

1968

A Study of Factors Relating to Grade-School Band Dropouts in the Aberdeen School District

Richard Daniel Lundstrom
Central Washington University

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A STUDY OF FACTORS RELATING TO GRADE-SCHOOL BAND DROPOUTS
IN THE ABERDEEN SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

by
Richard Daniel Lundstrom
August, 1968

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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

A. Bert Christiansen, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

T. Dean Stinson

Robert M. Panerio

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the cooperation of the administration of the Aberdeen School District, Aberdeen, Washington.

The author is particularly grateful for the consideration, assistance, and guidance offered by Mr. A. Bert Christiansen, Mr. Robert M. Panerio, and Dr. T. Dean Stinson.

A special word of thanks is due the author's wife, Shirley, whose patience and assistance played an important part in the completion of this thesis.

R. D. L.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is very important that an instrumental music instructor survey his beginning band program. The first few months of instruction are generally where the beginning instrumentalist forms attitudes and habits that determine his success or failure on his instrument. Therefore, the instructor must be constantly aware of the common causes of band dropouts peculiar to the beginning instrumental classes in his own area. Through this awareness, he may then organize his program to solve as many dropout problems as possible.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study (1) to determine the various causes of student dropouts in the beginning band program; (2) to examine the relation of statistics collected between five elementary schools; (3) to analyze, in particular, various student responses as well as aptitude factors as causes for dropouts; and (4) to compare the results with other selected related studies.

Procedures of the study. Cooperation to conduct this study was obtained from Dr. R. H. Woodroof, Superintendent

of Schools in the Aberdeen School District in Aberdeen, Washington. Each grade school band student who dropped out of band was administered a one-page questionnaire, which revealed his reasons for termination. He was asked to be as honest as possible in his answers and was assured that his name would not be associated with his responses. As the questionnaires were collected, they were separated by schools into folders. At the end of the first semester of the 1967-68 school year, the data was collected, tabulated, and analyzed.

Scope of the study. The period of this study was the first semester of the 1967-68 school year in the Aberdeen School District in Aberdeen, Washington. Aberdeen is a city of approximately 20,000 people located on Grays Harbor on the West Coast of Washington state. It is one of the older cities in the state. The primary industry involves the production of lumber products. Residents employed in this area range from loggers to factory workers in paper pulp and lumber mills. Related areas include those employed in loading and shipping lumber and paper products for export, primarily to Japan. Fishing and machine manufacturing comprise other minor industries on Grays Harbor.

Aberdeen is a stratified community consisting of a low and middle economic strata with a small high-salaried

upper class. Socially and economically it is primarily average middle-class oriented.

The grade schools selected as a source of information included Central Park, Gray, McDermoth, Washington, and West. The grade school band turn-out each year is approximately 200 students. From this number, 63 dropped from the band program and filled out questionnaires.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Study. Throughout this paper the term study is defined as a systematic process to analyse, interpret, and compare the results of the collected data.

Questionnaire. The term questionnaire shall be interpreted as a list of planned, written questions related to causes of elementary band dropouts, with spaces provided for indicating the response to appropriate questions, intended for submission to a number of students who drop out of band.

Factor. The term factor shall apply to any cause or determiner, which may be unique to an individual which would cause him to drop band.

Grade school band dropout. This term is defined as any pupil signed up for band who terminated his study before the end of the first semester of the 1967-68 school year.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The organization of this chapter will commence with a brief summary of music education research and the questionnaire as it particularly applies to this study. Although existing written information is limited, as such, a discussion of actual causes of beginning instrumental dropouts, as presented by various music educators, will follow. Much has been written relative to successful recruiting and motivational practices designed to prevent excessive dropouts. Therefore, a summary of preventive measures, used by successful music educators, will also be presented.

I. LITERATURE ON MUSIC EDUCATION RESEARCH

Choate (3:67), in commenting upon the history of music education, points out that for over one hundred years music has been a part of public education. During that time, teachers of music have been constantly searching for improvements in instruction and student learning. Always, the teaching of music has been directed toward one aim "The education of children in and through music (3:67)." Methods of achieving this goal have varied causing misunderstandings and disagreement in the field. Therefore, Choate encourages cooperative effort, toleration, resourcefulness, and

sincerity in developing research projects if the potentials of music education are to be realized.

Music educators are constantly being challenged to evaluate and defend the traditional. They are asked to test the old and the new and to compare the results of both in order to plan for future actions to insure the steady climb of the profession (15:76). Scholarly research is the means of producing unbiased and impersonal information that will aid in solving the many problems that plague the efficiency of music education. Scholarly research is defined by Morgan as "basically a seeking process and may be concerned with the collection, tabulation, analysis, and interpretation of data with a written report of the findings (15:76)."

According to Colwell (4:73), research in music education was not always as extensive, respectable, and valuable to the music teacher and professional educator as it is today. Men such as Carl Seashore, Robert Lundin, and Hermann Helmholtz were in related fields rather than in music education itself. Much of the past master's and doctoral research was done without reference to, or an adequate basis of, prior knowledge in the field. Many were simply a collection of readings or an opinionated analysis of a particular situation.

In recent years the situation has changed and more worthwhile experimental research projects are appearing.

This is due to many improvements in the doctoral programs. Required courses, including those in research design itself, have been added. Doctoral advisors have upgraded their research standards and have become more skillful in directing research. Students themselves are more knowledgeable about purposes and techniques of music education research.

Now the serious researcher can at least hope that his work will be heard of, written about, or cited at a convention. This is not to say that his findings, however important they may be, will be put into practice by a majority of music educators in their teaching, materials, or curriculum. Today's researcher does not believe that he can find definite answers to all questions in music education. His hope is that he can provide a body of information that will help improve music teaching. Unfortunately, there is a wide gap between research reports and actual teaching practice.

In "Teachers Can Be Researchers Can Be Teachers (8:81)," Haack states: "Educational research is carried on to enhance the teaching-learning process and, as a result, to make the vocation of the teacher more satisfying--not more frustrating." He claims that no gap should exist since there is a significant relationship between the methods and procedures of active research and those of effective, imaginative teaching.

Both activities start with a problem, which usually results in the formation of a hypothesis that leads toward actual trial at solution. After determining the problem and his hypothesis, the researcher finds related literature and research. He is interested in anything that pertains to his problem and particularly the results obtained by other researchers on similar problems.

Similarly, the effective teacher strives to keep up with knowledge in his teaching area and is not satisfied with only the well-known information. Hopefully, the teacher will also be aware of applicable knowledge from related disciplines: cultural history, art history, acoustics, and the psychology of behavior. Knowledge in these areas should help him to understand, for instance, why children react a certain way in specific situations.

The researcher and teacher both attempt to develop procedures that will lead to the solutions of problems. They also both analyze the data. The researcher deals with statistical significance which result in the findings of his study. The teacher seeks evidence of general significant improvement as well as certain trends of progress or signs of weakness.

The researcher arrives at his conclusions, using his data and the hypothesis being tested, and attempts to make his recommendations for the practical application of his

results. Usually he will point out weaknesses in his study and will point out areas that need more study. The teacher will also try to arrive at logical conclusions about his work and that of his students. He will, in addition, try to evaluate the points of weakness in his work and strive to better them.

In view of the close relationship evident in the work of the researcher and progressive teacher, Haack concludes: "Teaching and researching, if each is at a respectably high level of competence, are not only closely related, but in many cases are carried on by the same person, often at the same time." He also encourages the researcher to give more attention to the discussion of his conclusions and to the practical application of his results. He urges the teacher to examine these results more intelligently and with a creative ability for use to his particular situation. If this procedure could be accomplished, the gap between researcher and teacher would be virtually closed.

II. LITERATURE ON QUESTIONNAIRE TECHNIQUES

The questionnaire is an instrument that is used frequently by educational researchers to gain data pertinent to their particular problem (35:254). This may include facts about current conditions and practices as well as attitudes and opinions. For some studies, the questionnaire may

be the only practical method of obtaining data necessary to confirm or disconfirm a hypothesis.

Isolating and specifically identifying items from which a respondent may choose his answers tends to objectify, intensify, and standardize the observations. This is called a closed-form or structured questionnaire and is the type which was used in this study. To reply, a respondent marks yes or no, checks, circles, or underscores his answer from a list of possible answers assembled by the researcher.

"Closed-form questionnaires are easy to administer and fill out, help keep the respondent's mind riveted on the subject (important for young students), and facilitate the process of tabulation and analysis (35:255)." However, they do have certain shortcomings. They seldom expose the respondent's reasons for answering as he does. They seldom yield information of scope or depth, nor do they discriminate between fine shades of meaning. Fixed responses may make respondents take a stand on a subject upon which they have no crystallized opinion. The listed items may be placed in an order that encourages the respondent to select a specific answer. It is hoped that these weaknesses were somewhat overcome in this study. Listed items were randomized and an open end response "List any other reasons___etc." was included.

The questionnaire can be administered personally (as was done in this study), or it can be sent to individuals for self-administration and return (9:1448). The problem that continually arises with transmitted questionnaires is nonresponse. Usually a 60 percent return is considered fairly average for a mailed questionnaire; however, it is insufficient to eliminate bias. Callbacks usually can reduce the nonresponse to 20 percent which is considered small enough to validate most studies. A drawback to personally administered questionnaires (although not as serious) is that individuals are occasionally not available through illness or moving away.

III. LITERATURE ON THE DROPOUT PROBLEM

In this day and age of so many varied activities and responsibilities, which may distract attention from the study of music, the problem of instrumental dropouts can become serious (29:18). In many cases other interests capture students' fancy and take precedence over music. The high school and junior high no longer are alone in the abundance of extra activities. In the elementary schools, students can choose working as a pupil aid, going out for patrol, or participating in intramural sports, dramatics, etc.

The attention of administrators, counselors, teachers, parents, and students too may be overly occupied with the

strong emphasis on science and math. Unless the director is aware of this, highly talented students may become convinced that they have no time for the study of music. In addition, the entertainment media of today compete increasingly for the leisure time of beginning instrumentalists. Television, for one, lures even the best students from their practice time.

Capturing and retaining the student's interest, then, is an important consideration and responsibility of the teacher in building a substantial music program.

The most evident dropout problems usually occur in the beginning classes during the first year. The end of the second month may be a crucial point when the novelty of the new instrument wears off and the serious work begins (29:19).

In working with a random group of students and dealing with their diversified talents and abilities, a variety of problems may lead to a dropout situation that is above average. Physical limitations, previously unnoticed, can cause a student to become discouraged and dropout. Occasionally, a student with weak lip muscles will be unable to control the escape of air from the corners of the mouth while playing a wind instrument (1:36). Since it is rarely cured, when it is not overcome promptly, the student should be transferred to another instrument if he is to be successful.

The haphazard manner in which many students choose an instrument usually leads to a relative high dropout rate

(6:150). For example, pressures may come from parents who have an old instrument just lying around the house.

Father or Uncle or Grandfather played trombone in the Silver Cornet Band, and they still have their instruments which Johnny may use. Perhaps he has been able to "get a tone" on the trombone. Whether or not the boy is adapted to the instrument, he is determined to play it (25:35).

Children are also very easily influenced by their friends. They are very apt to pick the instrument mastered by their best friend (6:150). They do not realize that temperamentally they may be similar to their friends but physically they may be quite different. The instrumental teacher should guide all children in the selection of instruments, always keeping in mind a child's physical, mental, and musical characteristics relative to the suitability of instruments (24:151).

"Many pupils are pitifully handicapped from the start due to lack of proper guidance in the selection of an instrument (21:49)." Tests given to children to determine the type of instrument to which they are best adapted are at the present time only fairly reliable. They will only occasionally prevent placing in the hands of a student an instrument to which he is entirely unsuited. For example, a potential dropout might be a puny, undersized boy who is impressed with the size of the sousaphone and wants to play it. Another could possibly be a quick, lively individual with

exceptional powers of coordination who becomes bored with the more modest demands of the tuba or alto horn.

A common potential dropout is the pupil who is a slow learner or has a low musical aptitude (17:22). He enters class and after a short time finds that he is not able to keep up with the class. Facing continuous discouragement, he will more than likely drop from class. On the other hand, many capable boys and girls will indicate that they are desirous of playing in the band and will after a few weeks find that it is impossible to keep up in the class without home practice. They will either drop or fall so far behind that dismissal will be necessary (10:67). Distinguishing between the two above mentioned students is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks an instrumental teacher has to perform. He must, at some time, determine which students cannot master the instrument regardless of the practice they put in and which could make it with a little more motivation. As Ford states:

I am thoroughly convinced that students are often dropped with the excuse they have no talent when that is not really the correct reason at all. At our local senior high school band concerts I never cease to be amazed at the personnel. Many students who were slow beginners and obnoxious individuals have continued playing and may even hold responsible positions in the band. This phenomenon, if that may be a proper term, also works in reverse. Some students who were so promising in the elementary classes may not be playing at all. I truly believe that almost any average or above average child can be taught to play an instrument if he has chosen voluntarily to take instrumental music (5:64).

The teacher must do his best to make the correct decision; however, he should not feel obligated to recommend that all students continue in the class. If a pupil shows definite musical or physical inaptitude, lack of application, or lack of interest, it is the teacher's responsibility to point this out. If he does not, the percentage of dropouts in his classes will rise; and the confidence in the teacher will fail (11:20-1). Unfortunately, "Regarding tests, T. P. Giddings once observed that 'Someone has yet to devise a gumption test!' And there you have it in a nutshell (1:36)."

In some cases of beginning band dropouts, something was done wrong at the start; or a lack of understanding on the pupil's part caused him to lose interest or fall behind (23:84). The director who does not plan and evaluate his teaching procedure at the beginning level is likely to find himself using many "quick-treatment" statements regarding embouchure, breathing, tone, tongue, posture, and rhythm. Many times the beginner will not understand the teacher's terminology or directions. Thus, the beginner is very apt to forget, or completely miss, many of the important details and tends to become lost and discouraged in his home practice, due to lack of constant guidance. Those first lonely practice periods at home are a struggle, and it is no wonder many students develop bad habits or drop instrumental music completely.

The teacher must know and understand the limitations of the student in order to use patience in providing instruction. "It is indeed important that the teacher support the pupil through positive criticism (29:45)." The teacher may stress group behavior, but individual attention must also be given where needed. A concern for individual feelings is very important when working with a varied group of beginners. Never should the individual be isolated by excessive, negative criticism in front of the class. Young people, in particular, are very sensitive to negativism and can feel shame and rejection through publicized failure. Excessive competition may cause stress and anxiety which will lead to fear of self-exposure. The teacher is then surprised when students wish to drop but are reluctant to tell him the reason.

"One of the greatest sources of discontent and restlessness among beginners stems from their inability to play their instruments during most of the practice period (10:67)." If the teacher spends too much time talking or working with one section, boredom quickly sets in which soon leads to lack of interest. In working with diversified groups, the teacher must learn to pace the work on several levels with consideration for individual differences and learning plateaus. There must be enough repetitive material for even the slow to grasp and a variety to keep the quicker ones

involved and interested. A lack of challenge will quickly bore faster students and lead to dropout problems.

Beyond the routine mechanical skills of their instruments, music educators also owe their students some basic understanding of music itself.

Countless children have dropped out of our classes because they expected more understanding of music and did not find it. When the class became routine, then dull, they blamed themselves, probably deciding that "music" was not for them (13:42).

Practice without musical meaning and concerts made up of notes merely strung together can become dull and uninspiring. Students should develop their technique in and through the use of music. Technical and mechanical studies are necessary for developing skill but are not ends in themselves (18:249). The contour and movement of a melody, its rhythm, its phrasing, its dynamics, its demands for attack, release, and tone qualities are musical values. Without them, music can become dull and lifeless, causing waning interests and then dropouts. According to Revelli (27:20), after the interest of the students has been aroused sufficiently to encourage them to start instrumental study, it is the teacher's responsibility to maintain the interest in all music which will influence the individual throughout his life.

The condition of the instrument upon which a student plays has an important bearing on his progress and,

consequently, the dropout rate (17:22). Many children fall by the wayside frustrated by the impossible task of playing on an improperly functioning instrument. As Raphael states (26:38) "A prime prerequisite of any attempt to revitalize instrumental music is the providing of each student with an instrument of good quality for his exclusive use and for as long as he stays in the program."

In a study by E. A. Morris (17:22), "A Report On Beginning Dropouts," it was determined that schools which administered some kind of musical test had a lower dropout rate than those who did not. The survey also showed that schools where the majority of the students played on new instruments had fewer dropouts than those where primarily older instruments were used. There seemed to be no relationship between the experienced teacher and the beginning teacher as far as the amount of dropouts was concerned.

A very detailed study by A. J. Martignetti, "Causes of Elementary Instrumental Music Dropouts," involved interviewing the students, parents, and directors as to the reasons for dropping out of band (14:177). It was the purpose of this study to determine the causes of elementary instrumental dropouts in Bergen County, New Jersey, during the 1961-62 school year. Fifty-six questionnaires from music educators representing 114 schools in 38 communities were collected. The researcher, by averaging the percentages

supplied by the teachers, determined that almost half of the beginning students dropped out of band during the year. Most of the dropouts, about one-third, were those of the woodwind family.

According to the teachers, loss of interest accounted for a little over half of the dropouts. Lack of ability to do the work included over one fourth of the withdrawals. Lack of perseverance was the third most frequent reason for student dropouts given by directors. This refers to students who live in unstable surroundings, starting everything, finishing nothing. Others come from families where standards are not well-defined. When a child reaches an obstacle, he lacks the perseverance to continue and therefore drops. Other reasons given by the directors for dropouts include: students not realizing the work involved, after-school activities, and lack of carry-over of enthusiasm to the classroom.

In the Bergen County study, thirty-five children, having dropped out of the elementary instrumental program, were interviewed. Major reasons given by the students were: the instrument was too difficult, too many activities and not enough time to practice, not doing well in other subjects, and parental dislike of the instrument.

The reason most frequently given by the parents for their children dropping out of the instrumental program was

a lack of ample time to practice. In fact, over one half of the parents listed this as the main cause.

The author of the Bergen County study found that the three groups--teachers, students, and parents--advanced different reasons as the main causes of dropouts.

Martignetti concludes:

To deal with elementary instrumental dropouts the problem must be viewed in its entirety. The factors which make for a good instrumental music program are dependent upon one another. The entire instrumental music program is an integrated whole which suffers from an exclusion of any of the factors to make it a success (14:183).

In view of Martignetti's comment on the relatedness of the entire music program, a study of high school dropouts will be mentioned briefly. "A Study of Drop-Outs In Instrumental Music In Five Selected Schools In Michigan" by Hal A. Bergan was completed in 1957. The most important information relative to elementary instrumental music was that over half the dropouts were among the weaker players in their groups. This suggested that methods of recruitment and selection in the elementary schools be reevaluated.

IV. LITERATURE ON PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Frederick (6:150), in commenting on the hit-or-miss process in which most children choose an instrument, states that instrumental music must have its roots in the primary grades. Here the child should learn about the various

instruments--what they look like, what they sound like, and their versatility. He lists five basic ways for this to be accomplished:

1. Use small groups of upper elementary instrumentalists to stop in the primary classrooms to play one or two well-rehearsed selections. This shows the students a variety of musical instruments by sound and sight.
2. Invite the parents and children of the primary grades to all concerts. This familiarizes parents with the band program and introduces the student to a concert situation.
3. Prepare a list of fine recordings, television programs, and instrumental concerts and distribute them to the students and teachers. This should help motivate primary school children to recognize and enjoy instrumental music.
4. Encourage private piano study. Students who have had piano are able to adapt to a wind instrument more quickly.
5. Encourage musical field trips. With the cooperation of the music and primary teachers, many performances can be found for a music educational field trip.

The results of these five steps can interest children in instrumental music at a much earlier age. They will begin to form concepts of the various sounds of instruments. They will thus be better prepared for fifth grade instrumental recruitment.

A successful recruiting program must locate the talented student and provide guidance in the selection of the instrument best suited for him. Certain physical characteristics should be observed (20:53): Fingers should be

long enough for the clarinet. The trombone beginner should indicate enough growth to eventually reach 7th position. The tuba player should be sturdy enough for an eventual long parade. Emotional traits, agility, and dexterity are important to the success on some instruments. Good rhythm alone does not mean a person will be a good percussionist. Good dexterity and a self-controlled disposition are also important. An easily excitable drummer can ruin the tempo of an entire band. The slow moving, deliberate, yet reliable individual is a natural for success on such instruments as tuba, bass drum, and the low woodwinds. "Use of the foregoing ideas will provide more beginners in the lower voiced instruments, and the number who remain interested and continue on the instruments will be greatly increased (20:53)."

Scholastic achievement can be an important consideration in the assignment of instruments. The ability to think rapidly gives the pupil a better chance for success on the flute or clarinet which often have to play fast passages.

Sometimes a little salesmanship is necessary on the part of the director to convince the child and his parents to select the correct instrument. With a diplomatic buildup, most students will make the right choice. Salesmanship can be used to insure a balanced instrumentation that is considered necessary to give the greatest fulfillment to the

greatest number (21:52). A director may tell a student his chances of getting into the band are greater if he chooses a less popular instrument. When there are too many trumpets, he may point out that in symphony orchestras the trumpet is used mainly for rhythmic and dynamic effects. Only the solo cornet part in band carries the melody. If there is a scarcity of clarinets, he can stress the fact that the clarinet is the most important woodwind of the band. No one wants to play in a band with only thirty-six saxophones and ten clarinets. Therefore, the director must watch the development of his instrumentation.

In recruiting, it is also a good idea to talk with the room teacher. She knows the scholastic and emotional factors of each child probably better than anyone else. Since the policy of the public school is not to refuse the chance to play to anyone, the room teacher could alert the music director to possible peculiarities in some students. In this way he might better prepare to head off dropout problems (16:75).

Always it is wise to check the roll call carefully during the first few days of instruction. The parents of absent students should be called. It is common that the reason for a child's absence was that the parent failed to get the instrument in time for the first class. Usually a reminder is all that is needed (34:67). Chronic absentees at the beginning are definitely potential dropouts.

Ward (32:102) recommends that instrumental students of private teachers should play with a group as soon as they begin lessons. There will be fewer dropouts among promising students when they have something to look forward to other than a weekly lesson. "It is too much to ask a ten-year-old to practice thirty minutes a day...for a whole year before he begins to play with a band (32:102)." A beginner will sometimes tend to learn rhythm, pitch, and fingerings more rapidly when he is in with a group playing the same material. The momentum of the group will force him to fall in with the correct rhythm or pitch, and he has learned something by osmosis. This is of particular value to the young, irresponsible beginner who has trouble learning things on his own.

Poor work habits are an important factor in influencing dropouts. Some emphasis must be on teaching pupils how to practice (29:45). Time spent developing proper habits now may save years of trying to eliminate ingrained faulty ones in the future (32:46). It is clear that some students get less from two hours of practice than a more analytical player gets from one-half an hour. The analytical player works toward clearly defined and understood goals (33:42). One of the most important things a student can learn is how to organize his practice intelligently. Many students, and parents also, accept the old cliché that "practice makes perfect". It should be added that practice without understanding, aim, or direction will seldom, if ever, reach

perfection. Weerts has stated several recommendations for improving practice:

1. Musical growth depends upon the will to learn intrinsically intertwined with purpose.
2. A certain amount of confidence is needed.
3. Relaxation is important. Muscles must be free and not cramped.
4. Intelligence must be used throughout the practice session. Without thinking, learning stops.
5. Several short practice sessions are better than one long continuous period.

Toenes (30:29) devised a letter which would state the basic principles of practice and which could easily be understood by the parents and students. A space was left at the conclusion of the letter where parents could sign their names and place their phone numbers if they desired more information. He found the response to be tremendous. More than a fourth of the parents wanted to know how their children were doing and had not realized that practice outside of band was necessary. There was also an improvement in interest as well as in playing by the students.

Teachers must guard against emphasizing only the mechanical features of instrumental music. Musical understanding and a lasting interest in music is more than merely learning which valve to press down (13:42).

The idea of learning to read before one can speak is ridiculous. Yet, in musical training the symbols of musical notation are usually presented before the

ability to speak in music has been acquired. The symbols instead of being symbols of sounds, are presented as the symbols of actions to be performed, such as the pressing of a key (7:356).

Therefore, the beginner must learn to appreciate the quality of sound which may be obtained on a specific instrument before he can be expected to use his efforts to produce it (31:41). Tone, quality, harmony, rhythmic accompaniment, phrasing, expression, note placement, and counter-melody are examples of musical elements that should be introduced along with the mechanical aspects of learning to play (13:43). Other musical qualities, such as fine intonation and pitch sensitivity, do not just happen; they must be taught from the beginning. Herendeen states:

Children should be instructed to hear the beats identified with improper intonation. Cross fingerings and the process of lipping up or down in elimination of these beats should begin as soon as possible. Abundant use of unison studies and scales in all registers will help in the creation of pitch awareness. Not only will unison studies help with intonation, but those "little guys" on mellophone, third clarinet, and tuba will share in the joy of melody playing. Being the conformists they are, they will correct a good number of wrong and misfingered notes when they discover their deviations from the melody (10:69).

"More nebulous is the matter of selecting material of good quality. The seeds of good musical taste are sown in the elementary program, and here lies the director's greatest responsibility (12:35)." The continued use of trite and dull music will eventually lead to a serious drop-out problem. Band folders should contain well-arranged,

musically-satisfying transcriptions and original compositions of musical value as well as marches and novelties.

Enlisting the full cooperation of parents, according to Peters (19:154) is responsible for the low dropout rate of 5 percent at Joliet, Illinois. He spends a great deal of time making personal interviews and phone calls to make sure that the parents understand the program. Of those students who drop, he has found that about 80 percent have parents who do not care.

Rohner (28:51) presents an interesting plan to enlist the aid of the mothers in preventing potential dropouts. It is important to realize that a mother is almost always very interested in her children. If the beginner's mother can be motivated sufficiently, the success of the beginner is almost certain. She does not have to be an expert musician or even a very good one. The best method of gaining the enthusiastic active cooperation of the mothers is to teach them to play their children's instruments. With the mother learning the same instrument, she will encounter some of the same problems as the child and will be more sympathetic and understanding in helping him overcome them. The beginner will have the possibility of a daily private lesson given by his mother.

Rohner recommends that the mothers' class meet in the evening or on the weekend. If possible, parents should be

invited to observe their children in a regular band class. "It is almost an axiom that every superior high school instrumentalist has at least one parent who is seriously interested in the student's success in music (28:52)."

In the Martingnetti study (14:183), loss of interest due to lack of support at home was given as one of the main causes for dropouts. This would also suggest that the parents need to better understand the instrumental music program and to be kept informed of their child's progress. Since students gave difficulty of the instrument as the most important reason for dropouts, perhaps a better matching of student and instrument are needed. Again, guidance and understanding at home could help the student through the difficult stages. Time for practice was cited by the parents as the chief reason their children dropped out of band. This would again suggest better parental understanding and cooperation in providing the student with a regular home practice period.

CHAPTER III

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The band program in the Aberdeen School District has been in existence for approximately 40 years. Traditionally, the band was limited to strictly male membership. During the last six years, girls have been encouraged to join band in order to increase total membership. The program has been successful culminating with award-winning performing groups in the senior high school.

Organization of the beginning band classes in the elementary schools is begun during the second week in September. Sufficient time is allowed for the students to adjust to the routine of their new classrooms. In a more relaxed situation, they will make a more intelligent decision whether or not to participate in the instrumental program. The instructor visits each perspective classroom to explain the program and the procedure by which one might join. Since all of the students have taken a music aptitude test in the preceding spring, they are aware that classes will start at this time. Those who indicate an interest are examined, counseled, and given a letter to take home. The letter explains the program to the parents and how they may enroll their child should they choose to do so.

In 1967 a list of these students was kept by the instructor. From this list, totaling 193, there were 63 students who dropped out of the band program before the end of the first semester of the 1967-68 school year.

Each student who dropped out of band was personally administered a one-page questionnaire. The student was asked what instrument he was playing and how far he lived from school. The pupil also circled the following: boy or girl; 9, 10, or 11; 5th or 6th. From a given list, the dropout then placed an (x) behind the main reason he dropped band and a (✓) behind less important reasons, if any. Possible responses were as follows:

1. Too difficult
2. Lack of money
3. Dislike band book
4. Dislike instrument
5. No practice time
6. Moving to another city
7. Parents' wish
8. Dislike teacher
9. Illness
10. Lost interest
11. Behind in studies
12. Parents not interested
13. My friends do not play an instrument
14. List any other reasons

Students were asked to be as honest as possible in their answers and were assured that their names would not be associated with their responses. As the questionnaires were collected, they were separated by schools into folders. At the end of the first semester of the 1967-68 school year, the information was tabulated and analyzed.

Table I, page 31, illustrates the frequency of major causes of beginning band dropouts in the Aberdeen School District during the first semester of the 1967-68 school year.

TABLE I
 FREQUENCY OF MAJOR CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS

Major Causes	No.	Percent
Lack of money	17	27.0%
Parents' wish	11	18.0%
Lost interest	6	9.5%
Moving to another city	6	9.5%
No practice time	6	9.5%
Behind in studies	3	5.0%
Too difficult	3	5.0%
Dislike teacher	2	3.0%
Instrument too heavy	2	3.0%
Parents not interested	2	3.0%
Dislike instrument	1	1.5%
Getting braces	1	1.5%
Hearing problem	1	1.5%
Illness	1	1.5%
Too early	1	1.5%
Dislike band book	0	0
My friends do not play an instrument	0	0
Total	63	100.0%

By far, the majority of students, 17 or 27%, indicated a lack of money as the major cause for dropping out of band. Ranking second was parents' wish with 11 students or 18%. Three responses--lost interest, moving to another city, and no practice time--ranked third with 6 students or 9.5%. Behind in studies and too difficult ranked fourth and were chosen each by three students or 5%. Fifth in frequency, 2 students each or 3%, was dislike the teacher, instrument too heavy, and parents not interested. Ranking sixth with one student each or 1.5% was getting braces, hearing problem, illness, and class meeting too early in the morning. Two possible causes, dislike band book and my friends do not play an instrument were not indicated as causes for dropout by any of the students.

Frequency of secondary causes of dropouts was indicated by only 30 students and is illustrated in Table II, page 33.

TABLE II
 FREQUENCY OF SECONDARY CAUSES OF 30 BEGINNING
 BAND DROPOUTS

Secondary Causes	No.	Percent
Lack of money	6	20.0%
Parents not interested	5	16.8%
Lost interest	4	13.4%
No practice time	3	10.0%
Parents' wish	3	10.0%
Too difficult	3	10.0%
Behind in studies	1	3.3%
Embarrassment	1	3.3%
Forgot to practice	1	3.3%
Parents disliked noise	1	3.3%
Paper route and little league	1	3.3%
Taking piano instead	<u>1</u>	<u>3.3%</u>
Total	30	100.0%

Lack of money, indicated by 6 students or 20%, was also the most frequently chosen response as a secondary cause of dropouts. Parents not interested ranked second with 5 students or 16.8%. Third in frequency was lost interest chosen by 4 students or 13.4%. Three responses--no practice time, parents' wish, and too difficult--ranked fourth in frequency with 3 students each or 10%. The

following responses were listed by 1 student each or 3.3%: behind in studies, embarrassment, forgot to practice, parents disliked noise, paper route and little league, and taking piano instead.

Table III shows the frequency of major causes of beginning band dropouts in Washington School.

TABLE III
MAJOR CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS IN
WASHINGTON SCHOOL

Major Causes	No.	Percent
Parents' wish	6	30%
Lost interest	3	15%
Dislike teacher	2	10%
Lack of money	2	10%
Instrument too heavy	2	10%
Behind in studies	1	5%
Class meets too early	1	5%
Dislike instrument	1	5%
Moving to another city	1	5%
Parents not interested	<u>1</u>	<u>5%</u>
Total	20	100%

The largest group of students at Washington School, 6 or 30%, cited parents' wish as the major reason they

dropped out of band. Lost interest was indicated by 3 or 15%. Three responses--dislike teacher, lack of money, and instrument too heavy to carry to school--ranked third with 2 students each or 10%. The following responses were listed by 1 student each or 5%: behind in studies, class meets too early in the morning, dislike instrument, moving to another city, and parents not interested.

Frequency of secondary causes of dropouts in Washington School was indicated by only 10 students and is illustrated in Table IV.

TABLE IV
SECONDARY CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS IN
WASHINGTON SCHOOL

Secondary Causes	No.	Percent
Lack of money	3	30%
Parents not interested	3	30%
Too difficult	2	20%
Lost interest	1	10%
Parents' wish	<u>1</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total	10	100%

Lack of money and parents not interested were the leading secondary causes of dropouts in Washington School cited by 3 students each or 30% of those who responded. Too

difficult was indicated by 2 students or 20%. Lost interest and parents' wish were cited by 1 student each or 10%.

Table V shows the frequency of major causes of beginning band dropouts in A. J. West School.

TABLE V
MAJOR CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS IN
A. J. WEST SCHOOL

Major Causes	No.	Percent
Lack of money	5	33.3%
Moving to another city	3	20.0%
Too difficult	2	13.2%
Hearing problem	1	6.7%
Illness	1	6.7%
No practice time	1	6.7%
Parents not interested	1	6.7%
Parents' wish	<u>1</u>	<u>6.7%</u>
Total	15	100.0%

Lack of money, indicated by 5 students or 33.3%, was the leading cause of dropouts in A. J. West School. Ranking second, with 3 students or 20%, was moving to another city. Too difficult was third with 2 students or 13.2%. The following choices were listed by 1 student each or 6.7%: hearing problem, illness, no practice time, parents not interested, and parents' wish.

Frequency of secondary causes of dropouts in A. J. West School was indicated by only 6 students and is illustrated in Table VI.

TABLE VI
SECONDARY CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS IN
A. J. WEST SCHOOL

Secondary Causes	No.	Percent
Lack of money	2	33.3%
Lost interest	2	33.3%
Parents' wish	<u>2</u>	<u>33.4%</u>
Total	6	100.0%

Three secondary causes of dropouts in A. J. West School were cited by 2 students each or 33.3%. They were lack of money, lost interest, and parents' wish.

Table VII shows the frequency of major causes of beginning band dropouts in Robert Gray School.

TABLE VII
MAJOR CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS IN
ROBERT GRAY SCHOOL

Major Causes	No.	Percent
Lack of money	4	33.3%
Parents' wish	4	33.3%
Behind in studies	2	16.7%
Lost interest	<u>2</u>	<u>16.7%</u>
Total	12	100.0%

Lack of money and parents' wish, cited 4 students each or 33.3%, were the leading causes of dropouts in Robert Gray School. Behind in studies and lost interest ranked second with 2 students each or 16.7%.

Frequency of secondary causes of dropouts in Robert Gray School was indicated by only 6 students and is illustrated in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII
SECONDARY CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS IN
ROBERT GRAY SCHOOL

Secondary Causes	No.	Percent
No practice time	2	33.3%
Parents not interested	2	33.3%
Behind in studies	1	16.7%
Lost interest	<u>1</u>	<u>16.7%</u>
Total	6	100.0%

No practice time and parents not interested were cited by 2 students each or 33.3% as secondary causes of dropping out of band. Behind in studies and lost interest were listed by 1 student each or 16.7%.

Table IX, page 39, shows the frequency of major causes of beginning band dropouts in Central Park School.

TABLE IX
 MAJOR CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS IN
 CENTRAL PARK SCHOOL

Major Causes	No.	Percent
Lack of money	3	37.5%
Moving to another city	2	25.0%
No practice time	2	25.0%
Too difficult	<u>1</u>	<u>12.5%</u>
Total	8	100.0%

Lack of money, listed by 3 students or 37.5%, was the main reason for dropouts in Central Park School. Ranking second was moving to another city and no practice time with 2 students each or 25%. Too difficult was listed by 1 student or 12.5% as the major reason for dropping out of band. A secondary reason, too difficult, was listed by only 1 student.

Table X, page 40, shows the frequency of major causes of beginning band dropouts in McDermoth School.

TABLE X
 MAJOR CAUSES OF BEGINNING BAND DROPOUTS IN
 McDERMOTH SCHOOL

Major Causes	No.	Percent
Lack of money	3	37.5%
No practice time	3	37.5%
Lost interest	1	12.5%
Getting braces	<u>1</u>	<u>12.5%</u>
Total	8	100.0%

Lack of money and no practice time were listed by 3 students each or 37.5% as the major reasons they dropped out of band at McDermoth School. Ranking second was lost interest and getting braces with 1 student each or 12.5%. Lack of money, no practice time, and taking piano lessons were cited by 1 student each as secondary causes for dropout.

Table XI, page 41, shows the frequency of dropouts on specific instruments totally and by individual schools.

TABLE XI

FREQUENCY OF DROPOUTS ON SPECIFIC INSTRUMENTS
(Totally and By Individual Schools)

School	Woodwinds				Brass and Percussion						
	Fl.	Cl.	Sax.	Total	Cor.	Trb.	Mel.	Bar.	Tuba	Dr.	Total
Washington	2	5	1	8	3	3	3	3			12
A. J. West	4	4	1	9	4		1	1			6
Robert Gray	2	3	3	8	1	2				1	4
Central Park	3	1	2	6	1				1		2
McDermoth	<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>6</u>	-	<u>2</u>	-	-	-	-	<u>2</u>
Total	15	14	8	37	9	7	4	4	1	1	26

The majority of dropouts in Washington School were of the brass family and included 3 each of cornets, trombones, mellophones, and baritones with a total of 12. Those of the woodwind family were 2 flutes, 5 clarinets, and 1 alto saxophone, comprising a total of 8. Dropouts at A. J. West School were mostly woodwinds including 4 flutes, 4 clarinets, 1 alto saxophone, with a total of 9. The brass dropouts included 4 cornets, 1 mellophone, and 1 baritone totaling 6. Robert Gray School also had a majority of woodwind dropouts with 2 flutes, 3 clarinets, and 3 alto saxophones with a total of 8. The brass and percussion dropouts totaled 4 with 1 cornet, 2 trombones and 1 drum. Woodwind dropouts at Central Park School totaled 6 including 3 flutes, 1 clarinet, and 2 alto saxophones. Brass dropouts were only 1 cornet and 1 tuba. McDermoth School totaled 6 woodwind dropouts including 4 flutes, 1 clarinet, and 1 alto saxophone. Brass dropouts included 2 trombones.

The majority of dropouts, 37 in the five schools, were in the woodwind family. Flutes were first with 15. Clarinets ranked second with 14, and alto saxophones were third with 8. Brass and percussion totaled 26 with 9 cornets, 7 trombones, 4 mellophones, 4 baritones, 1 tuba, and 1 drum.

Table XII, page 43, shows comparisons between the number of boys and girls who dropped out of band, their ages 9 - 12, and their residence in town or out of town.

TABLE XII
COMPARISONS BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS,
AGES, AND RESIDENCES

School	Boys	Girls	9	10	11	12	In-Town	Out-Town
Washington	13	7		9	11		14	6
A. J. West	7	8		6	8	1	14	1
Robert Gray	6	6	1	7	4		8	4
Central Park	4	4		7	1		6	2
McDermoth	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	-	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
Total	32	31	1	33	27	2	45	18

The dropouts in Washington School included 13 boys and 7 girls. There were 9 pupils aged 10 and 11 pupils aged 11 while 14 lived in town and 6 out of town. Those at A. J. West School included 7 boys and 8 girls with 6 pupils aged 10 and 8 pupils aged 11. In-town students numbered 14 and only 1 student lived out of town. Robert Gray School had 6 boys and 6 girls. There were 7 pupils aged 10, 4 pupils aged 11, and 1 pupil aged 9. In-town students numbered 8 and out-of-town students numbered 4. Dropouts at Central Park School included 4 boys and 4 girls. Included were 7 pupils aged 10 and only 1 pupil aged 11. In-town students totaled 6 while only 2 lived out of town. Those at McDermoth School included 2 boys and 6 girls with 4 pupils aged 10, 3 pupils aged 11, and 1 pupil aged 12. Three of these lived in town while 5 lived out of town.

The total dropouts were almost equally divided with 32 boys and 31 girls. Their ages included 1 pupil aged 9, 33 pupils aged 10, 27 pupils aged 11, and 2 pupils aged 12. In-town students numbered 45 and out-of-town pupils numbered 18.

Table XIII compares major causes of beginning band dropouts in this study with those of the Martignetti study (14:180) in Bergen County, New Jersey.

TABLE XIII
COMPARISON OF MAJOR CAUSES OF DROPOUTS
OF THIS STUDY TO THOSE OF BERGEN COUNTY

Major Causes	Aberdeen	Bergen County
Lack of money	27.0%	14%
Parents' wish	18.0%	9%
No practice time	9.5%	31%
Behind in studies	5.0%	23%
Too difficult	5.0%	34%

It appears that while Aberdeen ranked first with lack of money as the major cause of dropouts with 27%, the Bergen County study placed it as fourth with 14%. Parents' wish ranked second in Aberdeen with 18% as opposed to Bergen County with 9%. No practice time ranked third and was given by 9.5% of the Aberdeen dropouts while Bergen County ranked

second with 31%. Behind in studies was listed as a major cause by only 5% of the Aberdeen dropouts as compared to 23% by Bergen County. Aberdeen listed too difficult as being cited by only 5% of the dropouts while Bergen County listed this as its major cause at 34%.

Table XIV compares the Aberdeen dropouts on specific instruments with those of Bergen County.

TABLE XIV
COMPARISON OF ABERDEEN DROPOUTS ON SPECIFIC INSTRUMENTS
WITH THOSE OF BERGEN COUNTY

Study	Woodwinds	Brass	Percussion
Aberdeen	59.0%	39.0%	2.0%
Bergen County	47.5%	22.8%	29.5%

The majority of dropouts in Aberdeen (59%) were those of the woodwind family. In the Bergen County study woodwinds also led the dropouts with 47.5%. Ranking second in Aberdeen were instruments of the brass family with 39%. Second in Bergen County were percussion instruments with 29.5%. Aberdeen percussion dropouts, ranking third represented only 2% of the total, while brass dropouts (22.8%) ranked third in Bergen County. Adjustments were made in the Bergen County percentages to include only the wind and percussion dropouts and not those on string instruments.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

This study was made in an effort to determine the causes of beginning band dropouts in the Aberdeen School District, Aberdeen, Washington. Frequency of causes according to the students was determined through the use of a questionnaire.

The study disclosed that lack of money was by far the most common cause given by 27% of all the students who dropped out of band during the first semester. This was also the most prevalent cause in individual schools as well as in the total district. Of those students who indicated a secondary cause for dropping band, lack of money again claimed the majority with 20%.

Parents' wish was cited by 18% of the district's beginning band dropouts and was the second most prevalent major cause. Of those students who indicated a secondary cause, 16.8% ranked second in choosing parents not interested.

Other major causes and the percent of students who cited them are as follows: lost interest 9.5%, moving to another city 9.5%, no practice time 9.5%, behind in studies 5%, too difficult 5%, dislike teacher 3%, instrument too

heavy 3%, dislike instrument 1.5%, getting braces 1.5%, hearing problem 1.5%, illness 1.5%, and class meets too early in the morning 1.5%.

The majority of dropouts in the school district (59%) were on woodwind instruments. Those on the brass instruments ranked second with 39%. Only 1 percussion student dropped comprising 2% of the total.

The 63 dropouts were divided almost equally between 32 boys and 31 girls. Most were aged either 10 or 11 years. The majority were in-town residents totaling 45, while out-of-town residents totaled only 18.

Comparisons with the Bergen County study showed lack of money as the major cause of dropouts in Aberdeen as opposed to too difficult as the major cause in Bergen County. The largest number of dropouts in both studies occurred on woodwind instruments.

II. CONCLUSIONS

According to the results of this study, the majority of students who dropped out of beginning band during the first semester did so because of a lack of money. At present, school-owned instruments in Aberdeen available for elementary student use are very limited and mostly in very poor condition. Therefore, a student who could not afford

to rent or buy an instrument downtown usually had no recourse but to drop from the program.

More dropouts on woodwinds than on brass and percussion would indicate that woodwinds are perhaps more difficult to learn in the very beginning stages. They are more difficult to learn to put together, especially the correct assembly of the reed and ligature. They are more awkward to hold for the completely inexperienced student. The flute can be especially difficult for a beginner to achieve a good tone upon for several days. The alto saxophone usually offers less problems at the beginning unless the student is unfortunate and becomes owner of a poor instrument.

There appears to be no significant relationship between the number of boys to the number of girls who dropped out of the beginning band program. They were almost evenly divided between 32 boys and 31 girls. There were more dropouts in the 9 - 10 age group as compared to the 11 - 12 age group. Maturity most likely is the factor here. The student who is a little older may make a more intelligent decision and then stick with it. In-town dropouts far outnumbered those out-of-town with 45 in-town as opposed to 18 out-of-town. Perhaps in-town students become more involved in other after-school activities.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Aberdeen School District make available more and better quality school-owned instruments for student use in the elementary schools. Instruments such as small sized tubas (with cases so they may be taken home for practice), and baritone horns in good condition must be made available by the school district as they are too expensive to either buy or rent by the students. It is recommended that the district also obtain smaller instruments such as flutes, clarinets, cornets, and trombones. These could be rented to needy students for a nominal fee. Students might be permitted to use these instruments in a similar manner as scholarships are now granted to eligible students upon presentation of evidence of need.

Since many students indicated that parents' wish was their reason for dropping out of band, it is suggested that a better understanding of the program by the parents is needed. Parents must realize the value of instrumental music and what is expected of them and their children who take part in it. They should be made aware that their help is needed in scheduling a daily practice time and maintaining their child's interest in the activity. Further research in this area might well include interviews with parents of dropouts. Many times loss of interest can be a direct result of parental apathy.

It is, therefore, recommended that a more concentrated and effective campaign of publicity and selling of the program city-wide be inaugurated. The working man of Aberdeen must be made more aware of the benefits that can come from the instrumental program. He must be made to want to sacrifice something else in order to pay for an instrument for his child.

A majority of woodwind dropouts would indicate a need for more careful screening and counseling on these instruments. At the present time, woodwind students are selected by an examination of teeth, lips, and finger length as well as the Seashore Test score. More time and care might be taken at the beginning to explain the assembly and playing position for woodwind instruments especially tone production and breath support for flutes. Special effort must be made to insure woodwind instrument students do not get discouraged by lack of individual attention and help. The author should strive to increase his knowledge of beginning woodwind problems.

The large amount of after-school activities available especially to in-town students must be dealt with by parents and children. The child and parents must make decisions as to which activities will be participated in and adhere to that decision. They will not always decide in favor of the music program. However, the possibility of the students

starting many activities and participating in none of them would be eliminated.

It is recommended that in the future a district-wide followup study of band dropouts be instigated. This would determine the complete picture of dropout problems throughout the Aberdeen School District.

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A P P E N D I X

BAND QUESTIONNAIRE

Each student who decides to drop out of band is asked to fill out this sheet. Please be as honest as possible in your answers. Do not write your name on the paper.

Instrument you were playing was _____.

How far do you live from your school _____.

Circle the following items that apply to you:

Sex: Boy - Girl

Age: 9 - 10 - 11

Year in school: 5th - 6th

Place an (X) behind the main reason you are dropping band.

Place a (✓) behind less important reasons, if any.

1. Too difficult _____
2. Lack of money _____
3. Dislike band book _____
4. Dislike instrument _____
5. No practice time _____
6. Moving to another city _____
7. Parents' wish _____
8. Dislike teacher _____
9. Illness _____
10. Lost interest _____
11. Behind in studies _____
12. Parents not interested _____
13. My friends do not play an instrument _____
14. List any other reasons _____