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## **Musical Explorations in Creation and Performance: A School's Alternative Approach to Music Education**

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MUSICAL EXPLORATIONS IN CREATION AND PERFORMANCE: A SCHOOL'S  
ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO MUSIC EDUCATION

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Music

in

The School of Music

by

LaTerence E. Varnado

B. M. E., University of Southern Mississippi, 2013

May 2015

To my family

To my late grandparents

To all educators, present and future

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Abstract**

Students have various opportunities to participate in school music. The large ensemble model that follows the Western Classical music tradition is the most commonly used model for music education in secondary schools; however, many students in secondary schools do not participate in school music. Recently, alternative approaches (i.e. popular music, world music, guitar, etc.) have been proposed as valuable music experiences that may increase student participation in school music. The aim of this study was to examine the philosophical foundations and pedagogical practices used at a secondary school that has implemented alternative approaches. I also explored student experiences with these courses and the perceived values, benefits, and challenges of participation from both student and teacher perspectives. Ethnographic data collection strategies were used with songwriting and guitar classes in order to address the research questions. Analysis of observations, interview transcripts, and material culture revealed that the courses were grounded in the instructor's philosophy of student inclusivity and advocacy. The learning outcomes and pedagogical practices were connected to this philosophy and aligned with the National Standards. Students were motivated by curiosity and instructor effectiveness, and they were enthusiastic about the courses. Benefits included the fostering of creativity, critical listening, musical independence, and collaboration. Challenges included technical mastery of the guitar and working through the creative process. These findings suggest that alternative music approaches have many benefits for students. The results of this study were used to create a theoretical framework for practitioner use.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Rationale**

Music in school is not at all a new concept. For quite a long time, students have been learning and participating in music under the tutelage of a trained musician, educator, or musician-educator. Even today, students are presented with various opportunities to participate in school music. In secondary schools, these opportunities most often come in the form of band, choir, and/or orchestra (Abril & Gault, 2008). Although these opportunities are available to many students, it seems that many of them are opting to not participate in music in schools. According to research by Elpus and Abril (2011), only 21% of high school seniors participated in school music. Additionally, the majority of these students were high-achieving (average GPA = 3.95) Caucasian students from two-parent homes. This, however, is not reflective of the ethnically and socioeconomically diverse student population in many secondary schools. The lack of participation among secondary school students does not seem to be caused by a lack of music courses. Results of research by Abril and Gault (2008) suggested that 98% of 541 junior high and high schools surveyed offered music courses; however, only 58% of junior high and 18% of high schools had a requirement for music. At these schools, band (98%) and choir (88%) were the most common music offerings for students. The next common class types included jazz/rock, general music, orchestra, and theory. The least common courses included guitar, piano, technology, composition, musical theater, and various non-traditional ensembles. Lack of course diversity or lack of music classes at all, at both levels, was attributed to various factors including finances, scheduling, outside pressures, staffing, enrollment, students' socioeconomic status, and facilities/equipment. It seems, based on these findings, that opportunities to participate in music in secondary schools may be limited and rather narrow in scope, featuring mostly traditional ensemble experiences. Band and choir are available at most places, but other musical outlets are

less common. Though jazz has become more mainstream, it is still only offered in about half of our schools (Abril & Gault, 2008). Students who wish to study instruments that are not traditionally a part of the band or orchestra may have difficulty finding instruction or performance experience through school music classes.

This trend is not exclusive to secondary music education. A survey of students ( $N = 80$ ) at a large university in the southwestern United States revealed that 93% of time spent in university history, theory, and performance courses is with Western art music (Wang and Humphreys, 2009). Jazz/Broadway, Latin, Caribbean, and American pop is studied 7% of the time, and less than 1% is spent on non-Western and other popular music. A similar trend was also shown in results of research by Springer and Gooding (2013) who found that 86.3% of preservice music educators ( $N = 82$ ) reported taking between zero and one course on popular music, and that many students felt unprepared to teach it. Kruse (2014) also found that undergraduate music majors ( $N = 124$ ) from eight universities in the Midwest and Northeast spent the majority of their performance and listening with Western art music.

Although music is a cultural experience that has developed and evolved as the times have changed, many models of music education are centered on the classical tradition of Western European art music (WEAM). In a time when multicultural approaches are widely encouraged in the classroom, the Eurocentric model based on band, choir, and orchestra represent most of the performance mediums available to students (Abril & Gault, 2008; Wang & Humphreys, 2009). Perhaps, this narrow focus could be cited as one of the causes of limited participation in school music (Davis & Blair, 2011; Mixon, 2009; Williams, 2011). The lack of focus on other genres in university programs (Wang & Humphreys, 2009) may also contribute to this issue. If music education students do not have experience with other genres, then this may affect their

willingness and ability to include alternative music opportunities for their students when they start their careers. While there are documented examples of alternative approaches to music education and non-traditional ensembles, they are rather rare compared to their more traditional, longer established counterparts (Abril & Gault, 2008; Wang & Humphreys, 2009).

According to Reimer (2003), an aesthetic education should include all ways people interact with music and “be far more comprehensive than the narrow spectrum of school music, reflecting the realities of our multimusical culture” (p. 10-11). Popular and contemporary music are part of the current culture and, based on Reimer’s statement, deserving of some consideration and discussion in our field. While there are a number of articles related to the merits of including non-traditional ensembles in the curriculum (Byrne & Sheridan, 2000; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Westerlund, 2006; Williams, 2011) and some that discuss the implementation of such ensembles in the classroom (Okumu, 2000; Williams, 2008; Pulman, 2014), most are practitioner journal articles presenting ideas for music educators. Of the existing research articles, most are concerned with world music (Okumu, 2000; Williams, 2008), the historical development and current practice of popular music education in non-American schools (Byrne & Sheridan, 2000; Dunbar-Hall & Wemyss, 2000; Väkevä, 2006; Westerlund, 2006; Pulman, 2014), and advocacy for the inclusion of popular music in the curriculum (Allsup, 2003; Augustyniak, 2014; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Ponick, 2000; Winter, 2004; Woody & Lehmann, 2010). The research on popular music pedagogy must be expanded to include more research on philosophy and practice, so that researchers and educators may be able to explore various methods for implementation in their own programs. The aim of this research is to add to the body of knowledge on approaches with non-traditional music classes, particularly those involving alternative approaches in music. Since the existing literature mainly features articles based on

opinion rather than empirical inquiry, my intent is to provide research-based conclusions that may contribute to a continuing dialogue about the values, benefits, and challenges of including alternative learning opportunities in music education curricula.

## **Chapter 2: Review of Literature**

### **Discourses on Alternative Approaches in Music Education**

**Early discourses.** The expansion of music education to include music outside the Western Art tradition may be traced back to the 1930s. During this time, a movement for multiculturalism in music education began with the inclusion of Latin American and Eastern European folk music (Volk, 1997). After the end of World War II, there was a greater interest in multiculturalism in music education. As a result, MENC (now NAfME) began advocating for the inclusion of the American allies' folk songs and, eventually, the folk songs of 'all peoples and nations' (Volk, 1997, p. 146). A later event in the history of non-traditional approaches in music education was the Tanglewood Symposium of 1967, at which a declaration was made to include more music of all cultures, genres, periods, and styles (Campbell, 2002; Hebert & Campbell, 2000; Kruse, 2014; Mantie, 2013; Wang & Humphreys, 2009). The Tanglewood Symposium's recommendation for inclusion of more "music of the time" including popular music, avant-garde music, world music, and American Folk music (Wang & Humphreys, 2009) sparked a national push for an expansion of styles and genres in music that would be relevant to students and promote diversity in music education curricula (Campbell, 2002).

**Discourses on popular music.** Although the end of the war and the Tanglewood Symposium catalyzed discussions about the inclusion of some non-traditional genres of music, some educators and researchers had reservations about popular music in particular. Fowler (1970) stated that these genres of music (specifically rock music) were aesthetically inferior and morally damaging. He also asserted that instructional time should not be spent on "what is easily acquired in the vernacular (p. 42)." Mark (1994) expressed uncertainty about considering popular music just as highly as traditional music. He also stated his concerns about spending financial

resources and time on this genre of music. Even though Hebert and Campbell (2000) advocated for popular music in education, they also expressed concerns regarding the lack of preservice training to prepare teachers to teach in popular music and the scarcity of curricula.

Music educators also began to explore folk music and world music ensembles and approaches. Practitioners have used such ensembles to address issues of outreach, multicultural education, and cross-curricular learning experiences (Okumu, 2000; Williams, 2008). Okumu (2000) studied and conceptualized Kenyan popular guitar music, highlighting its multiple educational uses. Specifically, he discussed its relation to music history, analysis, form, theory, and performance. He also argued that education should respond to the needs of its consumers and that educators should make greater efforts to include popular music since employment opportunities in the Eurocentric tradition of music are sparse. Williams (2008) wrote about the development of a steel band in his own music program and its benefits to students and music education by providing a narrative of his experiences with this type of group. He discussed the cross-curricular benefits because the development of steel bands in the United States is tied to growth of immigration. He also stated that the inclusion of similar ensembles promotes multicultural education and attends to a wider range of students than traditional band.

Although the Tanglewood Symposium mainly resulted in more inclusion for world music and jazz, the efforts to make curricula more inclusive catalyzed discussions about popular music. As a result, educators and scholars have engaged in discourses on advocacy, teacher preparation, and implementation of alternative approaches including: popular music (blues, jazz, rock, electronic, etc.), composition, guitar, and other methods outside of the traditional large ensemble performance model. They have discussed legitimacy and methods/practices that can help music educators best implement instruction, suggesting possible benefits and challenges related to the



inclusion of non-traditional music in the curriculum (Allsup, 2003; Augustyniak, 2014; Campbell, 1995; Hebert & Campbell, 2000; Davis & Blair, 2011; Fowler, 1970; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Mantie, 2013; Mark, 1994; Ponick, 2000; Springer & Gooding, 2013; Winter, 2004; Woody & Lehmann, 2010). Some have even contributed to this body of knowledge by discussing specific types of approaches (Byrne & Sheridan, 2000; Dunbar-Hall & Wemyss, 2000; Hebert & Campbell, 2000; Väkevä, 2002; Westerlund, 2006) and ensembles (Campbell, 1995; Okumu, 2000; Pulman, 2014; Williams, 2008).

Springer and Gooding (2013) revealed a mixed view toward popular music from preservice teachers. They found that participants felt that popular music could be useful in meeting the National Standards for Music Education, but believed it was more appropriate for older students. Furthermore participants indicated that popular music was more suitable for marching band or guitar class, and least fitting in orchestra or chamber music group. Many participants stated this music could be used to motivate students because of its transferability, familiarity, and student preference; however others stated that the music's content made it inappropriate for school, it may upset parents and administrators, the arrangements were poor, and popular music lacked depth. Davis and Blair (2011) also researched the challenges of popular music curricula by observing students' experiences with the genre in a methods class. They found that although students were frustrated and confused due to lack of familiarity with the genre, they understood its validity after more experience in the genre and making connections to their more familiar classical training.

**Advocacy for popular music.** Music educators and researchers have discussed the values, challenges, and implementation of alternative approaches involving popular music in the music classroom. Mantie (2013) outlined 81 articles from American, Australian, British, and

international journals. He found that American scholars were more concerned with the legitimacy of popular music practices, trying to make a case for or against it; however, educators and researchers outside of the U.S. were more concerned with utility, finding the best ways to teach and learn popular music. He also discusses American educators and scholars' concerns, regarding popular music as a genre that is of "lower quality" than classical music. Therefore, music education outside of the United States is more involved with the inclusion of popular music. This is mostly due to the acknowledgement of its cultural relevance and the shift of focus onto how to best implement it rather than discussions of its legitimacy. He also cites that many discussions about popular music fail to differentiate between using popular music in instruction and teaching the music itself (p. 347).

There are various sources that discuss the benefits of non-traditional approaches in music education regarding student learning outcomes and individual musicianship (Allsup, 2003; Augustyniak, 2014; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Ponick, 2000; Winter, 2004; Woody & Lehmann, 2010). Ponick (2000) specifically advocated for popular music instruction because it could, as he states, be used in conjunction with other genres to address the National Standards for Music Education. Winter (2004) examined an Australian string program that utilized popular music as teaching material. He suggested that the program was useful for learning popular music because it motivated participants to become immersed in the music and that learning was enhanced when teachers utilized similar pedagogical approaches that emphasized the performance activity.

Researchers have also advocated for inclusion of popular music by discussing specific cognitive strategies and learning competencies that are associated with experiences in popular music. These competencies include ear-training, student autonomy, self-efficacy, and self-

expression (Allsup, 2003; Augustyniak, 2014; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Ponick, 2000; Winter, 2004; Woody & Lehmann, 2010). Woody and Lehmann (2010) researched students' ear playing ability in relation to their experiences with classical and vernacular music. Results implied that student musicians involved in popular music required fewer attempts to learn music by ear and used strategies that were more efficient than those of their classically trained counterparts. Other researchers have concluded that popular music experiences in music education were more conducive to student-autonomy, peer-directed learning and self-efficacy (Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007). Augustyniak (2014) examined how students used formal and informal strategies, styles and situations while improvising and composing. Results indicated that technology and auditory memory enhanced these processes. It was also noted that experiences with garage band and other "shared learning" opportunities affect students' strategies for thinking and learning about music in and out of the classroom.

Allsup (2003, 2011) proposed that popular music study promotes self-expression, musical autonomy, and enhances creativity. He also advocated for the use of informal learning practices within a formal educational context. He stated that it fosters collaborative and student-centered music learning processes that can be used in various music classroom settings. Green (2006) also discussed popular music education and its benefits. She stated that popular music and informal methods enhance the authenticity of musical experiences. Green also proposed that popular music may be conducive to musical and personal autonomy and cites how the use of informal methods can improve students' listening skills. Finally, Hall (2015) discussed the importance of group learning in popular music ensembles. He suggested that instruction in popular music provides collaborative, creative tasks within performance scenarios and an environment in which students feel safe with experimentation. Hall also noted that this focus on collaboration and

experimentation may encourage divergent thinking. By encouraging students to take part in the creative actions associated with popular music (writing, arranging, trial-and-error, improvisation, group collaboration), students become more adept at quick problem solving, collaboration, and other thinking skills that are necessary for employment in the popular music industry.

Adolescents seem to be more engaged while listening to and performing popular music than classical music, and this seems to be affected by self-gratification and media pressure (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000; Walker, 2005). Following this notion, researchers and scholars have discussed the benefits of non-traditional music from the perspective of social and cultural relevance, advocacy, and outreach for music education (Davis & Blair, 2011; Mixon, 2009; Williams, 2011). Williams (2011) argued that performance mediums in music education have remained largely unchanged since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and that the large ensemble model is outdated. He then cites this as the reason for low participation rates in music among high school students. Contemporary, alternative approaches in music education were proposed as the fix for this problem. He cited that similar initiatives in Scottish schools have increased overall participation in school music (Byrne and Sheridan, 2000). Mixon (2009) also discussed the use of specialized and alternative ensembles that are reflective of students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds. He suggests that these groups, called "culturally responsive ensembles," (p. 71) are essential in increasing ethnic diversity in the music classrooms. He argues that specialized and alternative ensembles along with traditional ensembles will reach the widest range of students and establish connections with parents, community members, and administrators because they respond favorably to music that is meaningful to them.

**Non-traditional ensembles.** While band, choir, and orchestra are the "big three" of performing ensembles in many schools, educators and researchers have explored approaches

involving alternative ensembles (Byrne & Sheridan, 2000; Campbell, 1995; Hebert & Campbell, 2000; Pulman, 2014; Seifried, 2006). Additionally, the National Association for Music Education has deemed the non-traditional music ensemble an important enough emerging trend to designate the Council for IN-ovation as a body “dedicated to innovative ideas in all areas of music education, including emerging ensembles (i.e. world and popular music) and digital media” (National Association for Music Education, 2015). These scholars and organizations have yielded a body of work on popular music ensembles that provides models and approaches for teaching these ensembles, potential benefits to students, and the influence of these approaches on music education.

The body of research in popular music pedagogy in Western Europe, Scandinavia, and Australia explores the historical development of these pedagogical approaches and the overall benefits to music education (Byrne & Sheridan, 2000; Dunbar-Hall & Wemyss, 2000; Pulman, 2014; Väkevä, 2002; Westerlund, 2006). The history of popular music pedagogy and its effect on music education in Australia was outlined by Dunbar-Hall and Wemyss (2000). They discussed introduction of popular music into the curriculum in the 1970s and the challenges faced by educators. They stated that traditional practices were ineffective. Since most popular musicians do not use it, traditional music notation was not as important to teaching and learning popular styles of music. They also indicated that this music was important for multicultural music education because various popular styles have links to “specific ethnicities, ideologies, religions, and sexualities” (p. 26–27).

Byrne and Sheridan (2000) explored the inclusion of rock music in the music curriculum of Scottish secondary schools. Rock music was introduced to the curriculum in Scottish schools during the 1980s originally as a method of outreach to students who were “less talented”

regarding the Eurocentric, classical tradition. This change, which included alternative teaching methods, prompted the inclusion of a wider range of instruments and musical styles. As a result, there was a significant increase in the number of students studying music at secondary schools and of students who wanted to pursue music at the university level.

Väkevä (2002) researched the history of popular music pedagogy in Finnish schools and discussed current trends in music education. She writes that popular music is largely accepted in the educational curriculum and the movement to include it started in the upper secondary schools. Specialized subject teachers in pop, rock, jazz, and Latin music have been involved in Finnish music education since the 1970s. She states that popular music is still included in the schools but is growing more rapidly in the professional schools of music. She also states that pop music pedagogy has expanded to include newer genres such as hip-hop, techno, and electronica.

Westerlund (2006) has also examined popular music in Finnish music education by observing the practices of “garage” rock bands. She argues that the informal practices used by rock bands may serve as a pedagogical model for popular music education. The researcher argued that the use of modeling, imitation, and peer-directed learning developed knowledge-building communities and musical expertise in formal music education. She further suggested that music education should become more “multimusical” (p. 123), and that this might be accomplished by bringing in teachers with different types of expertise, altering the criteria for entrance in music teacher education programs to include performances of any genre, including relevant courses in university curricula, increasing technological facilities in schools, and changing negative attitudes towards this music among classical performers and teachers.

Research by Seifried (2006) examined the influence of rock and popular music courses on secondary music education programs. He interviewed students ( $N = 14$ ) enrolled in beginner

and intermediate guitar courses at a secondary school. Results of these interviews revealed that students perceived various benefits and values related to their participation in guitar courses. Analysis of student interviews showed that they felt that guitar courses provided new musical experiences with more relevant “real-world” applications. Responses also revealed that pop guitar classes saw music as a form of self-expression that reflected their life experiences and that music was useful for bringing people together and building a group identity. Based on these conclusions, rock and pop music seem to benefit students through collaborative learning, musical and personal growth and self-expression, and it allows students to participate in an authentic experience that is relevant to them. It also motivates students by providing them with a new and valuable music learning experience.

Pulman (2014) explored perceptions of instructors and students in popular music groups at various British tertiary schools. Analysis of participant responses revealed themes regarding operational mechanics of rehearsing (member selection, goals and objectives, time), rehearsing activities (development of skills and abilities, instructional activities), and group dynamics (communication, personal attributes, tension, trust) in the rehearsal. Using these themes, Pulman suggests 12 pedagogical guidelines for teachers involved in popular music education. Some of these guidelines included: informal music practices, opportunities for arranging, student-led rehearsals, recognition of individual contributions, and performance of both cover songs and original works. He also provided two pedagogical models for suggested practice: one that is based on student output (final performance) and one based on experiential concepts and self-development.

There has also been research involving rock bands in American contexts (Campbell, 1995; Hebert & Campbell, 2000). Campbell (1995) explored the musical growth of young rock

music performers. Results of these observations revealed that the rock band rehearsal established a different model of learning based on “getting” a song, playing based on a recording, analytical listening, self-evaluation, and a cooperative, compositional process. The researcher further suggests that educators and education researchers should take note of students’ music-making in and out of schools.

Hebert and Campbell (2000) advocated for the inclusion of rock band courses in American schools in their critical analysis of arguments against its inclusion. Critiquing points made by Fowler (1970), they argued that the exclusion of rock and popular music could alienate students, and that this music could be intellectually and aesthetically engaging. They also stated that lessons in rock music require young students to engage with a broader diversity of musical skills, concepts, and technologies, and broaden their understanding of music as a phenomenon that is reflective of current times. Rock music is also advocated as a music that can help students develop skills in improvisation, composition and arranging.

These studies and articles highlight specific approaches for non-traditional music education, highlighting benefits, pedagogical models, guidelines, and resources. They also explain some of the historical developments of these methods in international and American music education. Research suggests that the inclusion of popular music has many benefits. Although there has been some dissent against its inclusion (Fowler, 1970; Mark 1994), many educators have advocated in support of both popular and world music as a method of multicultural music education (Byrne & Sheridan, 2000; Davis & Blair, 2011; Mixon, 2009; Williams, 2011). Researchers have also discussed the benefit of popular music pedagogy on the development of specialized or individual musical skills (Allsup, 2003; Augustyniak, 2014; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Winter, 2004; Woody & Lehmann, 2010).



The literature has revealed positive outcomes and logical philosophical underpinnings for non-traditional methods in music education, however, specific methods and how to best implement these methods are still a matter of discussion in American and international music education. The literature has also revealed a need for additional research involving studies of specific programs and curricula, along with values, benefits and challenges, and pedagogical frameworks and models for practitioner use.

The purpose of this study was to examine a teacher's philosophy and pedagogical practices regarding the implementation of alternative approaches in music classrooms. I also examined student experiences with such classes and the perceived values, benefits, and challenges of participation from both student and teacher perspectives. The following research questions guided the study:

- What are the teacher's philosophical underpinnings for including alternative approaches in a music curriculum?
- What pedagogical approaches are employed by the teacher in this setting?
- What are students' perceptions of these courses?
- What are perceived values, benefits, and challenges of teaching and learning in these alternative music courses?

### Chapter 3: Methods

In this study, ethnographic data collection strategies were used to answer the research questions. I focused the research on a music program at a southeastern secondary school that employs alternative approaches in music education. Music classes at the “Academy of Math and Science” include both traditional and alternative music courses. A full profile of the academy including courses offered, class profiles, and course objectives is provided in Chapter 4.

#### Participants

Informants for this study included the instructor and an administrator. Twelve student participants also provided their perspectives on their experiences. This included two Songwriting students, three Guitar Performance students, Six Guitar Studies students, and one student from the Blue Notes ensemble. Profiles of the participants are shown in the Tables 1 and 2<sup>1</sup>:

Table 1: Student Participants

Student	Classification	Enrollment
Matthew	Senior	Blue Notes; orchestra; choir
Blaine	Junior	Songwriting
Mackenzie	Junior	Songwriting
Bridget	Junior	Guitar Performance; orchestra
Justin	Junior	Guitar Performance
Brittany	Junior	Guitar Performance
Deandra	Senior	Guitar Studies; orchestra; choir
Shay	Junior	Guitar Studies; Choir
Trisha	Junior	Guitar Studies; orchestra
Ashley	Junior	Guitar Studies
Tanya	Junior	Guitar Studies
Tanner	Junior	Guitar Studies

Table 2: Faculty Participants

Participant	Position
Ms. Donna	Music Instructor
Ms. Belinda	Director of Academic Affairs

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonyms have been assigned in order to protect the identities of all participants.

Ms. Donna, a National Board Certified Teacher, has been the music instructor at the Academy for the past 20 years. Prior to joining the academy she was a band director at a public school for two years. She has both an undergraduate and graduate degree in Music Education and her primary instruments are guitar and flute. She also plays guitar professionally with her own rock band that performs both original songs and covers.

### **Data Collection and Procedures**

Approval was received from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), permitting observations and interviews for the study to be conducted (See Appendix A). Data was collected through formal classroom observations (Spradley, 1980). I conducted 25 total hours of observation during the time that Ms. Donna meets with her choir, band, guitar studies (beginner guitar), guitar performance (non-beginners), and songwriting classes. Eighteen hours of in-person formal observations were taken. Of the 18 hours, five were spent with the songwriting class, five were with the guitar studies class, and five hours were spent on the guitar performance class. Also, to provide perspectives on the traditional ensembles for comparison, the orchestra class was observed for one hour and the choir class was observed for two hours. Due to challenges with traveling to the site, an additional seven hours of video with two hours of songwriting, three hours of guitar studies, and two hours of guitar performance were taken. I kept all fieldnotes from the observations in a notebook that functioned as an observation journal.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Ms. Donna, Ms. Belinda, two songwriting students, three advanced guitar students, six beginner guitar students, and one student who participated in the popular music ensemble in the previous semester (Spradley, 1979; Fontana and Frey, 1994). The format of the interviews was flexible, allowing me to pursue aspects that had not been considered during the initial development of the protocol, and allowing

better exploration of the guiding questions. Ms. Donna and Ms. Belinda were asked about the implementation of courses at the academy and the role of the music curriculum in the lives of students. Ms. Donna was also asked to discuss her educational philosophy and the manner in which it guided her pedagogy. Students were asked about their reasons for choosing to participate in the music courses, their future plans with music, and how the alternative music classes compare and contrast with other music classes that they may have taken. All participants were asked about perceived values, benefits, and challenges associated with the music classes. The complete interview protocols are included in Appendix B. I conducted six of the interviews in person and eight interviews using the Facetime function of an iPhone 4. The in-person interviews were recorded using an iPhone 4, and the other interviews were recorded using an electronic voice recorder.

Material culture was collected in the form of course syllabi (see Appendices C, D, and E). The syllabi outlined course goals, objectives, and learning outcomes. It also highlighted modes of assessment in the course along with Ms. Donna's policies for conduct and attendance. Lastly, a copy of the guidelines for the final project in songwriting (see Appendix F) showed one of the activities associated with this course and the parameters under which students worked.

## **Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed by hand and then saved on a password-protected laptop. Accounts from all observations were analyzed for patterns regarding student behaviors, teacher pedagogy and philosophy, and perceptions of the courses. The full data set was subjected to open and closed coding (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 2011) guided by the research questions, and six themes emerged.

Member checking was performed to reinforce validity and accuracy of the data.

Transcripts of interviews were sent to the informants so that they could ensure accurate portrayal of their thoughts and perspectives. Triangulation was achieved through a comparison among data sources (fieldnotes, formal classroom observations, interview transcripts and material culture in the form of lesson plans, assignments, and syllabi). Through these methods, I was able to create an interpretive representation of these alternative approaches, exploring the underlying philosophical and pedagogical foundations of these courses. I was also able to examine the benefits and challenges for participants, using the conclusions to create a theoretical framework for use in pedagogical practice.

## **Chapter 4: Music at the Academy: Curriculum, Philosophy, and Pedagogy**

This chapter provides a profile of The Academy and its music curriculum. A summary of all music courses is also included, and philosophy and pedagogy are addressed. The emergent themes discussed in this chapter include: Outreach, Inclusivity, and Advocacy; Learning Outcomes of Alternative Approaches, and Pedagogical Practices.

### **Site and Context**

**The school.** The “Academy of Math and Science” is a magnet school in the southeastern United States for high school juniors and seniors interested in pursuing careers in fields such as science, engineering, medicine. The students who attend the academy are selected from schools all throughout the state in which it is located. The school itself is housed on the campus of a small, public university, and students live on the campus as well.

The curriculum is heavily focused on STEM subjects (science, engineering, technology, and mathematics), but there are numerous opportunities for students to participate in the arts. All music at the academy is handled by the director of performing arts/music instructor at the academy, “Ms. Donna.” The curriculum offers various courses with different opportunities for performing and creating music, and her teaching practices are informed by research, scholarly writings, textbooks, and professional development workshops. A table that provides an overview of these courses is provided at the end of this section in Table 3.

Traditional music courses at the Academy include a performance-oriented choir class of six singers that meets after school for two hours, two days per week (Tuesday and Thursday). Additionally, there is a large instrumental ensemble class called Orchestra. Because of the small student population and scheduling, this course does not have standard orchestral instrumentation. Rather, any student who wants to play in an instrumental ensemble may participate. The

ensemble includes 21 players and the instrumentation featured violins, flutes, trumpets, saxophones, clarinets, percussionists, hornists, a pianist, and guitarists. The class meets for 55 minutes during school, two days per week (Tuesday and Thursday).

In addition to these more traditional courses, Ms. Donna teaches two guitar courses and a songwriting course. “Guitar Studies” is a class for novice or beginner students aimed at developing technical skill, mastery, and music reading through performance. The class meets three days per week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) for 55 minutes during the school day and were six students enrolled. “Guitar Performance” is designed as a continuation for students who have completed the beginner course and as a course for more experienced students. There were three students in this class, and they met three days per week (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday) for 55 minutes during the school day. The objectives of this course are the same as Guitar Studies, but aim for a higher level of mastery from the students. Students use a method book to learn the instrument, but the course explores multiple music genres in which the guitar is commonly used (blues, jazz, rock, classical).

The songwriting course introduces students to basic principles of theory regarding chord progressions, harmony, and melodies, and allows them to apply these skills to compose their own songs. They are also exposed to music technology in the form of recording and editing software and they discuss trends in the music industry and currently popular music. There were two students enrolled in this course, and the class meets two days per week (Tuesday and Thursday) for one and a half hours during the school day. Although music experience is highly encouraged before taking songwriting, it is not a prerequisite for participation in the either of the guitar or the songwriting courses at the academy.

Lastly, Ms. Donna uses students enrolled in the guitar, choral, and instrumental facets of her program to form a popular music performance ensemble, the “Blue Notes.” This group performs covers of blues and jazz standards involving vocal performances with instrumental accompaniment. They rehearse after school and participate in authentic performance opportunities in the form of a tour. In the fall semester, they travel to three or four cities across a region of their home state and perform in public parks, along a street, or at special events.

Table 3: Music Courses at the Academy

	Meeting Days	Duration	Enrollment (number of students)	Features
Choir	Tuesday and Thursday	Two hours	6	Performance focus
Orchestra	Tuesday and Thursday	55 minutes	21	Performance focus; experience required
Guitar Studies	Monday, Wednesday, and Friday	55 minutes	6	Novice/beginners; Mastery of the instrument; No experience required.
Guitar Performance	Monday, Wednesday, and Friday	55 minutes	3	Intermediate/Advanced Continuation of Guitar Studies; Music literacy required
Songwriting	Tuesday and Thursday	One hour, 30 minutes	2	Theory and composition of original song; experience encouraged but not required

### **Philosophical Foundations: Inclusivity and Advocacy**

This section outlines philosophical underpinnings for the Academy’s alternative music courses. The themes discussed here outline Ms. Donna’s educational philosophy and her reasons for including alternative courses in her curriculum.



**Inclusivity: Increased participation in music.** Knowing that popular music is an integral part of American musical culture, Ms. Donna includes classes geared toward the performance of popular genres. As noted in previous research (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000; Walker, 2005), adolescents are highly engaged while listening to and performing popular music partly because of its large media presence. Because it is more relevant and relatable to her target age group, she can use popular music as way to pique more students' interests and pull them into the music program. Ms. Donna believes popular music courses should become a part of traditional music education and states that it is a genre of music that can be studied on its own in the curriculum. Although this is an important facet of her educational values, using popular music for increased participation and inclusivity was a central tenet of her philosophy. She stated that one of the goals of the music program is to expose as many students in the Academy to music as she possibly can. This action is motivated by her philosophy that all students should be afforded an opportunity to have a meaningful music experience. Her goals are stated in this excerpt from her interview:

I wanted an opportunity here for the students... Another one other than the traditional methods most students get in their education, public education, private education or whatever. But typically most students have the option of choir or they have the option of band. Some schools are fortunate enough to have strings or orchestra. But this would be another way to reach children and to provide music education to students who are interested in something else.

Later in her interview, she discussed how this goal ties in to her educational philosophy and fuels her desire for more student outreach and participation:

So, how does that affect what I do? I think that's what drives me to want to reach more and more students, and that's what drives me, even with these students who are taking instruments that are considered not as sophisticated as a band instrument or something like that... So, I think that's what drives me to reach more and more of my students and come up with these other courses that I can grab these other students who missed the band boat, the choir, the orchestra boat for whatever reason and I know in our state many times, it's because they're

gifted. They have to choose between taking the gifted program and being in the music program. For others, it's athletics. They can't do both. Those elective courses are, a lot of times, taught at the same period as some of the other elective courses, and the music students or the students who are interested are forced to choose. So, I'm trying to catch those who fell through those cracks and tell them it's not too late, you know, to learn to play an instrument, to learn the language of music. That's my driving philosophy.

She also uses non-traditional courses as a way to reach students who missed the opportunity to participate in music earlier in their academic careers. As a result, she meets her goal of engendering a sense of appreciation and enthusiasm in more of the Academy's students, producing more consumers of music. This was also reflected in Ms. Belinda's (the school's administrator) interview in which she stated that Ms. Donna designs courses based on students' musical interests and curiosity in order to develop courses that will draw them to the music program.

This is also evidenced by the fact that many students become involved in other facets of the Academy's music program (e.g. band or choir) before or after participating in these courses.

Ms. Belinda discussed this occurrence in her interview:

We have some kids that want to do every music class they can do, so...they might start in guitar studies, and then there's a guitar performance class which is a higher level. Or they might go into orchestra and play the bass, because our orchestra is a very different orchestra. It's not a typical orchestra that she takes whatever instrument you play and that become part of her orchestra. We have some students that play an instrument and also sing in choir. Some of them will audit one or the other because they don't have room in their schedule for it. So, she is very open to students walking in and as long as they're willing to put the time in outside and learn the music she will allow them to perform.

Other research has also implied that the inclusion of non-traditional courses increased participation in music in secondary schools (Byrne & Sheridan 2000; Hebert and Campbell, 2000, Väkevä, 2002; Westurlund, 2006), and that popular music material is useful for motivating students to participate (Hebert & Campbell, 2000; Winter, 2004).

**Inclusivity: Accessibility for all students.** Regardless of their amount of musical experience, students are afforded an opportunity to participate in guitar and songwriting courses at the Academy. Additionally, Ms. Donna creates an environment that makes learning and participating accessible to all enrolled students. Ms. Belinda provided a profile of the academy's music students:

She gets two types of students: one that has a background that want to just continue that music study and then she gets students that have never played an instrument that come to us and think, "Hey this might be interesting!"

Students who are interested in music courses are not required to have prior music experience. Ms. Donna stated that it is encouraged, but discussed how she makes class accessible for students with little to no experience:

They did have to be able to play an instrument to be able to get through the class, but with the advent of all of these, you know, GarageBand<sup>2</sup> and the FruityLoops<sup>3</sup> and ACIDized loops<sup>4</sup>, and these programs that are out there for days for children. So, no [musical experience] is not an absolute requirement. I still prefer it. You know, I prefer that to a chord progression generator any day of the week, but if it gets them in there and it gets them thinking about it.

With technology to bridge the gaps in preparedness, students are able to fully participate in classes. She has also stated that less experienced students are encouraged to collaborate with their more experienced peers so that they can help with aspects of the course that may call for more musical knowledge. The accessibility of her classes aligns with her philosophy of wanting as many students as possible to participate in music. The classes are approachable because of her use of technology and her adaptable curriculum. This creates a more exploratory environment in the music classes, especially in songwriting, in which all students may learn. Additionally, Ms.

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<sup>2</sup>GarageBand is a software application record, edit, and create music, using keyboards, premade loops, voice recordings and instrumental effects

<sup>3</sup> FruityLoops also known as "FL Studio" is a software program used to create and edit loops, repeating sections of sound, using a pattern-based music sequencing system and prerecorded sounds and effects

<sup>4</sup> Also known as ACID loops, ACIDized loops is similar to FruityLoops. It is a technology used with the music making software originally called ACID. It uses repetition and transposition of sound clips to form a song.

Belinda noted that class offerings and objectives are not set but determined by Ms. Donna's assessment of student experience and preparedness. This experiential approach with learning outcomes determined by reflection and feedback is similar to one of the pedagogical models proposed by Pulman (2014).

**Advocacy: Ambassadorship.** Ms. Donna's efforts with outreach and accessibility are aimed at getting more students participating in school music. She hopes that, as a result, this will lead to more students at the academy leaving with musical knowledge and values. One of these values is a lifelong appreciation for music that they may transmit to others as ambassadors for music and music education. This was explained in her interview:

So, that's what I get out of that is that I have more students going out into the world with musical knowledge, and they're going to be more informed and hopefully impassioned ambassadors for music education because, you know, hopefully they'll all grow up and have children and demand more. So, you know, it's just in my opinion making the world a better place.

This builds on her philosophically-based desire for greater outreach and advocacy for music. She wants students to leave her class with a passion for music such that they will be patrons for music who can help advocate for music education and perpetuate its importance in general education.

**Advocacy: Lifelong participation.** Ms. Donna wants to instill in students a lifelong appreciation of music that inspires them to continue participating in music after they leave the Academy. Many participants (students and teacher) discussed playing music for leisure outside of class time and plans for music after graduation. When asked about continuing music as a career, secondary job, or hobby, all student participants stated that they would like to continue participating in music as a hobby. Many of their comments reinforced the claim from the following quote from Blaine's interview: "Uh, a hobby is more what I would be looking for in to

it. Because... it just seems fun and I know that I'm not the best at music. I enjoy it, and it makes me happy." Some students, like this one, cited a lack of confidence in their musical abilities as a reason for not pursuing music as a career, while some cited that it simply did not align with career goals. Since the academy mostly attracts students who are interested in STEM careers, music is generally not a part of most of its students' long-term goals. These students, however, may be in other careers that place them in a position in which they may be able to assist their local music programs. Therefore, this valuable experience in music provides them with something that gives them an appreciation for music and music education and will inspire them to be advocates or ambassadors for the field in the future.

Although, students may not pursue professional goals in music, many of them stated that they would like to continue being involved in music. For example, Blaine stated, "I don't plan on majoring in music, but I plan on playing music throughout my life." Additionally, Ms. Donna stated that she has students who have pursued music as a career. She also shared stories of students who pursue music as a secondary job or put together performing groups simply for the joy of it:

Post-college, I get students all of the time, contacting me, sending me links to their web pages of their personal music projects, you know, outside of what it is they're doing now. So, in other words, student are engineers, or they are nursing students, or they are law students, but still on the side, they're writing, recording, playing guitar. Some of them went on from guitar and switched to bass or some other instrument because they found that to me more to their liking. Had an email just the other day from a student saying, "I still blame you because I'm still writing and recording. I have a couple of band projects."

Later in a discussion, she shared names and personal stories of students who formed indie rock groups, continued with songwriting, toured as guitarists, and play "on the side," providing links to websites and pages where their music could be found. Professional musicianship is not explicitly stated as a goal of these alternative approaches; however current students want to

continue doing music after they are done with classes, and there are former students who continue to write, record, and perform even though music is not a part of their primary careers. Ms. Donna has helped them to develop a great appreciation for music, and they continue to let music take an important role in their lives as hobbies, side jobs, and careers.

### **Pedagogical Basis**

This section outlines pedagogical foundations and Ms. Donna's practices in teaching her alternative music courses. The emergent themes that are discussed here are: Learning Outcomes of Alternative Approaches and Pedagogical Practices.

**Goals and objectives.** Ms. Donna and her students cited various learning outcomes associated with this course. Ms. Donna stated, in her interview that music literacy is an important aspect of her guitar courses:

We have a system by which we communicate with each other with language: we all have to learn that. *We* have a system of symbols that we use in science and numbers and symbols in mathematics and all these other things that students are required to learn so that they can communicate through these various ways, and you know we have a set of symbols. We have a set of things and it's the language of music and my philosophy on that is that it diminishes our humanity to *not* teach our children this system of communication and deem it as important as these other systems that we have created by which we can communicate things.

She wants students to be able to read, understand, and analyze music because she feels that it is important for students to be able to do this. This is also reflected in her syllabus for guitar that emphasizes reading notation and tablature.

Ms. Donna's syllabi (see Appendices B and C) also revealed that she places emphasis on technical mastery of the guitar. This included hand position, strumming patterns, and knowledge of parts of the instrument. Students also had to learn note names and the position for all of these notes on the guitar. This was also evident during class observations. Ms. Donna often drilled students on naming notes and correlating them with a fingering or fret position on the guitar.

Additionally, Ms. Donna aimed for students to use these basic skills in performance. Playing and performing in groups and solos was an important outcome of learning in the guitar class.

The main outcome for songwriting was the composition of an original song. In order to achieve this other goals were a part of this course. These included learning basic music theory and using music technology. As reflected in the course syllabus (see Appendix D), students learned what Ms. Donna called “songwriter’s theory.” Observations showed that on initial meetings with the class, they learned about common chord progressions used in songs, form, cadences, and harmony. This was used to inform their compositions. They also had to learn about music technology. The syllabus (Appendix D) showed that students had to learn about music software, and this was evident in class meetings when they used computers, applications, and other forms of technology to create, share and record their songs.

**Theory and composition in the National Standards.** Ms. Donna stated in a conversation that her courses allow her to attend to certain National Standards that are not easily addressed in her traditional courses. Through the songwriting course, Ms. Donna is able to address the theory and composition strand of the National Core Music Standards (NAfME, 2014) in an uncommon manner. On the first day of class, students were introduced to basic theoretical elements used in popular song including form, chord progressions, and melody. They discussed how these elements were used to express mood and explain how they were used in performance. They also selected music that was meaningful to them and used it as a model for their first original songs. This is the starting point for their individual work as described by their teacher. “Their songs are their projects, so they’ll write the lyrics, they will compose the music, they will put it together, and then we will record it.” The students organize their own musical ideas into an original creation and they use teacher input along with personal criteria to refine their ideas as

they work. As they work, and upon completion, they share their songs in order to demonstrate the products of their creative process. Through this course students are able to explore other areas of music outside of performance. Moreover, this course allows Ms. Donna to address these facets of the National Core Standards through a medium that may be more conducive than the traditional ensemble setting. This is supported in research by Ponick (2000) which states that alternative approaches can be utilized to take on music standards that are not as easily addressed in traditional school music contexts, and in research that suggests involvement in popular music courses may improve skills in composition and arranging (Campbell, 1995; Hebert & Campbell, 2000).

**Guitar performance in the National Standards.** The National Standards also include a strand for guitar, keyboard, and harmonizing instruments (National Association for Music Education, 2014). The main criteria of this strand that gets addressed is the performance of varied repertoire of music, including melodies and chordal accompaniments. As noted by Ms. Donna, performance is the primary goal. “So, my pedagogical approach to that is, you know, trying to get them to learn a score and play together.” Additionally, there is a large focus on reading music, and students discuss melodic, harmonic, and structural in the music selected for performance. As Ponick (2000) discussed, alternative approaches can address the National Standards. Now that there is a separate strand devoted to guitar and other harmonizing instruments, teachers have a pedagogical model to follow. Observations and the course syllabus revealed that this program uses aspects of this strand along with the ensemble strand.

**Music technology in the National Standards.** The music technology strand of the National Core Standards (NAfME, 2014) is also addressed through the songwriting class. Most of the activities address the artistic process of Creating under this strand. Primarily through the



use of GarageBand and similar programs, students incorporate digital tools in their creative processes. Technology is also used to increase accessibility for students who are not as musically experienced. One student recalled how enjoyable it was for her to learn using the technology. She said, “Well, that computer thing's pretty cool. Um, figuring out how to work that. It's getting fun.” She enjoys using technology and is enthusiastic about being proficient with it. In relation to the National Core Standards, songwriting students use technology to generate their musical ideas and develop them into larger ideas or works. Additionally, students share and perform their songs during class, relying on peer and instructor feedback and self-reflection to improve their work over time.

**Trends in the music industry.** Ms. Donna also teaches students about trends in popular music. “Hit Songs Deconstructed” is a website that publishes quarterly reports about trends in popular music including duration, introduction, subject matter, etc.

(<http://www.hitsongsdeconstructed.com>). The reports, according to the company provide information about form, theory, subject matter, and duration of the most popular songs. Her class uses this site to tell students how to make their songs relevant in relation to the current culture. During class observation, she also told her students information about the industry including how songs would be submitted to a record label. The use of technology along with the discussions on music in the industry seem to be useful for enhancing the authenticity and applicability of the musical experience. This is consistent with findings by Green (2006) who cites an alternative approach (rock band) as conducive to the authenticity of musical experiences. It is also supported by research that suggests popular music in schools may expose to students to a broader range of musical technologies (Hebert & Campbell, 2000).

**Interpersonal skills.** An extra-musical outcome that was mentioned by all participant perspectives is the development of interpersonal skills. Because of the amount of collaborative work that occurs within the songwriting and guitar classes, students experience social growth and interpersonal skill development. Ms. Donna talked about the collaborative music community that she has fostered through her programs:

Students will seek out other students...and these students will put together little impromptu groups, and I see them jamming and playing and interacting with one another. So it opens up another whole realm of social interaction. So that's how I see it outside of my classroom, and in their everyday lives I see them doing things like that. So, opportunities to express themselves, opportunities to spur social growth and social interaction, personal relationships with others...that sort of thing.

Because the students work cooperatively, they build relationships with their peers over a common goal. Matthew also spoke on this social aspect of the music courses:

It's really fun interacting with all the other band, orchestra, and choir members, because you share a common hobby type of thing. It's really fun to like get together with people not even on choir time. But you can like group up with them. You can sing with them. You can have something in common to bond over.

They build important social skills through collaborative learning. As students work together toward this common goal, they build relationships with each other and bond with their peers. The students make individual contributions to the learning environment and grow as a community of learners. This is consistent with research that suggests alternative music courses provide collaborative tasks that promote interpersonal growth (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Campbell, 1995; Hall, 2015; Pulman, 2014; Seifried, 2006).

**Similarities to teaching in traditional settings.** The guitar students are taught to play multiple genres, usually playing rock or blues as an introduction to the course. Guitar is also different than traditional ensemble instruments because, like piano, it is a harmonizing instrument. Although this class is somewhat different in focus than a band, choir, or orchestra

course, Ms. Donna asserted that her approach to teaching guitar is quite similar to her pedagogical approach to her orchestra or choir classes. She noted, “For me beginning guitar is very much like beginning band. So those two, that approach from a pedagogical standpoint is really the same. The material isn’t the same, but the approach is the same if that makes sense.” She also stated in the interview that music reading and ensemble performance are still a primary goal of the guitar course. This also was noted by one of her guitar students who participates in orchestra. This student stated that the main difference between the two courses was the music and the class size rather than the teaching. This is also supported by data from formal observations of both classes. In both the guitar and large ensemble, Ms. Donna directs the group as they learn to read and perform scored music. She rehearses, gives direct feedback, models, and conducts the groups as they play. There are some differences in repertoire and materials, and the small class size in the guitar course is more conducive to individualized interactions with each student; however, her approach and course goals for guitar are very similar to her traditional large ensemble course.

**Individualized instruction.** Because of the size of the guitar and songwriting classes and focus on individual development, Ms. Donna tends to use more one-on-one instruction with students when they need it. In songwriting classes, she checks in with each student as they work individually on their songs and gives them feedback. Because of the small class size, she can spend long periods of instructional time listening and offering opinions on the students’ work. In guitar classes, she would allow students to work on the repertoire on their own, and check in with each person individually and provide him or her with feedback. Brittany talked about the difference in instruction between this course and orchestra: “This is a smaller class, more hands on help versus a 100-and-something person class. You can get more peer help or teacher help. In

band, they really wanted you to just learn a piece.” This student attributed the increase in personal instruction to the size of the class. Shay, Deandra, Tanner, and many of the other guitar students offered comparable comments about class size and individual instruction. Ashley stated, “Guitar class is a lot smaller. You get a lot more direct instruction. It’s more personalized to you. It’s easier to learn that way.” Because of the small class size, Ms. Donna can devote more class time to one-on-one teaching, and they feel that this facilitates learning. The students also have a bit more freedom to explore on their own with the guitar.

In songwriting, Ms. Donna could take time to listen to each student’s product and offer opinions that they can use as they continue to write. Another result of this pedagogical practice is the pacing of the courses. In songwriting, students are given benchmarks, but these goals develop during the creative process. While this is not necessarily the case in the guitar class that uses a more formal teaching model, there is still some room for individual growth and pacing while meeting course goals. Pulman (2014) proposed pedagogical models for teaching popular music that are consistent with these pedagogical practices. He suggested the use of informal learning practices, support of individual direction, reflection and ongoing feedback from peers and teacher, and guidance and sequencing from a teacher in order to achieve learning outcomes.

**Student-centered learning.** The previously mentioned individual instruction is complemented by the courses’ focus on student-centered learning. Ms. Donna makes decisions about course options and curriculum based on students’ level of preparedness. She and the academy’s administrator explained this in their interviews. In class, students have opportunities to work while the teacher acts as a facilitator without giving explicit direct instruction. In songwriting courses, students worked on recording their songs alone. They did not even want her in the room until after they were done or ran into difficulty. Furthermore, throughout the creative

process, Ms. Donna offers feedback in the form of soft suggestions rather than staunch opinions as suggested by Pulman's (2014) theoretical framework. She provides students with knowledge and skills in the beginning, but after they have been taught fundamental concepts, they are left to explore independently. At this point she does not provide a great deal of instruction outside of troubleshooting with technology or offering suggestions about students' lyrics and music. This approach also appears, at times, during her guitar classes. Sometimes, she plays the music on her own guitar to provide students with an aural model, and lets them figure out the music on their own or pick it up after repeated demonstrations- a practice outlined by Campbell (1995) as "getting" the song. The feedback about students' playing, however, is more specific. This less-involved approach fosters autonomous learning, experimentation, creativity and student self-efficacy as outlined by the results of multiple research studies (Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007).

Because increased participation is important to her, Ms. Donna makes inclusivity and advocacy her primary goal in the implementation of alternative music courses. This philosophy is the foundation of her pedagogical practices that make the class accessible for all students and allow them to learn autonomously and develop interpersonal skills. These practices are also linked to the National Core Arts Standards. Therefore, her pedagogical practices are grounded both in personal philosophy and current educational policy.

## **Chapter 5: Student Experiences: Motivation and Perceived Values, Benefits, and Challenges**

This chapter discusses students' experiences in alternative music courses at the Academy. The emergent themes that are addressed here are: Motivations to Participate, Personal and Musical Benefits, and Challenges

### **Motivations to Participate**

**Curiosity and interest.** Students heard about the courses through family (older sibling), friends, or faculty, and they were initially intrigued by the course out of curiosity. Because these alternative approaches involve courses that are outside the “normal” course offerings, many students who were enrolled simply joined because they were interested. Drawn by the idea of an enjoyable learning experience in music, they signed up for the course. Blaine explained his reasons for enrolling in his interview: “Well, I had written one song before with a lot of help from a teacher, and I thought it sounded fun! I wanted to take a music course in songwriting. Who doesn’t want to write their own song?” Mackenzie offered a similar explanation “I signed up for it a long time ago and it was on my schedule. I don’t know, I never thought about writing a song, and was like “Hey, why not?”

Additionally, Bridget gave comparable reasons for enrolling. “Well, I’ve taught myself since ninth grade. Maybe two years ago I started teaching myself and I wanted a teacher, and I wanted to play in an ensemble. So I decided to get in this class.” Student interest is based in their curiosity to explore musical creativity and performance. Their comments about this are further reflected in comments by Ms. Belinda; she stated that students join the classes simply because they think that it may be an enjoyable experience. As a result, they are highly motivated to learn and achieve in the course. This is consistent with results of research that implied that popular music is effective at intellectually and aesthetically engaging students (Hebert & Campbell,

2000) and by research that suggests students are motivated by new musical experiences (Seifried, 2006).

Students' curiosity and motivation in the courses is linked to the idea that they think it is "fun" or "cool." This, according to Ms. Donna, played a major role in the students' motivation to enroll and participate in the guitar course:

The guitar is still one of the most popular instruments in the world, so for them, that's cool, you know, to play a "cool" instrument. So for the guitar studies students, there's that sort of element... and I see them, you know, playing around campus. I see them sitting out, because we're a residential high school, I see them sitting outside of their dormitories with their guitars sitting around, just playing and I think it's neat, too.

Students perceive the guitar as a "cool" instrument. This may be due to its common use in popular music styles (rock, pop, alternative, etc.) to which they are most exposed. This notion about the instrument makes it enjoyable for them to learn and even to play or practice outside of class in the public eye.

Songwriting students also discussed this idea in relation to their reasons for signing up for the course. Blaine discussed his motivation for participating in songwriting stating, "I think that it'd be really fun just to say that I've written songs and be able to listen to 'em a few years later." He was intrigued by the idea of creating a musical product and thought that it would be "cool" to be able to say he had that experience later in life, and this was stated as his reason for choosing to take the class. Because he and the other students are so enthusiastic, they are willing to work diligently to accomplish tasks in their classes. This type of motivation and enthusiasm is reflected in research that suggested alternative approaches may motivate students to enthusiastically engage themselves in music learning activities (Winter, 2004).

When asked about their general impressions of the music classes, all student participants used the word "fun" to describe the class. They are not only learning, but being quite enthusiastic

about it. Many students offered comments about the class similar to the following: “I’ve really enjoyed the class. It’s been a lot of fun.” The frequency with which they used the word “fun” is quite telling of the student’s perception of the course. Mackenzie offered a comparable statement, saying, “It’s a lot of fun, if you make it! It doesn’t have to be fun. If you have a bad attitude it’s no fun.” Again, the buzzword is “fun.” It was a prevalent word when students described their experiences in class. This is also evident in class observations. Students remain actively engaged in class. Even during difficult tasks, students are excitedly participating, and are even more motivated after overcoming them. Reflecting results of research by Winter (2004), students in these alternative courses are prone to be highly enthusiastic about learning and participating in class.

**Teacher effectiveness: A means for external motivation and success.** The students and the administrator attributed success and enthusiasm in the class to Ms. Donna. Many of the participants lauded her as the reason that students enjoyed the class and were able to be successful. Many of the students simply believe that she is a great teacher who has been highly effective. Tanner offered the following perspective:

I have absolutely enjoyed every moment. The instructor is amazing, she almost won a Grammy. Music is fun and guitar is a fun instrument to play. All those thing together make the class very enjoyable...The class is not so much about the guitar, but the instructor. It all depends on her, how successful it would be. I could be really good, but without a good instructor I couldn’t learn anything. I could be really bad and a good instructor could make me more successful.

Tanner attributes his learning almost entirely to the teacher and thinks she is a highly competent instructor who is responsible for student success. Many other students offered general comments of approval about their teacher. Deandra stated, “Ms. Donna is a good teacher and she actually pays attention to you and tries to make you become better,” while Tanya said, “She makes it really fun, and makes it like a smooth natural process. Picking up the guitar is not the



easiest thing...she finds ways to make it work for you individually.” Some students simply stated that she was a “good” or “fun” teacher. Students have a great deal of confidence in her effectiveness as a teacher; therefore, they are motivated to participate and are confident in their potential to achieve.

This is also supported by comments by Ms. Belinda. She went as far as to credit the success of the program almost entirely to the teacher:

I've been involved with the music program here even before I became an administrator here, and I think we have a very unique opportunity for students at The Academy as far as music goes. I think that is 95% because of Ms. Donna and what she brings to that program... because [...] she's been here long enough that she's been able to shape that program. It's not stagnant by any means because she's been here so long. She keeps changing it and if she only has a few students in a class, she figures out how she can get more kids in that class by changing the time of the class or whatever she can do to make it work for students. She's going to make it work. So, part of the success of our music department is because of her.

According to the administrator, the instructor is the primary vehicle for the music program's success. Like the students, she believes that the instructor is a highly competent individual who has put forth a tremendous effort to reach out to students, make the courses accessible, and ensure student achievement.

### **Personal and Musical Benefits**

**Music as an expressive tool.** Many participants discussed songwriting students' use of music as a form of self-expression. They use music as a vehicle to convey feelings, emotions, and thoughts. This was shown in class observations; the first assignment was to use a song that “speaks to them” as a framework. They had to take this song and rewrite it using different words to convey a similar or opposite meaning. By using a preexisting song that expressed their feelings, they were able to create a new work that conveyed their thoughts. The class's expressive concepts were also discussed by Ms. Donna:

Students are seeking ways, a lot of times, to express themselves in other ways, and these nontraditional forms of delivering music education allows for that. I'm certainly not suggesting that the traditional courses do not...I think having that way to write a song or write down something they're feeling, or pick up a new instrument, that's exciting for them.

According to her, the students seek outlet for self-expression. The songwriting courses allow students to do this through musical creativity, and she also suggests that guitar courses, along with the traditional courses, provide an expressive opportunity through performance. This was all succinctly stated by Mackenzie: "It's really fun. I get to write what I feel!"

Because of the course's focus on creativity, students are allowed to create music based on what they feel or think. As a result, they have a vehicle for self-expression coupled with a means of learning music in a different, accessible manner. This is consistent with the results of studies that cite popular music courses may promote self-expression and creativity (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Hall, 2015; Seifried, 2006).

**Stress relief.** A majority of participants, including students, Ms. Belinda, and Ms. Donna stated that the music courses provided a form of stress relief. Students described it as a "break" from the normal classes, while the school's administrator stated that it was a cathartic creative outlet for the students. Bridget offered, "Because it's like no tests. Well, the tests are the performances and it's not really a lot of pressure like the rest of my classes. So this is just something that's fun." She attributes the low stress of the class to the lack of high-pressure summative assessments. The students are given authentic performance opportunities (Green, 2006) that serve as their assessments. This is also evident from class observations. Many of the students seemed to be relatively relaxed in class, and Ms. Donna's easygoing classroom climate and patience created a low-pressure environment. As a result, the students do not feel as much stress in this course. This in turn makes it a class that reduces students' anxiety levels.

**Promoting creativity.** Ms. Donna's pedagogical practices in songwriting are highly effective for fostering creativity within her students. The course's emphasis on composition and creation of music allows students to experiment with musical ideas. They are allowed to develop their artistic thoughts independently with some support from their teacher, and as a result, are given complete artistic freedom with their work. Mackenzie discussed this in her interview:

There's a lot of room to run...and she kinda gives us some tips and advice and guidelines and stuff, but the other day was like, "Well you're not here to please me. It's your song, do whatever."

The generation and development of musical ideas is placed almost entirely in students' hands. As she stated Ms. Donna provides students with a framework for carrying out their tasks. She may offer suggestions or recommendations; however, the students' works are ultimately "for them."

Students also discussed this as an alternative to performing pre-composed music, feeling that songwriting offered a different approach to music-making. Blaine discussed this difference in his interview:

It's just a different type of learning. Having to learn how to create and construct a song instead of learning to play a song. You take everything you've learned and just, kind of, put it all together, and hope you get something that sounds good.

According to him, the main benefit of the songwriting course was its focus on creating rather than playing music. It is also implied that students may perceive writing songs as more creative than performing music as well. Rather than performing off of another's ideas, they use their own thoughts to create musical ideas for their performances. This focus on creativity is consistent with results of research that state popular music courses are beneficial to students because they promote individual creativity (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Hall, 2015). This also aligns with the pedagogical model proposed by Pulman (2014) that focuses on creative ownership, development of intellectual property, and making original songs.

**Fostering musical independence and collaboration.** Because Ms. Donna takes on the role of a facilitator in her courses and songwriting students are focused on personal creative tasks, the classroom environment is conducive to independent learning. Students are often presented with opportunities to develop their musical skills with limited instruction; Ms. Donna guides them, while letting them find answers autonomously. As mentioned in an earlier interview quote with a songwriting student, Ms. Donna provides students with “a lot of room to run,” allowing them to make creative decisions and learn, in this case, by trial-and-error. This is also shown in her guitar classes. Demonstrations by rote are often used to provide aural models, and she then allows students to “get” the music through independent practice with guidance.

While students learn autonomously, they are also presented with opportunities for collaborative learning. Students with varied levels of experience may work together in order to compensate for differences in skill levels. They also collaborate in order to complete assignments and learning tasks. Matthew reflected on this in his interview stating that a benefit of the class was, “...the enthusiasm for music and development of growing as a group of musicians... a group of music performers. We can all play together.” He cited collaborative learning as a benefit of the class that contributes to student growth. Ms. Belinda also discusses the benefits of collaborative learning in music classes:

She teaches them, if they do guitar performance especially, you know, you learn stage presence with that because she makes you perform that. That's part of that class. It might be performing with other people, so it's working in a team type setting to get a piece to be polished enough to be presentable. And it might be doing something on your own again it's out of your comfort zone because we have a lot of very introverted students.

She stated that students work together in order to achieve a common goal, and that the collaborative experience promotes social growth as well.

Besides the social benefits of collaboration, peer-directed learning is also discussed as a part of the collaborative process. Ms. Donna provided more insight into this in her interview:

Right, anybody can take the class. It [prior musical experience] is advised and recommended, but it is not a prerequisite because I do allow them to collaborate in the class. You know, some students don't- I will allow them to collaborate with other students in the class, and also maybe piano players or guitar player outside of the class. I tell them, "It's okay, you know, for you to collaborate if you wanna work with someone else."

Since some students may be less musically experienced, she promotes collaboration with other music students in order to make up for the difference in levels of preparedness. This is also shown in classroom observations. When songwriting students showed their progress, she often asked for student input or opinions about the work. This is consistent with the framework and teaching model suggested by Pulman (2014) that focuses on informal learning practices, individual contributions, shared experiences, and peer feedback. This is also reflected in research that discusses independent and collaborative learning as a benefit of popular and alternative music courses (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Campbell, 1995; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Seifreid, 2006).

**Critical listening skills.** Songwriting students who learned about the composition and arrangement of popular songs discussed how it affects their everyday listening. They implied that they had started to develop into more critical listeners who take more notice of a song's musical elements. Blaine described this in his interview:

Basically the whole music industry, a lot of is just marketing. It makes me realize why people write songs like that. They wrote that song to make money. Meanwhile, these other people wrote it because they wanted to have fun. Just kind of analyze the music industry.

He claimed that he has attained a better understanding of commercialized music and the reasons a song may be written a particular way. He also claimed to be able to discern a song that was written for marketability from a song that was written for more artistic or personal purposes.

Mackenzie had a different take on her listening experiences, saying, “Like, when I was listening to music, I was like, ‘Oh, that’s strophic!’ But for the most part, that kind of stuff, I’ve just noticed before. Just picked up on it.” As a result of participating in the course, she understands musical forms that are used in songs, and can identify them when she listens to music. This, according to her, has affected the way she listens to music in and out of the classroom. These occurrences of improved listening skills are also evident from classroom observations. In the first days, students did a great deal of listening, along with discussions about form and chord progressions. This is consistent with research that suggests participation in alternative music methods improves aural skills (Woody & Lehmann, 2010), affects the way students think and learn about music in and out of class (Augustyniak, 2014), and introduces them to a wider range of musical concepts and ideas (Hebert & Campbell, 2000).

## **Challenges**

**Mastering a new instrument.** Trisha concisely summarized the difficulties faced specifically by guitar students: “In guitar it’s doing the baby steps. Learning all over.” They dealt with challenges related to developing skills with the instrument. The most commonly cited challenges dealt with learning proper technique and learning to read the music. Trisha discussed her difficulties with developing her technical abilities saying, “The finger movements, the chords are most challenging for me. Other than that, it’s pretty simple because I read music already. So, it’s just the finger movement for me.” Although her prior experience gives her an advantage on reading, she faced challenges related to finger dexterity while trying to master the instrument.

Deandra discussed similar challenges stating that her fingers had to get accustomed to hitting multiple strings on the instrument, and Justin also explained his biggest challenge as, “getting my hands to work right.”

Students also discussed challenges related to learning how to read music to be performed. In her interview, Tanya said that the biggest challenge was, “learning all the technical stuff about music: notes, time and key signatures.” For many students, especially novice musicians in the Guitar Studies course, there was an added challenge of learning to read music while mastering the instrument itself. They often struggled in processing how to read a note then apply it to a fingering on the instrument. There were also students who already played an instrument that struggled reading music in an unfamiliar clef. As Tanya stated, “I really didn’t know how to read music. Bass clef is not easy. I’m proud to say I am able to read music and interpret chords and notes.” Although reading music presented a challenge, students were proud to overcome it and acquired a skill that was mentioned when Ms. Donna discussed her philosophy. These challenges were noted in observations as well. In the earlier stages of the course, Ms. Donna often intervened to correct inaccurate rhythms and notes. She also had to employ teaching strategies that involved students quickly identifying note names, frets, and finger positions while reading music.

**Little input from the instructor.** Students often performed learning tasks without a great deal of direct instruction from their instructor. Often, she left students to their own devices and did not intervene until they needed assistance or asked for help. In an interview, a songwriting student stated that they were given guidelines and advice, but when it came to actually writing the song, Ms. Donna mainly leaves the students to their own devices. This was apparent during class observations. When students began to work on recording their work, they

were left alone in the studio. They did not even want her to be present until after they were done or ran into technical difficulties. As a result, they had to become more autonomous, efficient learners. This is corroborated by a body of research that suggests that non-traditional courses present students with independent learning challenges (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007). It also consistent with aspects of the Pulman's (2014) pedagogical model concerning informal teaching methods, self-development, and individually determined creative choices with some teacher guidance.

**Taking risks through experimentation.** Students also had to learn how to step out of their comfort zones and experiment with musical ideas. They were also faced with the challenges of completing a task through trial-and-error, which may have been particularly difficult for students wanting to attain a high achievement level. This is shown in class observations when students are composing lyrics in songwriting. They have to try different words or use synonymous terms in order to make the lyrics fit a musical idea, or change the music to fit a lyric. They also had to be open to the idea that they may not achieve desired results immediately. An excerpt from an interview with Ms. Belinda explained this in more detail:

They're having to learn how to write and have to express themselves through poetry or through some kind of prose that is different. It's a little bit out of their comfort zone. So, I think it stretches our students. Because most of those kids are very, you know they're gifted kids, so they're used to the rigors of a traditional class but not necessarily the rigors of a music class... because they just want to be able to get up there to do it and do it well. And this stretches them because they're not good at this sometimes and they think that's easy until they start doing it. And so, it stretches them which I think is wonderful.

She explained that many students are not accustomed to having to deal with creative difficulties, and other challenges associated with music. Students are presented with a type of challenge that is different than what they experience in their non-music courses. Those who want to quickly present a quality product are especially challenged because of the amount of effort they have to



put into completing the task. Songwriting students, in particular, are stretched to experiment with music and with lyrics through repeated trials. Ms. Belinda views this as both a challenge and a benefit to the students. This is consistent with research that cites creative challenges as an integral part of alternative music approaches (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Campbell, 1995; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Pulman, 2014).

**The creative process.** Students noted the difficulties of the creative process. In particular, they found one of the greatest challenges to be associated with the selection, organization, and self-assessment of their musical ideas. Mackenzie explained this challenge as follows:

Oh my gosh! The hardest part is just deciding, because you have all this stuff going on in your head at one time, and you can only pick one. And it's just... it's hard. And then you think about stuff and you're like, "ooh yeah!" and then you forget what it was. So you're like, "aww man!" It happens all the time.

She stated she experiences difficulty organizing her thoughts and determining which of her ideas fit best. Blaine offered a similar account in his interview:

Just creativity and learning how to think of something to help better your song. You're stumped. Just trying to get over that, uh... writer's block, if you will. You're not always gonna come up with a song that's gonna sound good or have any musical theory to it...It's just, yeah. Just gotta take your ideas and learn how to expand amongst them.

Forming musical and lyrical ideas into cohesive thoughts proves to be a challenge for him. As stated by Ms. Belinda in an earlier quote, this is not always an easily accomplished task. Sometimes, students may be stymied while trying to develop their ideas, and they have to independently organize or revise their thoughts in order to come up with a product. This is reflected in results of research that discuss the creative challenges and expansion of ideas associated with alternative music education (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Campbell, 1995; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Hebert & Campbell, 2000; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Pulman, 2014).

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

### **Philosophical Underpinnings**

The first research question focused on teacher philosophy and her reason for using alternative approaches in her music curriculum. Elliott and Silverman (2015) define philosophy as a “process of formulating reasons, supplying evidence, and drawing logical conclusions” (p. 25). They also state that philosophy requires deliberate, careful thought and is a matter of rigorous, systematic, and comprehensive thinking (p. 28), and that mere subjective opinion does not constitute a sound philosophy. Although Ms. Donna’s ideas seem more like opinions and slogans, she has based these ideas on her educational experience. Grounded in critical thought and reflection about her professional environment and musical experiences, she has developed her philosophical ideas about which students should be participating in music. Inclusivity and outreach seem to be the most important facet of her philosophy. She strongly supports the notion that all students should be afforded an opportunity to participate in a meaningful music experience. Williams (2011) suggests that this may be achieved by implementing a more inclusive curriculum that addresses alternative approaches other than the traditional large ensemble setting. Elliott and Silverman (2015) also discuss social-contextual concepts of music, explaining that music is a social and cultural endeavor. Similarly, Ms. Donna thinks of the relevance of music to adolescents as a culturally situated act. Thus, she offered courses in guitar and songwriting in her music program, and has, in the past, included classes in contemporary music history and music theory. This range of course offerings met various student interests and presented them with various paths by which they could explore music. She also made the courses very accessible so that musical experience, or a lack thereof, would not hinder students from participating in music at the academy. As corroborated by a body of previous research, (Davis &

Blair, 2011; Mixon, 2009, Williams, 2011; Winter, 2004), her classes were accessible to a wide range of students, while promoting enthusiastic participation. As a result, students may be more involved in music after high school, and the instructor hopes that they may contribute as professional musicians or advocates for music education.

## **Pedagogy**

Pedagogical practices were the focus of the next research question. Teaching techniques are apparently informed by the instructor's philosophy and intended learning outcomes. By focusing on one-on-one instruction with limited input, she allows students to learn independently and collaboratively while developing into autonomous learners. For the guitar classes, learning outcomes are very similar to outcomes outlined in the Guitar, Piano, and Harmonizing Instruments strand of the National Core Standards for Music Education. Learning goals include reading music, performing it in an authentic setting, and analyzing melodic and harmonic structures within the music. The songwriting course is connected with multiple aspects of the National Core Standards. The course involves aspects of both the Theory and Composition strand and the Music Technology Strand. Students organize and develop their musical ideas, share their work, use music for self-expression, and use technology as a tool for creating music.

Additionally, the curriculum used in the songwriting class is consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Pulman (2014). Activities align with teacher philosophy, she recognizes the importance of individual contributions, informal learning practices are employed, and feedback comes in the form of ideas rather than opinion. Moreover she follows the model that focuses on experiential learning aimed at self-development. Students develop their own intellectual property, determine their creative choices, and learn from teacher and peer feedback.

## **Student Perceptions**

The third research question focused on student perceptions of the course. All student participants stated that they thought the course was enjoyable. “Fun” was the word that was commonly used in all interviews with guitar, songwriting, and ensemble students. Many students enjoyed the class because they felt that participating in music was a cathartic experience that provided stress relief. For songwriting students, enthusiasm seemed to be based on the idea of creating an original music product, while guitar students seemed excited about being able to learn the instrument.

## **Values, Benefits, and Challenges**

The subject of the last research question was perceived values, benefits, and challenges. Students, their instructor, and the administrator cited numerous values and benefits. Data from all participants suggested that being able to use music as an expressive tool, independent learning, and collaborative learning were major benefits of the courses. Songwriting students could express their feelings through words and music. Furthermore, the focus on student-centered learning, one-on-one instruction, and the instructor’s reluctance to impose opinions created an environment that was highly conducive to independent and collaborative learning and development of interpersonal skills. This is further validated in a body of previous research (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Campbell, 1995; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007) that discusses the educational and social benefits of implementing popular music in educational settings. As suggested by previous research (Augustyniak, 2014; Woody & Lehmann, 2010), students in songwriting also noted an improvement in listening skills that encouraged them to think differently about music. Because they spent their initial lessons discussing common chord progressions and form used in popular music, students became more

aware of these concepts when listening to music in and out of class. They became more active listeners who were able to discern musical elements and critically think about what they heard. These effects on students' critical listening and cognitive processing of music are also corroborated in writings by Hebert and Campbell (2000) and Augustyniak (2014). Finally, the development of student creativity was a direct benefit of the songwriting class. Students were able to experiment with and develop their own musical ideas into a self-composed musical product. They also felt that the act of making their own music was a more creative outlet than performing someone else' music. As cited by previous research (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Hall, 2015; Pulman, 2014), they were able to develop individual musicality and creativity.

Students and teachers also had to deal with challenges in this class associated with learning new skills and being creative. Classroom observations showed that, as with learning any instrument, development of technical skills was the primary challenge for guitar students. Remembering fingerings, hand positions, and rhythm-reading posed some challenge for the students. Experimenting with ideas and the process of developing these ideas was a primary challenge for those involved in songwriting. Students had to learn how to not only generate ideas, but adapt them to fit written lyrics, melodies, or harmonies. Sometimes, students were not immediately successful at getting "the right answer," but they had to independently tackle those challenges while creating their songs. For all students, the teacher's "hands-off," experiential approach proved to be challenging as well. Often, students were left to work independently, and the instructor did not intervene unless the student faced a great deal of difficulty. Without a teacher giving direct instruction in all phases of learning, students had to learn to resolve challenges on their own.

## Chapter 7: Implications and Conclusions

### Implications

**Advocating for alternative methods.** As Mantie (2013) points out, advocacy is a large part of the popular and alternative methods discussion in American music education. Is there any merit to it? What goals does this accomplish? Why is it worth pursuing? The results of this study have cited multiple benefits to these methods including, independent and collaborative learning, promotion of creativity, development of critical listening skills, self-expression, and greater accessibility for more students. There is also a body of research that supports all of these conclusions (Allsup, 2003; Allsup, 2011; Augustyniak, 2014; Campbell, 1995; Green, 2006; Hall, 2015; Hebert & Campbell, 2000; Jaffurs, 2013; Lebler, 2007; Woody & Lehmann, 2010). These methods provide teachers an opportunity to deliver instruction using a more student-centered, constructivist approach (Pulman, 2014) that places learning in the hands of the pupils, with the teacher functioning in a more facilitative role.

Results of research by Elpus and Abril (2011) suggested that a lack of outreach may be a current issue in music education. Although many schools have programs, only a small percentage of secondary school students seem to participate in school music. This could be due to a missed opportunity during the “window” to join beginner band, or maybe they just do not feel that music is accessible. In her interview, Tanya stated that she wanted to learn to play the guitar before she attended the academy, but the band director at her original school did not teach it. Perhaps, we should revisit our course offerings or at least opportunities for inclusion of other music mediums within our programs. Ms. Donna’s students seemed to have discovered an enjoyable and engaging music experience, and they appear eager to continue after they graduate. As stated earlier, former students have gone on to pursue music professionally or even just as a

hobby. Professional opportunities in music are not only found in symphony orchestras or touring chamber groups, and classes like these provide students who may want to pursue musical careers with skills that can be used in a genre outside of the Western tradition.

I want to also make clear the following point: This is *not* meant to be a condemnation or dismissal of traditional methods. Contrary to Williams (2011), I do not claim that the large ensemble is outdated. We should not toss aside traditional ensembles to replace all of our instruments and literature with guitars, karaoke cover arrangements, and synthesizers. There are studies that cite various benefits of participation in band (i.e. Dagaz, 2012; Jutras 2011), choir (i.e. Bartolome, 2013), and orchestra (i.e. Hash, 2009), and many authors suggest that large ensembles are still highly valuable aspects of music education (Adderley, Kennedy, & Berz, 2003; Fonder, 2014; Morrison, 2001). Professionals should continue to advocate for traditional ensembles, as they appear to be working well for some student populations. The findings of the present investigation serve to highlight alternative approaches as another viable means of delivering music education, perhaps for those populations whom traditional ensembles do not serve. It is unknown if these benefits are exclusive to alternative music education approaches, but results suggest some merit to exploring classes like guitar and songwriting as additions to school music programs. Also, as previously stated, the objectives of these courses align with the learning outcomes outlined by the National Core Standards for Music Education. In all, these alternative methods, supported by our standards allow us to explore other, non-traditional form of teaching and learning in music and provide many learning outcomes that are beneficial to students.

**Policy and the National Standards.** Ponick (2000) suggests that non-traditional approaches in music education can be implemented to address aspects of the National Standards

that are not usually taught in the large ensemble model. The recent adoption of the new National Standards for Music Education has presented educators with various avenues for teaching and learning in music. Results of this research suggest that alternative approaches may be able to address particular strands of the standards more easily than the traditional large ensemble model which primarily focuses on performance practice. Specifically, a course in songwriting addresses standards regarding music theory, composition, and music technology, and a framework for teaching guitar is outlined in its own strand of the National Core Arts Standards. The standards present the teacher with a pedagogical framework and justification for alternative/popular music in his or her classroom. If our goal, as educators, is to be more holistic and comprehensive, we should explore unconventional methods while connecting them to existing policy.

**Pedagogical Frameworks.** Although some teachers and scholars may be convinced of the value of popular and alternative music in education, there is still the question of how they may implement it in the classroom. Based on the findings of this study, I have developed frameworks for guitar and songwriting. Course aims and pedagogy were based on Ms. Donna's practices. Statements about "alignment with teacher philosophy" refer to aspects of Ms. Donna's educational philosophy that provided a context for these frameworks. Therefore, these suggestions are based on the assumption that aspects of the practitioner's philosophy are similar to hers, regarding inclusivity and accessibility. An outline of these frameworks, including aims, objectives, pedagogical strategies, materials, and assessment is shown in Table 4.

**Framework for guitar.** For guitar, the Core Music Standards for Guitar, Keyboard and Harmonizing Instruments may be used as a set of learning outcomes. The rest of the framework is very similar to one of the pedagogical models suggested by Pulman (2014). Teaching activities and strategies are designed to make the course as accessible as possible. This was achieved by



creating two guitar courses: one for beginners and novices, and one for students who are more experienced. A combination of group and individual instruction was also employed so that students could receive as much assistance as needed. There should also be an abundance of opportunities for autonomous and collaborative learning through individual practice, peer assistance, and use of group and solo rehearsals. Based on the findings of this study, these goals may be best achieved by keeping a small class size with a low student-teacher ratio. This model, however, should be more teacher-centered with the instructor guiding students through a series of established benchmarks and sequential learning structures in order to achieve student mastery of the instrument. This creates an environment that is highly conducive to learning and achievement.

The guitar class should also focus heavily on development of practical and technical skills. This includes but is not limited to: posture, hand position, playing notes, playing chords, strumming patterns, and practice techniques. This is geared toward developing students' mastery of the instrument. Additionally, issues of music literacy should be considered, weighing the balance between in-class activities that focus on music reading and tasks that involve aurally learning the material. Reading is a valuable music skill that is outlined in both the old and new National Standards, and is sometimes involved in mastering an instrument. However, reading is not always the most central facet of popular music performance. "Getting" the music aurally through trial-and-error or learning by rote is also a common part of popular music performance practice (Campbell, 1995; Woody & Lehmann, 2010). The degree of emphasis on literacy may be determined by the intended learning outcomes and the genres or styles of music used in the curriculum. Nevertheless, modeling, rote teaching, and playing along with students on the guitar are pedagogical techniques recommended in teaching both aurally learned and read music.

Lastly, authentic performing experiences and assessments should be utilized with students. At the academy, guitar students are allowed performance opportunities in the form of concerts with solo or group performances, background music for school events, or as accompaniment/collaboration for other ensembles. Performance provides students a means to showcase their learned skills, and it gives the teacher a chance to assess in an authentic performing situation. Additionally, the use of multiple genres in which the guitar is commonly used is highly suggested. Some examples include blues, jazz, rock, pop, and others. This expands students' musical knowledge and enhances the authenticity of the learning and performing experience.

**Framework for Songwriting.** If inclusivity is a major goal, accessibility should be a feature of the program. Based on the Academy's model, it is recommended that the instructor include means to make up for differences in levels of musical experience. Students who are musically experienced may bring their expertise to the course, and students with little to no musical experience may collaborate with student musicians or achieve moderate success with technological assistance in the form of applications such as GarageBand and FruityLoops.

This framework may also be linked to the National Standards. The Theory and Composition strand and the Music Technology strand are most applicable to this class. Students should use theoretical concepts concerning chords, chord progressions, harmony, and melody in order to compose their songs. Technology is also used to record, edit, and share the students' work. These goals, along with any other learning outcomes, can be drawn from the standards in order to design a curriculum that is aligned with current music education policy.

A major goal of the songwriting course should be the promotion of student creativity. Therefore, students have to create original content. As Pulman (2014) suggests, a pedagogical

model aimed at developing more creative musicians should include opportunities for students to develop their own intellectual property with guidance from the instructor. Focus should be on development of original musical and lyrical ideas; however, preexisting material may be used as a framework or template, especially for novice songwriters. For example, one of the activities involved students identifying a song that was personally meaningful to them (or that “speaks to them”). Students were then asked to rewrite the song with different lyrics and either the same or opposite meaning while keeping the form, number of verses, and other musical features unchanged. Musical ideas are developed as a result of experimentation with students’ musical thoughts.

An experiential, student-centered, social constructivist approach, as discussed by Pulman (2014), is used for creating an environment that is conducive to developing individual creativity and autonomous learning (p. 298; 307). Knowledge is gained during creative activities and experimentation, and students are in charge of their learning and are the primary source of creative choices. Therefore, instructors must be mindful of how they provide feedback to students. Feedback should come in the form of suggestions and ideas rather than firm opinions or suggestions that must be followed. Peers should also be involved in this stage of the process, providing feedback. Additionally, students must be left on their own to explore. At the Academy, students did not allow even the teacher to be in the studio with them while they recorded. Instructors who want to teach this class or a similar course, should take the role of a facilitator that is, they should provide guidance to learners, but refrain from imposing their opinions and being overly involved in student learning tasks.

Lastly, songwriting learning tasks may align with current trends in popular song. Students at the academy had discussion about common chord progressions used in popular songs. This

was accomplished using websites such as HookTheory.com, which contain a database of popular songs with chordal analysis. These discussions should also involve use of common trends in popular and commercial music such as length of song, subject matter, use of musical introductions/interludes, and form. The website, Hit Songs Deconstructed is useful, as it actually provides quarterly and annual reports about these trends in popular and commercial music (hitsongsdeconstructed.com).

Table 4. Pedagogical Frameworks

	Guitar	Songwriting
Aims	Mastery of the instrument Performance Practice	Experiential learning in music; Creativity
Outcomes	Reading and performing music; familiarity with performance in various styles/genres	Creating original music; familiarity with music theory, music technology, and trends in popular music
Policy/Standards	National Core Arts Standards: Guitar, Piano and Harmonizing Instruments Strand; Ensemble Strand	National Core Arts Standards: Music Theory and Composition Strand; Music Technology Strand
Course Descriptors	Performance tasks; authentic performance experiences, instrument mastery	Development of intellectual property (song)
Structure	Sequential presentation of learning tasks; structured by teacher; benchmarks and standards	Initial lessons on basic theory, chord progressions; workshops on generating ideas; students develop and determine creative choices within in a set of guidelines
Materials and Resources	Method books, repertoire of various genres, instruments, tuners	Instruments if applicable, music editing/recording software; music analysis resources (books and websites)
Accessibility	Open to novice and experienced players; classes separated according to experience level	Open to all students regardless of experiences. Supports (technology, collaboration) needed for students with little to not music experience
Pedagogy and Practice	Covers and composed pieces; ensemble model of teaching; balance of teacher- and student-centered individual instruction, achievement of benchmarks; independent and collaborative learning	Original content; informal methods; very student-centered; operate within guidelines; individual instruction; independent and collaborative learning.
Products	Group and solo performances	Original song
Assessment	Authentic assessment of performances using predetermined measures and criteria	Assessment of written and recorded material. Adherence to guidelines.

## **Limitations**

Total objectivity in qualitative research is impossible to accomplish. Although these findings provide valuable information and insights, the coding process is inherently subjective because of the researcher's decisions on which themes to dismiss or pursue (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Member checking and data triangulation (Creswell, 2007) were used in order to provide more objective support for the findings, limiting subjectivity. Data from the semi-structured interviews are self-reported by the informants. Therefore, the data only includes the information that they chose to divulge and responses could have been affected by memory or an attempt to provide desirable answers. Triangulating their claims with other forms of data reduces the risk of inaccuracies in the discussion of results, but self-reported data, by nature, may affect the results. Because the interviews were semi-structured, there may be some differentiation in the way the questions were asked and types of additional questions. The quotes provided were ultimately analyzed by the researcher, so subjective interpretation of the results may have been biased or directed by the researcher's inquiry for emergent themes.

This study represents 25 hours out of classes that last an entire school semester of approximately five months. Additionally, these hours were not consecutive. Therefore, the researcher did not see everything that occurred within the observation period. The observations formed a short snapshot of a long period of teaching and learning. More time with the program and insight into what happened at the points the researcher was not present could have changed the findings and conclusions drawn from this research.

The participants of this study included one administrator, one teacher, and twelve students from one school that only serves high school juniors and seniors. This is an uncommon high school setting that does not have a competitive large ensemble and involves multiple music

classes. Most high schools have rather limited courses offerings (Elpus & Abril, 2011), so it may be difficult to apply findings from a school like this to an institution with only one or two music classes on its entire schedule of courses. With such a small sample, these findings are not generalizable to the larger general population.

There were two songwriting students and nine guitar students between both classes, so the classes were very small. Although increased participation through inclusivity was important to Ms. Donna, she only allowed, at most, ten students in each of her guitar classes. This presented a conflict with the inclusivity aspect of her philosophy because she could not be fully inclusive with her all of her courses. However, this was done so that she could effectively teach using individualized instruction and student-centered learning models. Despite these limitations, this research does provide useful information regarding the philosophy, pedagogy, benefits, and challenges of alternative approaches in music education.

### **Directions for Further Research**

Results of a single study cannot prove anything or provide wholly generalizable evidence. Further research should utilize methods similar to the one used in this study. A follow-up study could examine similar programs in different educational settings over a longer course of time and with more participants that represent all grade levels. Similar findings could reinforce results of this study with a greater sample population and more observation hours, compensating for some of the limitations that were previously discussed.

Our profession needs more scholarly research into various instances of alternative or non-traditional music education. For example, the instructor mentioned having a beginner band for high school juniors and seniors. There are myriad examples of multicultural, specialized, and popular ensembles, and they all merit more research. Some, like large ensemble for older

beginners, are more traditional than a songwriting class. However, other methods and models from “outside of the box” may be valuable if advocacy and outreach are objectives.

As stated by Mantie (2013), many American music education researchers discuss alternative and popular music from an advocacy perspective. Making a case for these methods is important, and explaining its significance to our field is a noble pursuit. However, more scholarly work on implementation and effective methods should be explored. Similar to the work of Pulman (2014), researchers and scholars should aim to provide theoretical frameworks and pedagogical models that may be used by instructors who are not familiar with this medium. If popular and alternative methods are valuable to the field of music education, then we must be ready to inform practitioners of methods, models, and frameworks to use. Furthermore, these pedagogical suggestions should be made with the National Core Standards for Music Education in mind. Connecting new methods to the new standards strengthens advocacy and justifications for inclusion and can be used to guide teaching practices and learning activities. It is my hope that these findings may enlighten and inspire current and future music educators to pursue a more comprehensive music curriculum, including some of these alternative approaches as a means of providing meaningful music-making experiences to all students.

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## Appendix A: IRB

### ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST



Institutional Review Board  
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair  
130 David Boyd Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803  
P: 225.578.8692  
F: 225.578.5983  
[irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu) | [lsu.edu/irb](http://lsu.edu/irb)

**TO:** Sarah Bartolome  
Music Education

**FROM:** Dennis Landin  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

**DATE:** December 17, 2014

**RE:** IRB# 3581

**TITLE:** A Qualitative Investigation of Popular Music Courses in Music Education

**New Protocol/Modification/Continuation:** New Protocol

**Review type:** Full ☐ Expedited ☒ **Review date:** 12/16/2014

**Risk Factor:** Minimal ☒ Uncertain ☐ Greater Than Minimal ☐

**Approved** ☒ **Disapproved** ☐

**Approval Date:** 12/16/2014 **Approval Expiration Date:** 12/15/2015

**Re-review frequency:** (annual unless otherwise stated)

**Number of subjects approved:** 12

**LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)** \_\_\_\_\_

**By:** Dennis Landin, Chairman 

**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –**  
Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects\*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. SPECIAL NOTE:

*\*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>*

1. Study Title: A Qualitative Investigation of Popular Music Courses in Music Education
2. Performance Site: Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science
3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this Study, Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
  
LaTerence Varnado (601)-572-1070  
Dr. Sarah Bartolome (225)-578-2481
4. Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' philosophy and pedagogical practices regarding popular music in music classrooms. I will also investigate student experiences with such ensembles including perceived values, benefits, and challenges.
5. Subject Inclusion: Music instructor and students in the MSMS guitar performance, guitar studies, and songwriting classes
6. Number of Subjects: 12
7. Study Procedures: This study involves observation of the music classes for one week. The researcher will also conduct semi-structured interviews to explore the philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, implementation, and perceived values, benefits, and challenges of music classes involving non-traditional ensembles. Each interview will be audio recorded. The investigator will ask the questions listed on the attached "Semi-Structured Interview Protocol" (see last page of this document).
8. Benefits: There are no direct benefits related to participation, however this study may contribute to our understanding of the value and benefits of non-traditional courses and pedagogical practices associated with the design and implementation of these courses. This may provide educators with valuable information about launching these types of programs at their respective schools.
9. Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study, however, sometimes people get nervous when they are interviewed and audio recorded. Your child is free to stop the interview at any time should he or she feel uncomfortable or anxious. Additionally, your child does not have to answer any question he or she does not wish to answer. Every effort will be made to maintain the

confidentiality of his or her responses. Audio files and interview transcripts will be saved on a password-protected laptop to which only the investigator has access.

10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

12. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu), [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb). I agree to allow my child to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

---

Signature of Parent

---

Date

1. Study Title: A Qualitative Investigation of Popular Music Courses in Music Education
2. Performance Site: Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science
3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this Study, Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
  
LaTerence Varnado (601)-572-1070  
Dr. Sarah Bartolome (225)-578-2481
4. Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine teachers' philosophy and pedagogical practices regarding popular music in music classrooms. I will also investigate student experiences with such ensembles including perceived values, benefits, and challenges.
5. Subject Inclusion: Music instructor and students in the MSMS guitar performance, guitar studies, and songwriting classes
6. Number of Subjects: 20-30
7. Study Procedures: This study involves observation of the music classes for one week. The researcher will also conduct semi-structured interviews to explore the philosophy, curriculum, pedagogy, implementation, and perceived values, benefits, and challenges of music classes involving non-traditional ensembles. Each interview will be audio recorded. The investigator will ask the questions listed on the attached "Semi-Structured Interview Protocol" (see last page of this document).
8. Benefits: There are no direct benefits related to participation, however this study may contribute to our understanding of the value and benefits of non-traditional courses and pedagogical practices associated with the design and implementation of these courses. This may provide educators with valuable information about launching these types of programs at their respective schools.
9. Risks: There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study, however, sometimes people get nervous when they are interviewed and audio recorded. You are free to stop the interview at any time should you feel uncomfortable or anxious. Additionally, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of your responses. Audio

files and interview transcripts will be saved on a password-protected laptop to which only the investigator has access.

10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

12. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigator. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board, (225) 578-8692, [irb@lsu.edu](mailto:irb@lsu.edu), [www.lsu.edu/irb](http://www.lsu.edu/irb). I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date



I, \_\_\_\_ (your name) \_\_\_\_\_, agree to be in a study about popular music in music education. I will be observed during my music class and may be asked to participate in an interview. I can decide to stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

Student's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Witness\* \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*N.B. Witness must be present for the assent process, not just the signature

## **Appendix B: Interview Protocols**

### **Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Instructor)**

1. How did these courses get started at your school?
2. Why did you decide to include them in your music curriculum?
3. What role does this play in the lives of students?
4. How does this align with your educational philosophy?
5. What unique pedagogical practices are involved with teaching this class?
6. What are the benefits/values of participating in this ensemble?
7. What are some challenges you've faced while teaching this class?
8. Which students get to participate in this ensemble? Do you include students with little to no prior experience in music or your other ensembles?

### **Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Student)**

1. How long have you taken these courses?
2. Why did you decide to take the class?
3. For you, why is this ensemble important?
4. Do you participate in other ensembles? If so, how is learning in this ensemble different than others?
5. Would you want to continue doing this after high school as a major, career, or hobby?
6. What are the benefits/values of participating in this ensemble?
7. What are some challenges you've faced while participating in this class?
8. Have you enjoyed the class so far? Why or why not?

### **Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Administrator)**

1. How did these courses get started at your school?
2. Why did you decide to include them in the music curriculum?
3. What role does this play in the lives of students?
4. What are the benefits/values of participating in this ensemble?
5. What are some challenges you've faced while teaching this class?
6. Which students get to participate in this ensemble? Do you include students with little to no prior experience in music or your other ensembles?

## Appendix C: Guitar Studies Syllabus

### MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS & SCIENCE COURSE SYLLABUS - GUITAR STUDIES - FA 516

**INSTRUCTOR:** K. DAWN BARHAM  
dbarham@themsmsorg

**OFFICE HOURS:**

MWF	TR
8:00 Planning	8:00 CMM
9:00 OH	9:30 Planning
10:00 Guitar Studies	11:00 Lunch
11:00 Guitar Performance	11:30-1:00 Guitar Studies
12:00- 1:00 Lunch	1:00-2:30 OH
1:00-2:55pm OH	2:35 Choral Performance
3:00 Instrumental Performance	
Monday night tutorials	

**LENGTH OF COURSE:** 1 SEMESTER

**GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE PROPER HAND POSITION.

STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF NOTES ON THE FINGERBOARD THROUGH 5<sup>TH</sup> FRET.

STUDENTS WILL DEFINE AND PERFORM ARPEGGIOS.

STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE OF HALF AND WHOLE STEPS ON THE GUITAR FINGERBOARD.

STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE VARIOUS STYLES OF ACCOMPANIMENT TECHNIQUES. (STRUMMING AND FINGERPICKING)

STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE ABILITY TO PERFORM CHORDS, ACCOMPANIMENTS AND MELODIES ON GUITAR.

STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE ABILITY TO READ MUSIC NOTATION, CHORD CHARTS, AND TABLATURE.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:**

STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE ACADEMICALLY HONEST. CHEATING OR ANY OTHER FORMS OF ACADEMIC DISHONESTY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. SEE HANDBOOK.

**ASSESSMENT:**

9 WEEKS GRADES ARE AN AVERAGE OF HOMEWORK (WORKSHEETS, ETC), TESTS, AND DAILY ASSIGNMENTS AS FOLLOWS

40%: HOMEWORK, WRITTEN TESTS, PLAYING TESTS, (MAKE-UP TESTS MUST BE TAKEN WITHIN ONE WEEK TO AVOID 5PT POINT PER DAY DEDUCTIONS)

40%: CLASS PARTICIPATION

20%: EXAMS

SEMESTER GRADES ARE CALCULATED AS FOLLOWS:

1ST AND 2ND NINE WEEKS AVERAGES COUNT 40% EACH

SEMESTER EXAM IS 20%

**TEXT/MATERIALS:** JERRY SNYDER'S GUITAR SCHOOL METHOD BOOK 1  
JERRY SNYDER'S GUITAR SCHOOL ENSEMBLE BOOK  
WORKSHEETS/HANDOUTS

**MAKE UP POLICY:**

Students have one week from date of absence to complete make up work. Work/Tests made up after one week will earn a 5 point per day deduction.

## Appendix D: Guitar Performance Syllabus

### MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE GUITAR PERFORMANCE FA 517 SYLLABUS MSMS Performing Arts Center

**INSTRUCTOR:** K. Dawn Barham  
dbarham@themsms.org

**LENGTH OF COURSE:** 1 Semester

**OFFICE HOURS:**

MWF	TR
8:00 Planning	8:00 CMM
9:00 OH	9:30 Planning
10:00 Guitar Studies	11:00 Lunch
11:00 Guitar Performance	11:30-1:00 Guitar Studies
12:00- 1:00 Lunch	1:00-2:30 OH
1:00-2:55pm OH	2:35 Choral Performance
3:00 Instrumental Performance	
Monday night tutorials	

**GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

Students will demonstrate knowledge of guitar fretboard through the 9<sup>th</sup> fret.

Students will demonstrate ability to read notation and tablature.

Students will demonstrate ability to perform solo material.

Students will define and utilize music terminology/verbiage.

Students will play with expression and technical accuracy a varied repertoire of music with a challenging level of difficulty.

Students will perform an appropriate part in the ensemble, demonstrating well-developed ensemble skills.

Students will identify and explain the stylistic features of a given musical work that serves to define its aesthetic tradition and it's historical or cultural context.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:**

Students are expected to be academically honest. Cheating or any other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. See handbook.

**ASSESSMENT:**

40% Playing Exam Rubric  
30% Individual Contribution Rubric  
30% Ensemble Grade Performance

\*\* 10 point grade reduction for missed performance

**MAKE UP POLICY:**

Students have one week from date of absence to complete make up work. Work/Tests made up after one week will earn a 5 point per day deduction.

## Appendix E: Songwriting Syllabus

### THE MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS & SCIENCE COURSE SYLLABUS MUSIC TECHNOLOGY & SONGWRITING

**INSTRUCTOR:** K. Dawn Barham  
**LENGTH OF COURSE:** 1 Semester  
**OFFICE HOURS:**

MWF	TR
8:00 Planning	8:00 Planning
9:00 OH	9:30 CMM
10:00 Guitar Studies	11:00 Lunch
11:00 Lunch	12:1:30 OH
12:00-2:55 Office Hours	1:30-2:30 Songwriting
3:00 Instrumental Performance	2:30 Choral Performance

**ATTENDANCE:** No unexcused absences (see handbook)

#### GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of lyric and song structure.
- Students will write song lyrics.
- Students will compose songs.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of software applications used in music production and recording.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of hardware used in music production and recording.
- Students will demonstrate ability to utilize MIDI.

#### ASSESSMENT:

- 40%: Compositions (4)/Tests (4)
- 40%: Class Participation/Homework
- 20%: Final Composition

#### COURSE CALENDAR:

Weeks 1-4: Basic Theory, Simple Harmonic Progressions, Intro to software and hardware, Melodic Development, and Lyric Writing Exercises. Weeks 5-8: Theory, Harmonic Progressions, Melodic Development, Lyric Writing. Weeks 9-13: MIDI and Digital Software and hardware, Instrumentation, Composition. Weeks 14-18: Putting it all together.

## **Appendix F: Final Songwriting Project Guidelines**

### **Guidelines for final song project**

1. Song must be a verse chorus form (may include a bridge)
2. If the song is not a 12 bar blues form, it must be in multiples of 4 bars  
(verses and choruses must be 8, 16 or 32 bars in length)
3. Song must have an intro (4 or 8 bars)
4. Title of song must be in first or last line of chorus
5. Must have at least 2 verses
6. Lyrics must be typed, printed and turned in using correct format. (no emailing)
7. Songs must be recorded using a metronome, click track or drum track
8. Chord progressions for verse and chorus must be different
9. Song must be at least 3 minutes in length.
10. Song will have a central concise theme.
11. You must be the author of the lyrics
12. You may collaborate with music.

## **Vita**

LaTerence Edward Varnado, a native of Jackson, Mississippi, graduated Magna Cum Laude from University of Southern Mississippi with a Bachelor of Music Education degree in 2013. He entered graduate school to pursue a Master of Music in Music Education at Louisiana State University in 2013. He currently serves Assistant Director of Bands at St. Jude the Apostle Catholic School. He will receive his master's degree in May 2015 and plans to continue working as a music educator upon graduation.