members to practice individually. While the Tenor-Bass Choir and Treble Choir were not required to practice, they still had a large increase from pretest mean to posttest mean. The highest gain in score was attributed to the Symphonic Band, which did require individual practice. Furthermore, the highest posttest mean belonged to the Wind Ensemble, which also requires individual practice (see Table 3).

Table 3

7th Grade Ensembles Practice Requirement and Gain in Score

Ensemble	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	Practice Required
Tenor-Bass Choir	32	73	41	No
Treble Choir	22	56	34	No
Concert Band	25	62	37	Yes
Symphonic Band	35	77	42	Yes
Wind Ensemble	67	96	29	Yes

Among the two 6th-grade choir ensembles and 16 6th-grade band classes, only the members of the 16 instrumental classes were required to practice weekly. The band classes showed a large range in posttest mean scores and gain in scores. The class with the highest gain and the highest posttest mean was Bassoon, which has an individual practice requirement. However, the class with the lowest posttest mean was Flute, which also has a practice requirement. The class with the lowest gain was Oboe, a class required

to practice individually. The choir ensembles, which have no practice requirements, had low gains and moderate posttest means (see Table 4).

Table 4

6th Grade Choirs and Band Classes Practice Requirement and Gain in Score

Ensemble	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	Practice Required
Tenor-Bass Choir	29	51	22	No
Treble Choir	29	41	12	No
Bassoon	18	80	62	Yes
Clarinet A	9	37	28	Yes
Clarinet B	8	35	27	Yes
Clarinet C	11	64	53	Yes
Euphonium	23	39	16	Yes
Flute	15	22	7	Yes
Horn A	3	37	34	Yes
Horn B	11	53	42	Yes
Oboe	47	52	5	Yes
Percussion	9	62	53	Yes
Saxophone	10	34	24	Yes
Trombone A	8	46	38	Yes
Trombone B	9	51	42	Yes
Trumpet A	6	66	60	Yes
Trumpet B	20	35	15	Yes
Tuba	19	38	19	Yes

Effect of Audition Requirements on Test Scores

Viewing the results of the pretest and posttest score through the lens of audition requirements provides additional data regarding the score gains. Among the five 7th-grade ensembles participating in the study, only two were auditioned. The highest gain in scores was achieved by the Symphonic Band, which had audition requirements.

Furthermore, the highest posttest mean belonged to the Wind Ensemble, which also required auditions. While the Tenor-Bass Choir and Treble Choir were not auditioned ensembles, they still had a large gain in scores. In addition, the Concert Band had a large gain in scores and a high posttest score, though they are not an auditioned ensemble (see Table 5).

Table 5

7th Grade Ensembles Audition Requirements and Gain in Score

Ensemble	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	Auditioned
Tenor-Bass Choir	32	73	41	No
Treble Choir	22	56	34	No
Concert Band	25	62	37	No
Symphonic Band	35	77	42	Yes
Wind Ensemble	67	96	29	Yes

Among the 5 6th-grade ensembles and 16 6th-grade band classes, 5 groups required an audition. The highest gain in scores and highest posttest mean was Bassoon, which was an auditioned class. The Percussion class, also an auditioned class, had one of the highest gain in scores and posttest mean scores. The lowest gain was Oboe, which was also an auditioned class, however they had the highest pretest mean score. The Tuba and Euphonium classes both required auditions, yet neither had large gains in scores. One of the non-auditioned classes, the Trumpet A, had one of the highest gains and it is not an auditioned class (see Table 6).

Table 6

6th Grade Choirs and Band Classes Audition Requirements and Gain in Score

Ensemble	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	Auditioned
Tenor-Bass Choir	29	51	22	No
Treble Choir	29	41	12	No
Bassoon	18	80	62	Yes
Clarinet A	9	37	28	No
Clarinet B	8	35	27	No
Clarinet C	11	64	53	No
Euphonium	23	39	16	Yes
Flute	15	22	7	No
Horn A	3	37	34	No
Horn B	11	53	42	No
Oboe	47	52	5	Yes
Percussion	9	62	53	Yes
Saxophone	10	34	24	No
Trombone A	8	46	38	No
Trombone B	9	51	42	No
Trumpet A	6	66	60	No
Trumpet B	20	35	15	No
Tuba	19	38	19	Yes

Effect of Private Lessons on Test Scores

Viewing the results of the pretest and posttest score in terms of the percentage of ensemble members participating in private lessons provides additional data regarding the score gains (see Table 7). Among the five 7th-grade ensembles participating in the study, the three instrumental ensembles had an appreciably higher percentage of students taking private lessons than the vocal ensembles. The Wind Ensemble had the highest pretest

mean score and had the highest percentage of students participating in private lessons. The Symphonic Band and Concert Band had between 28% and 40% of students taking private lessons and showed significant gains. However, the Tenor-Bass Choir and Treble Choir, with a very low percentage of students taking private lessons, still had gains in scores.

Table 7

7th Grade Ensembles Percentage of Students Taking Private Lessons and Gain in Score

Ensemble	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	% in Private Lessons
Tenor-Bass Choir	32	73	41	0%
Treble Choir	22	56	34	5%
Concert Band	25	62	37	40%
Symphonic Band	35	77	42	28%
Wind Ensemble	67	96	29	67%

Among the two 6th-grade ensembles and 16 6th-grade band classes, the groups with a high percentage of students taking private lessons were Bassoon, Oboe, Percussion, and Tuba (see Table 8). Bassoon had 100% participation in private lessons and had the highest gain in scores. Oboe also had 100% participation in private lessons, but had the lowest gain in scores; however, it had the highest pretest mean score. Percussion, with 62% participation in private lessons, had a high gain in scores and a high pretest mean score. Tuba had 86% of students participating in private lessons, yet had a low gain in scores. In contrast, Clarinet C had 0% participation in private lessons, yet had a high gain in scores.

Table 8

6th Grade Choirs and Band Classes Percentage of Students Taking Private Lessons and Gain in Score

Ensemble	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	% in Private Lessons
Tenor-Bass Choir	29	51	22	0%
Treble Choir	29	41	12	5%
Bassoon	18	80	62	100%
Clarinet A	9	37	28	0%
Clarinet B	8	35	27	0%
Clarinet C	11	64	53	0%
Euphonium	23	39	16	20%
Flute	15	22	7	0%
Horn A	3	37	34	11%
Horn B	11	53	42	0%
Oboe	47	52	5	100%
Percussion	9	62	53	62%
Saxophone	10	34	24	0%
Trombone A	8	46	38	0%
Trombone B	9	51	42	0%
Trumpet A	6	66	60	9%
Trumpet B	20	35	15	8%
Tuba	19	38	19	86%

Effect of Student/Teacher Ratio on Test Scores

An examination of the results of the pretest and posttest scores through the filter of the student/teacher ratio provides additional data regarding the score gains. Among the five 7th-grade ensembles participating in the study, the two choral ensembles had the lowest student/teacher ratios, however neither of these ensembles had high score gains or

the high posttest mean scores. The Symphonic Band had the highest gain and a high student/teacher ratio. The Wind Ensemble had the highest posttest mean score and had highest student/teacher ratio (see Table 9).

Table 9

7th Grade Ensembles Student/Teacher Ratio and Gain in Score

Ensemble	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	Student/Teacher Ratio
Tenor-Bass Choir	32	73	41	15:2
Treble Choir	22	56	34	44:2
Concert Band	25	62	37	57:1
Symphonic Band	35	77	42	50:1
Wind Ensemble	67	96	29	59:1

Among the two 6th-grade ensembles and 16 6th-grade band classes, the 16 instrument classes had the lowest student/teacher ratios. Bassoon had the lowest student/teacher ratio (2:1), along with the highest score gain and posttest mean score. Oboe had a low student/teacher ratio (4:1) and the lowest score gain. Likewise, Euphonium had a low student/teacher ratio (5:1), but had a low posttest score and low score gain. The Treble Choir had the highest student/teacher ratio (62:1) and a very low gain in scores (see Table 10).

Table 10

6th Grade Choirs and Band Classes Student/Teacher Ratio and Gain in Score

Ensemble	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Gain	Student/Teacher Ratio
Tenor-Bass Choir	29	51	22	44:1
Treble Choir	29	41	12	62:1
Bassoon	18	80	62	2:1
Clarinet A	9	37	28	10:1
Clarinet B	8	35	27	11:1
Clarinet C	11	64	53	9:1
Euphonium	23	39	16	5:1
Flute	15	22	7	20:1
Horn A	3	37	34	9:1
Horn B	11	53	42	6:1
Oboe	47	52	5	4:1
Percussion	9	62	53	13:1
Saxophone	10	34	24	12:1
Trombone A	8	46	38	10:1
Trombone B	9	51	42	15:1
Trumpet A	6	66	60	11:1
Trumpet B	20	35	15	12:1
Tuba	19	38	19	7:1

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The relationships found in this study of the band and choir ensembles are particular to the participants observed and the methodologies used to collect data. However, there appear to be several findings worthy of mention and further research.

Research Question One

Is there a difference in the rate of development of music literacy skills among students who are required to practice independently?

The highest gains (over 50 points) on the music literacy exam were achieved by four 6th-grade instrumental classes: Bassoon (+62), Trumpet A (+60), Percussion (+53), and Clarinet C (+53). The ensemble with the highest gain was the Symphonic Band (7th) (+42). Practice outside of school hours was a requirement for students enrolled in all of these high-achieving groups. The ensembles and instrumental classes that had the highest posttest mean scores (70 or above) on the music literacy exam included Wind Ensemble (7th) (96), Bassoon, (6th) (80), Symphonic Band (7th) (77), and Tenor-Bass Choir (7th) (73). All of these groups, with the exception of Tenor-Bass Choir (7th), required members to practice outside of class.

This data indicates that classes in which the students are required to practice tend to have higher mean scores on music literacy tests and to have the largest gains in improvement. It is interesting to note that all of the instrumental classes and ensembles

included practice outside of class as part of their curricular requirements, while none of the choral ensembles had a practice requirement.

Research Question Two

Is there a difference in the rate of development of music literacy skills among students who receive private lessons?

The classes and ensemble with the largest gain in scores on the music literacy exam varied in terms of student participation in private lessons. Bassoon (6th) (100%) and Percussion (6th) (62%) had over 50% participation in private lessons, while Clarinet C (6th) (0%) and Trumpet A (6th) (9%) had less than 10% participation. Only 28% of the members of Symphonic Band (7th), the ensemble with the greatest increase in music literacy scores, participated in private lessons. Likewise, the ensembles and instrumental classes that had the highest posttest mean scores had a wide range of student participation in private lessons. Bassoon (6th) (100%) and Wind Ensemble (7th) (67%) had a high percentage of students who participate in private lessons, while Tenor-Bass Choir (7th) (0%) and Trumpet A (6th) (9%) had a low percentage of students participating in private lessons.

The results suggest that participation in private lessons does not have any direct effect on music literacy scores. Perhaps the percentage of students taking private lessons has more of a bearing on performance skills. The curriculum used by a private lesson instructor may or may not emphasize music literacy concepts. For example, the unique technique required to play an instrument, such as the bassoon, may be more of a focus than reading rhythmic patterns. While some of the top performing ensembles have a high

percentage rate of students participating in private instructions, other top performing ensembles do not.

Research Question Three

Is there a difference in the rate of development of music literacy skills among students who were auditioned or selected for their ensemble?

The classes and ensembles with the highest pretest mean scores (29 or above) on the music literacy exam varied in terms of audition requirements. Wind Ensemble (7th) (67), Oboe (6th) (47), and Symphonic Band (7th) (35) were auditioned ensembles and classes. Tenor-Bass Choir (7th) (32) and Tenor-Bass Choir (6th) (29) were among the top five pretest mean scoring ensembles, yet were not auditioned ensembles. The data shows a relationship among high pretest scoring ensembles and ensembles who were auditioned/selected. Since the students were auditioned, it might be interesting to see if these "select" students also showed high music literacy skills at the time of their audition. Additional research could focus on the standards students must meet for auditioned or selected ensembles, such as students selected based on predetermined high music literacy skills.

The data indicates there is a relationship among the ensembles and classes who were auditioned/selected and the ensembles/classes with the highest gains. Among the highest gains by the four instrumental classes, Bassoon (6th) (+62) and Percussion (6th) (+53) were auditioned classes. Trumpet A (6th) (+60) and Clarinet C (6th) (+53) were not auditioned ensembles. The ensemble with the highest increase in music literacy scores was the Symphonic Band (7th) (+42), which was also an auditioned ensemble.

Additional research could focus on the psychological impact of being selected into an elite ensemble on the performance of a student. The psychological impact could potentially motivate students to progress in music literacy skills more rapidly.

Research Question Four

Is there a relationship between student/teacher ratio and the rate of the development of music literacy?

The data indicates there is a relationship among the ensembles and classes who had a small student/teacher ratio and the ensembles/classes with the highest gain in scores. The four instrumental classes with the highest gains (over 50 points) on the music literacy exam also had a low student/teacher ratio (13:1 or less)—Bassoon (6th) (2:1), Trumpet A (6th) (11:1), Percussion (6th) (13:1), and Clarinet C (6th) (9:1). However, the ensemble with the highest gain in scores had a large student/teacher ratio—Symphonic Band (7th) (50:1).

Four of the ensembles and instrumental classes that had the highest posttest mean scores had small student/teacher ratio—Bassoon (6th) (2:1), Clarinet C (6th) (9:1), Trumpet A (6th) (11:1), and Tenor-Bass Choir (7th) (15:2). However, the highest posttest mean (96) was achieved by the Wind Ensemble (7th), which had a large student/teacher ratio (59:1).

The results suggest that classes/ensembles with a small student/teacher ratio tend to have higher posttest mean scores on music literacy tests and to have the largest gains in improvement. It is notable to mention that the 6th-grade ensemble with the largest student/teacher ratio, Treble Choir (62:1), did not have high gains or a high posttest mean

score, while the 7th grade ensemble with the largest student/teacher ratio, Wind Ensemble (7th) (59:1) had the highest posttest mean score of all ensembles. Additional research on how to best meet the needs of a beginner music student versus an intermediate student is needed. Perhaps 6th grade students learn music literacy skills better with smaller student/teacher ratios, regardless of ensemble/class type, whereas 7th and 8th grade students can successfully learn in an ensemble with a large student/teacher ratio.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that when students are required to practice individually outside of class time, it can potentially lead to higher gains in music literacy scores. Further research could focus on how much time middle school students should devote to music literacy during individual practice, how music literacy can be incorporated in individual practice, and whether music literacy during individual practice is approached differently by vocalists and instrumentalists.

In terms of student/teacher ratio, this study shows that the fewer students per teacher can potentially lead to higher gain in music literacy scores. In this study, the 6th grade band program created small classes based on instrument type with a small student/teacher ratio, whereas the 6th grade choir program had a large student/teacher ratio. Phillips (2016) addressed this disparity in class configuration, stating that the general public continue to believe that it takes instruction to learn an instrument, but you are born (or not) to be a singer. Therefore, instrumental students begin with small homogeneous classes while singers do not have this luxury. This information could lead to further research on school districts' hiring procedures in fine arts and the breakdown of directors in each type of ensemble. Research could also be done on choir programs with small student/teacher ratios to see if this factor would potentially increase music literacy scores among the choir students.

Limitations of the current study include having different test administrators, potentially effecting the accuracy of the data. It is unknown what was said before students took the benchmark test, therefore my assumption is the five directors administered the test in various ways. For further research, the researcher suggests either having one person administer the test to every ensemble or writing a script that each director would read verbatim before administering the test to alleviate this variable.

Another limitation to this study was not knowing each students' musical background. Factors for further research related to students would be how much previous knowledge a student possesses due to their elementary music education, private instruction in piano or other music classes outside of school, or exposure to music at home before entering 6th grade. Other director-centered factors that could be considered in further research would be the methodology the director uses to teach music literacy, and how much time, per class period, the director spends on teaching music literacy.

This study revealed that individual practice and smaller student/teacher ratio seemed to have a relationship with higher music literacy score gains. The data from this study could provide music educators with empirical evidence to support the creation of a practice regime for their beginning ensembles and classes. The results of this study could also be used as leverage for requesting that school districts hire more choral directors to give beginning choir students the same benefits as beginning band students. Future research could encompass a broader range of school districts and expand the participation to a larger number of bands and choirs to determine if the results found in this study were typical.

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APPENDIX A

Survey

SURVEY

1. How many 6thand/or 7th grade ensembles do you direct?
   ____ 1
   ____ 2
   ____ 3
   ____ 4
   ____ 5

Answer questions 2 – 9 for each ensemble. Select the type of ensemble (#2), then answer the questions following as they apply to that particular ensemble. You will continue the process until you have completed a set of answers for each ensemble.

2. Type of Ensemble

   ____ 6th grade band – heterogeneous
   ____ 6th grade band – woodwinds
   ____ 6th grade band – brass
   ____ 6thgrade band – percussion
   ____ 7th grade band – heterogeneous
   ____ 7th grade band – woodwinds
   ____ 7th grade band – brass
   ____ 7th grade band – percussion
   ____ 6th grade treble choir
   ____ 6th grade tenor-bass choir
   ____ 6th grade mixed gender choir
   ____ 7th grade treble choir
   ____ 7th grade tenor-bass choir
   ____ 7th grade mixed gender choir

3. Size of Ensemble
   Total no. of students in ensemble _____

4. Instructors

   Total no. of directors teaching ensemble _____

5. Private Lessons
   Total no. of students taking private vocal or instrumental lessons _____

6. Is this class an auditioned/select ensemble?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

7. Students enrolled in band and choir
   Total no. _____

8. Are students in this ensemble required to practice independently?
   _____ Yes
   _____ No

If the answer to #8 is yes, please continue.

9. How do you monitor their independent practice?
   _____ Practice log
   _____ Recording of practice
   _____ Charms or other educational software
   _____ Google

10. What percentage of their grade is based on independent practice?
    _____ %

Upload the benchmark test scores for the ensemble you just described.

1. Do not include students' names to preserve their anonymity.
2. Place a P next to the scores of students who have private lessons.
3. Write a BC next to the scores of students who are enrolled in both band and choir.

If you only direct one 6thor 7th grade ensemble, you are finished and may select Submit.
If you direct more than one 6thor 7th grade ensemble, please continue.

11. Type of Ensemble

    ____ 6th grade band – heterogeneous
    ____ 6th grade band – woodwinds
    ____ 6th grade band – brass
    ____ 6th grade band – percussion
    ____ 7th grade band – heterogeneous
    ____ 7th grade band – woodwinds
    ____ 7th grade band – brass
    ____ 7th grade band – percussion
    ____ 6th grade treble choir
    ____ 6th grade tenor-bass choir
    ____ 6th grade mixed gender choir
    ____ 7th grade treble choir
    ____ 7th grade tenor-bass choir
    ____ 7th grade mixed gender choir

12. Size of Ensemble
    Total no. of students in ensemble _____

13. Instructors

    Total no. of directors teaching ensemble _____

14. Private Lessons
    Total no. of students taking private vocal or instrumental lessons _____

15. Is this class an auditioned/select ensemble?
    _____ Yes
    _____ No

16. Students enrolled in band and choir
    Total no. _____

17. Are students in this ensemble required to practice independently?
    _____ Yes
    _____ No

If the answer to #8 is yes, please continue.

18. How do you monitor their independent practice?
    _____ Practice log
    _____ Recording of practice
    _____ Charms or other educational software
    _____ Google

19. What percentage of their grade is based on independent practice?
    _____ %

Upload the benchmark test scores for the ensemble you just described.

4. Do not include students' names to preserve their anonymity.
5. Place a P next to the scores of students who have private lessons.
6. Write a BC next to the scores of students who are enrolled in both band and choir.

If you only direct two 6th or 7th grade ensembles, you are finished and may select Submit.
If you direct more than two 6th or 7th grade ensemble, please continue.

APPENDIX B

Benchmark Tests

6th Grade Music Literacy Benchmark Test #1

Identify the following music symbols by naming it on the blank provided.

1.  _____
2.  _____
3.  _____
4.  _____
5.  _____

Describe the following notes by labeling how many beats it gets in the blank.

1.  _____
2.  _____
3.  _____
4.  _____
5.  _____

Answer the following questions by circling the correct answer.

1. What tells how many beats are in each measure?

   a. beat b. treble clef

   c. rhythm d. time signature

2. What do you call how fast or slow a piece of music is played?

   a. harmony b. tempo

   c. dynamics d. melody

3. What is the degree of loudness or softness in music?

   a. texture b. form

   c. dynamics d. tone color

4. When you are playing/singing in a staccato style, you are playing/singing...

   a. smoothly b. strongly with accents

   c. short and snappy d. forcefully

5. When you are playing/singing in a legato style, you are playing/singing...

   a. short and snappy b. strong and accented

   c. smoothly d. slowly

Using your preferred counting system method, write in the rhythmic counts below each note in each measure.

Using absolute pitch names or solfege syllables, write in the pitch name below each note in each measure.

Treble

Or

Bass

7th Grade Music Literacy Benchmark Test #1

Identify the following music symbols by naming it on the blank provided.

1.  _____
2. pp _____
3.  _____
4. ff _____
5. rit. _____

Describe the following notes by labeling how many beats it gets in the blank.

1.  _____
2. _____
3.  _____
4.  _____
5.  _____

Answer the following questions by circling the correct answer.

1. What tells how many beats are in each measure?

   a. beat b. treble clef

   c. rhythm d. time signature

2. What do you call how fast or slow a piece of music is played?

   a. harmony b. tempo

   c. dynamics d. melody

3. What is the degree of loudness or softness in music?

   a. texture b. form

   c. dynamics d. tone color

4. When you are playing/singing in a staccato style, you are playing/singing...

   a. smoothly b. strongly with accents

   c. short and snappy d. forcefully

5. When you are playing/singing in a legato style, you are playing/singing...

   a. short and snappy b. strong and accented

   c. smoothly d. slowly

Using your preferred counting system method, write in the rhythmic counts below each note in each measure.

Using absolute pitch names or solfege syllables, write in the pitch name below each note in each measure.

Treble

Or

Bass