

Fifth Biennial Colloquium for Instrumental Music Teacher Educators

POSTER PRESENTATION – 2013

A National Survey of High School Principal Perceptions and Opinions of Large Ensembles in the Secondary Music Curriculum

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As the ways in which our society experiences music continue to change, the relevance of traditional large ensembles (i.e., band, choir, orchestra) in the secondary music curriculum has been questioned from within our field of music education. Williams (2007) suggested that, in the face of these changes, traditional large group performance may not be the best goal of music education. Kratus (2007) questioned the relevance of traditional school music ensembles and their literature as he cited large declines in school music participation in California and Canada. Williams (2011) noted that, although nearly all teenagers find pleasure in music, the majority are not involved in traditional school music ensembles. Further, he contended that “the elephant in the room” may be the fact that the model of the large performance ensemble as a primary means of school music education has remained relatively unchanged since the early 1900s. Are traditional large school music ensembles in jeopardy?

As a continuation of previous work presented by these authors in national venues (IMTE, SMTE, MENC/NAfME) regarding reform and innovation in traditional K-12 large ensemble instruction, this poster will address results of a recent (Fall 2012) national survey of high school principals. Because high school principals are potential supporters of school music programs and make decision regarding them, the researchers sought their perceptions and opinions about the relevance of traditional large high school music ensembles. Of those who responded, approximately 90% reported that their schools offered band, 80% choir, and 30% orchestra. The survey asked principals to indicate primary purposes of traditional large school ensembles, whether or not they expected their large ensembles to participate in competitive events, and the level of importance of any competitive events results. Other survey items targeted evaluation processes for the traditional large ensemble music instructor.

References

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