

**An Examination of the Relationship between
School Administrators and Music Teachers**

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Abstract

The relationship between school administrators and music teachers is an important part of maintaining a strong music program. However, it seems that many music teachers may not understand the complexities of being an administrator. Similarly, many administrators may not understand what takes place in the music classroom, nor what the needs of the classroom are and why those needs exist.

In order to learn more about the relationship between school administrators and music teachers, an online survey was sent to music teachers and administrators to examine perceived attitudes and relationships. This project resulted in a series of ideas and suggestions for music teachers and administrators to better engage and create a positive relationship with each other. This project provides insight into the responsibilities of administrator and music teachers and factors that can influence their decisions and attitudes.

Both administrators and music teachers indicated **communication** was an important aspect of maintaining a positive relationship, as it appeared as the top incident category in each question. However, when asked what they wanted to know about each other, both groups indicted '**nothing**' as their top answer (A-43%, MT-26%).

This research suggests that if music teachers and administrators are to have positive working relationships, they need to follow their suggestions as indicated below, which they seem to largely agree upon. Both groups must communicate openly so there is an understanding of what each does and work together for the benefit of students.

Background

The music teacher and the school administrator work with similar goals in mind: to give each student the best possible educational experience. Perspectives on how to achieve this goal, however, may differ between the two groups.

Music teachers are set with numerous tasks from managing finances, to planning concerts, and organizing tours (Harvey & Beauchamp, 2005; Heston, Dedrick, Raschke & Whitehead, 1996). These tasks are in addition to the normal day-to-day teaching duties, which are often further supplemented with student or teaching students during planning periods, lunchtime, and before and after school (Schieb, 2006). One reason music teachers put extra effort toward helping students is to ensure a well-received public performances. In fact, most impressions of music programs tend to come from such public performances (Burton, 2004; Hoffer, 1998), and the pressure to create well-received performance is considerable. In addition, music teachers often fear that a weak performance could diminish support from their administrator (Harvey & Beauchamp, 2005). Lack of support from an administrator has been cited as a major reason for music teachers leaving a job (Hancock, 2008).

The duties and responsibilities of administrators are also numerous. Administrators are often responsible for tasks of finance, instruction, and professional and moral support needed to run an effective school program (Loch, 1991). Such tasks are critical to the day-to-day and yearlong operations of a school. Administrators are often responsible for guiding the curriculum of the school and making decisions regarding courses of study offered in a school. Such decisions create implications for

staffing allocations, a decision which can fall to the administrator as well (Abril & Gault, 2006).

Staffing decisions have important implications in many music programs. Many music teachers who teach elective courses feel increased pressure to maintain student numbers in order to preserve the quality of the music programs (Schieb, 2006). In fact, some elective course music teachers attempt to increase their student numbers with hopes of increased staffing. Financially, large classes are more cost-effective for the schools (Schieb, 2006). Hence, a music teacher may strive for more students, but it may make more fiscal sense for staffing decision makers to maintain status quo. Inadequate staffing can create a perception that the number of students in a program is more important than the quality of instruction (Schieb, 2006). Essentially, the burden of quantity battles with the quest for quality.

Perhaps some aspects of the issue of student number's effect on staffing lay in the perception of the music program itself. In 1991, Greenwood conducted a study to identify important characteristics of the band program according to the principal's perception and sought to compare the principal's perception of the band with the role of music in the curriculum (Greenwood, 1991). Through analyzing data, Greenwood discovered that principals perceived a band program's greatest strengths to be teaching music concepts and performance skills, teaching cooperation (highest rated) and discipline in achieving goals, and promoting school spirit and good public relations (Greenwood, 1991). These results were corroborated by Payne's 1990 study, investigating the beliefs of selected school personnel concerning the value of music in the public school curriculum study, as well as Abril & Gault's 2008 study, investigating principals' perceptions of the

curriculum of secondary school music programs in the United States. Each of these studies suggested principals' perceived the strength of the music programs to be utilitarian, with little relation to classroom learning (Greenwood, 1991; Payne, 1990; Abril & Gault, 2008). In general, principals (and other administrative personnel) viewed non-musical outcomes with equal or greater importance than musical outcomes (Greenwood, 1991; Payne, 1990; Abril & Gault, 2008). Each study points to a lack of perceived value of the actual content of the course (music). Such values may suggest lack knowledge of what happens in a music classroom on a daily basis. Are principal's perceptions of the music program aligned with what is really happening (Abril & Gault, 2007)?

An article published in the National Association for Secondary Principals Bulletin presented twelve categories of tasks to be completed in 'gearing up' for the school year. Most included contacting and working with groups of people such as custodians, food service workers, parents, students and faculty members (Findley & Findley, 1998). Interestingly, music teachers are separated into a distinct category, apart from faculty members. The authors encouraged principals to consult with and develop music program activities with the music teacher, so that an administrator may know more about such a visible program for its school. Indeed, some administrators admit that they lack knowledge about music program, specifically about courses offered in their schools (Abril & Gault, 2008). It does appear that there is a desire from administrators to know more about music programs (Abril & Gault, 2006), but perhaps music teachers are not making the effort to inform and educate (Hoffer, 1998).

Perhaps some music teachers have developed isolationist attitudes, content with extricating themselves from administrators. In a 2005 case study, Harvey and Beauchamp revealed telling comments by music teachers regarding interaction with administrators. "They don't interfere," said one teacher who felt that his administrator trusted the job he did, and therefore, stayed out of the way (pg 60). This displays attitudes of isolationism and assumption. It speaks not of trust, but of a break down of communication between music teachers and administrators. In another example, an administrator requested formal write-ups following department meetings, to which another music teacher said, "bits of papers are not high on our list of priorities if we've got a concert the next week"(pg. 61). This music teacher's comment seems to reflect a lack of the 'big picture' in the school environment. It also displays a general disconnect between the administrator and the music teacher, if the music teacher does not feel a need to fulfill an administrator's request. The vignette from Harvey and Beauchamp's article speaks strongly to the need for improved communication and an improved understanding of the relationship between music teachers and administrators.

It seems that different levels of understanding and values exist between administrators and music teachers. Scheib felt that "Music teachers hold not only developmentalist and social meliorist ideals ... but also humanist ideals taught through their training as musicians. In contrast, policymakers (school administrative personnel) often appear to hold social efficiency ideals. They want schools to produce" (p. 8). According to Scheib, music teachers are centered on the students and administrators are focused on numbers and outcomes. Perhaps variables exist in school systems that impact the working relationship of administrators and music teachers (Loch, 1991). Research

must be conducted to determine whether there are gaps in the ideas and philosophy of music teachers and administrators (Schieb, 2006). Through research, a higher degree of understanding regarding the current perceptions of key people in the school community (Abril & Gault, 2008) may be achieved. Perhaps sharing personal experiences can provide key attitudes to facilitate positive working relationships between administrators and music teachers. It is clear that a sharing of ideas and information needs to take place so that both groups can better understand the unique challenges of each other's job (Hancock, 2008).

This study seeks to enable understanding of the relationship between music teachers and administrators. Through responses to an questionnaire completed by music teachers and administrators, a series of 'best practice' ideas were created to help both groups better engage one another, and to foster positive relationships. The end goal of such engagement is to create a successful music program that provides a positive and lasting experience for students. The guiding research questions of this study were:

- 1) What factors (types of experiences) impact the relationship between music teachers and administrators?
- 2) What are current perceptions of each other's roles and responsibilities?
- 3) What factors or behaviors do administrators/music teachers consider important to the quality of the working relationship?
- 4) What are some suggestions for fostering positive relationships between music teachers and administrators?

Method

Terms

For the purposes of this study, the terms “music teacher” and “administrator” will be defined as follows:

Music teacher – A licensed teacher of K-12 music, belonging to a professional organization.

Administrator – A licensed administrator who works with and has contact with music teachers in a school setting in K-12. Also referred to as principal.

Participants

Participants for this study were selected from the state of Minnesota. In order to reach potential participants, professional organizations for both music teachers and administrators were identified. Music teacher organizations were previously known to the researcher and were selected to represent each level of K-12 teaching and each discipline of music teaching (general, band, string and choral). Administrator organizations were found through an internet search using keywords ‘Minnesota’, ‘administrator’, and ‘organization’. Three organizations were selected to represent each level of K-12 teaching

The selected professional music organizations were contacted via email, and, Minnesota Band Directors Association (MBDA), the Minnesota Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association (ADCA), and the Minnesota Chapter of Kodaly sent the recruitment email to their members. Because access to a state string organization was not available, all responding music teacher participants were encouraged to forward the recruitment email to string colleagues in Minnesota. Emails were also sent to individual

string teachers known to the researcher, with a request to send the recruitment email on to other string teachers.

After initial email contact with three administrative organizations, the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) agreed to forward the recruitment email to its members.

Procedure

Each participating organization forwarded the recruitment email to its members containing a short description of the study's purpose and a link to the on-line questionnaire.

The administrator organization, MASA, had a different method of distribution, as it sent the link to the online questionnaire and description of the study within the body of a bi-weekly email newsletter to its members. The written description asked superintendents to forward the study information and link to their principals. After one week, this method yielded no results. Additional emails were sent to previously mentioned music teacher organizations (asking music teachers to forward the email to their administrators) and to administrators familiar to the researcher. Two weeks after the initial recruitment notice in the MASA email newsletter, the researcher once again contacted MASA, which sent out an email "blast" to its members, this time containing only the study description and the link to the online questionnaire. The response rate after the email blast was satisfactory.

The population of music teachers was 108 respondents and the population of administrators was 110 respondents.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was available through a link embedded in the recruitment emails, and hosted by www.surveymonkey.com. Within the online consent form, respondents were again reminded of the purpose, design, content and length of the questionnaire and respondents were assured of the anonymity of their responses. After clicking “I agree to participate”, respondents entered the online questionnaire. Both groups were sent a similar questionnaire form, with only the subjects in specific questions (music teacher or administrator) changed depending on the respondent.

Referencing the four research questions created at the onset of this study, four corresponding sections were created for the questionnaire. The research questions were:

1. What factors (types of experiences) impact the relationship between music teachers and administrators?
2. What are current perceptions of each other’s roles and responsibilities?
3. What are commonalities and traits among the relationships between Administrators and Music Teachers?
4. What are suggestions for fostering positive relationships between music teachers and administrators?

In reference to research question one (experience), section one of the questionnaire addressed a series of demographic questions, involving years of experience, settings, levels taught, and number of administrators and music teachers in their current building. In reference to research question two (perception) section two asked a series of four open-ended questions. Respondents were asked what they (Group A) knew about the other group (Group B), what they (Group A) wanted to know about the other group (Group B), and what the other group (Group B) needs to know about them (Group A). Respondents were also asked to define their own responsibilities, in order for the researcher to compare responses with the opposite group’s perception. In reference to

research question three (personal experience), section three asked respondents to discuss one relationship they had with either an administrator or music teacher. Respondents filled in a four point rating scale (1-extremely negative, 2-negative, 3-positive, 4-extremely positive) to indicate the status of their relationship. Respondents were then asked to describe specific actions and attitudes by themselves and their counterpart in open-ended responses. In reference to research question four (suggestions), section four asked respondents for suggestions to foster positive working relationships through open-ended responses.

Pilot

The questionnaire was piloted with a small group of administrators and music teachers in central Nebraska, due the researcher's personal tie with an administrator. The pilot group gave responses to each question and then offered feedback on the questionnaire. One question was piloted with music teachers only, to see if the information provided was valuable. The piloted question asked respondents to describe their own duties (section two: perception). Upon examining responses, it was determined that this was a productive question and was added to the administrator's questionnaire. In addition, section three (personal experience), initially asked respondents to describe the actions of their counterpart that led to their (respondent's) characterization. In the pilot study, it was discovered that some respondents spoke more about their own actions than the actions of their counterpart. Therefore, the question was split into two questions, one addressing the actions of the counterpart and the other describing the respondent's actions.

Results

Description of Analysis

Data from respondents was gathered and sorted into incidents. For example, in the case of a question that asked for suggestions, each suggestion that was given in any response was considered an incident. Respondents could provide as many incidents as they deemed necessary in responding to the questionnaire. All incidents were then sorted into distinct categories. A category was determined distinct if two or more incidents occurred. Distinct categories were then grouped into broad categories, which essentially represented a central idea or theme.

Questions regarding duties and responsibilities were based on the collective response of each group. Music teacher (MT) respondents represented band, orchestra, choral and general music at levels K-12. Administrator (Ad) respondents represented principals and assistant principals at high school, middle school and elementary schools as well as other K-12 school configurations. Therefore, incidents regarding duties and responsibilities were treated as a general job description for administrators and music teachers.

Section One: Experience

Factors that impact the relationship between music teachers and administrators.

MT respondents reflected considerable career teaching experience in each of the three indicated school levels: elementary (73%) junior high/middle school (92%) and high school (78%). In their current positions, the population of respondents was mostly equally distributed among K-12 levels: elementary (42%), junior high/middle school

(57%) and high school (53%). A majority of MT respondents have been in their current jobs for nine years or less (54%), while a half of the respondents spent more than fifteen years in education. Forty-five percent of MT respondents indicated a bachelor's degree as being the highest degree obtained, with the remaining 55% indicating a graduate degree (48% masters and 7% doctorate). Most MT respondents were members of either ACDA (choral-46%) or MBDA (band-42%). Members of the Minnesota Kodaly Chapter and Minnesota chapter of American String Teacher Association made up the remaining 13% (7% and 6% respectively). A majority of MT respondents indicated their current school setting as suburban (53%). On average, MT respondents reported there to be three administrators and three and a half music teachers in their buildings.

Administrator (Ad) respondents reflected education experience in each of the three levels indicated: elementary (70%), junior high/middle school (81%), and high school (50%). In their current positions, Ad respondents were nearly equally balanced in their K-12 teaching level experience: elementary (47%), junior high/middle school (44%) and high school (50%). A majority of Ad respondents have been in their current job less than four years (43%), while a majority has spent more twenty or more years in education (55%). All Ad respondents earned a graduate degree, with 10% of respondents earning a doctoral degree. Most Ad respondents were members of one or more of the following professional organizations: MASA (Minnesota Association of School Administrators – 26%) MASSP (Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals – 61%), and MESPA (Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association – 40%). A slight majority of Ad respondents described their current school setting as rural (54%). On average, Ad

respondents reported there to be two administrators and two and a half music teachers in their buildings.

Section Two: Perception

What are the responsibilities of administrators?

The initial categorization of incidents of Ad respondents' description of their own duties and responsibilities led to 19 distinct categories, which were grouped into five broad categories. The broad categories, covering 98% of the incident responses were: 1) *Supporting Teachers* (46%); 2) *Facilitating School Climate* (17%); 3) *Working With Outside Groups* (14%); 4) *Management of Resources* (12%); 5) *Student Interaction/Influence* (10%).

The initial categorization of incidents of MT respondents' perception of administrator's duties and responsibilities led to 19 distinct response categories. Some of these responses fell into larger, broad categories. The three broad categories, which cover 68% of the total responses, were 1) *Management of Resources* (30%) 2) *Support Teachers* (25%) 3) *Student Interactions* (13%). Other notable categories included *Providing Leadership* (7%), *Managing School Environment* (7%) and *Communicating with the community outside the school* (5%).

What are the responsibilities of music teachers?

The initial categorization of incidents of MT respondents' description of their own duties and responsibilities led to 25 distinct categories. Most of these responses fell into larger, broad categories. The five broad categories, which covered 92% of the responses, were 1) *Administrative Duties* (15%); 2) *Teaching the Student* (19%); 3)

Teaching Courses (20%); 4) *Music Program Aspects* (22%); 5) *Inside the Classroom* (18%).

The initial categorization of incidents of Ad respondents' perception of music teacher responsibilities led to 20 distinct categories, and five broad categories. The broad categories, which covered 97% of the responses were 1) *Teaching Specific Content* (29%); 2) *Affecting the Student* (28%); 3) *Promoting and Performances of the Music Program* (22%); 4) *Following District Curriculum/State Standards* (10%); 5) *Teaching Courses* (9%).

What would you like to know/clarified about the other's responsibilities?

After analyzing the data was this question, it was determined that broad categories did not exist. Instead, questions were groups in distinct categories only, and then a general question what written from the culmination of all response within the distinct category.

Ad respondents' most-cited response was that they needed no clarification (43%) or that they already had a good understanding (8%) of music teacher responsibilities. In other responses, Ad respondents' wondered how music teachers decided what was important in their classroom (20%). Specifically, they wondered how music teachers determined grading practice and how they balanced performance with appreciation. In other responses, Ad respondents asked what music teachers perceived as their duties in comparison to descriptions given from the school districts (8%). Finally, Ad respondents asked how many lessons were needed for students during a grading period and why students had to leave other classes to have lessons (8%).

The initial categorization of MT respondents' incidents led to five major questions, which cover 87% of incidents. All other questions had two or fewer incidents. MT respondents' top response indicated that they needed no clarification on administrator duties and responsibilities (26%). MT respondents' next highest response asked for a description of an administrator's responsibilities (17%). MT respondents also asked what factors were involved in making big decisions (staffing, budget) and whether administrators sought consultation, or made these decisions independently (14%). MT respondents also wondered to what extent it is the administrator's job to advocate for music and in what ways music teachers and administrators could work together to advocate for music programs (11%). Finally, MT respondents asked for clarification on what factors prevent administrators from being visible in the school and at events, such as concerts (11%).

What does the other group need to know about your responsibilities?

The initial categorization of incidents regarding MT respondents' description of what administrators need to know about music teacher responsibilities led to 12 distinct categories, gathered into four broad categories which covered 83 % of incidents. Some distinct categories remained isolated from broad categories, as they did not sufficiently fit into the broad categories. MT respondents' most cited response was *Knowing the Aspects of Running a Music Program* (38%) followed by the *Understanding the Challenges of Running Large Classes* (22%). Also cited by MT respondents were *Understanding the Responsibilities with Curriculum* (10%) and *Understanding What Student Contact Time Looks Like in a Music Classroom* (13%).

The initial categorization of incidents regarding Ad respondents' description of what music teachers need to know about administrator responsibilities led to 11 distinct categories, which fell into four broad categories which covered 89 % of incidents. One distinct category remained isolated from broad categories, as it did not sufficiently fit into the broad categories, but occurred enough to be represented. Ad respondents' most cited response expressed a desire for music teachers to remember that an *Administrator has Responsibilities to All Departments in the School* (36%). Ad respondents also wanted music teachers to know that *It is an Administrator's Responsibility to Support Music Teachers, the Music Program and Music Students* (23%). Ad respondents also felt it important for music teacher to remember that it is an administrator's responsibility to *Make Tough Resource Related Decisions* (16%). In contrast, Ad respondents' next highest response indicated they felt that *Music Teachers Already Understand an Administrator's Responsibilities* (13%). Finally, Ad respondents' wanted music teachers to know that *It is an Administrator's Responsibility to Follow Required Mandates* (7%).

Section Three: Personal Experience

How would you characterize your relationship with a specific music teacher or administrator?

A majority of Ad respondents characterized their relationship with a specific music teacher as positive (50%) and 46% described their relationship as extremely positive. Only 6% of Ad respondents described their relationship as negative.

A slight majority of MT respondents characterized their relationship as positive (53%) and 36% respondents characterizing it as 'extremely positive'. Only 11% of music teacher respondents described their relationship as negative.

Actions/Attitudes of Administrators.

Ad respondents identified their own actions/attitudes that supported their characterization of their specific relationship with an individual music teacher. Ad respondents' responses led to 14 distinct categories, which were grouped into six broad categories. The broad categories were: 1) *Communication* (35%); 2) *Advocating For and Understanding the Music Program* (17%); 3) *Positive Actions* (15%); 4) *Visibility* (14%); 5) *Support* (11%); 6) *Collaboration* (8%).

MT respondents identified characteristics of their administrator that supported their characterization of their relationship with their administrator. MT respondents indicated 12 distinct categories that were grouped into three broad categories: 1) *Communication* (27%) 2) *Positive Actions* (21%) 3) *Understanding the Music Program* (20%).

Actions/Attitudes of Music Teachers.

Ad respondents identified action/attitudes of an individual music teacher that supported the characterization of their relationship. Ad respondents' responses led to 18 distinct categories, which were grouped into five broad categories. The broad categories were: 1) *Communication* (26%); 2) *Work Collaboratively School-Wide* (25%); 3) *Positive attitude* (21%); 4) *Student Centered* (18%); 5) *Experts in the (Music) Field* (9%).

MT respondents identified their personal actions/attitudes that supported their own characterization of their relationship with their administrator. MT respondents' responses indicated 11 distinct categories that were grouped into five broad categories: 1) *Respect* (28%) 2) *Communication* (24%) 3) *Positive Attitude* (18%) 4) *Personal Work Ethic* (16%) 5) *Face to Face Interaction* (11%)

Section Four: Suggestions

What are suggestions for facilitating a positive relationship?

Ad respondents made suggestions for facilitating a relationship with music teachers. Ad respondents indicated 13 distinct categories, which were grouped into four broad categories. The broad categories were: 1) *Positive Actions* (38%); 2) *Positive Attitudes* (34%); 3) *Understanding the School and the Music Program* (15%); 4) *Collaboration* (13%).

MT respondents made suggestions for facilitating a relationship with administrators. MT respondents' responses indicated 17 distinct categories that were grouped into four broad categories: 1) *Professionalism* (28%) 2) *Communication* (22%) 3) *Understanding the Music Program* (21%) 4) *Positive Attitude* (17%).

Discussion

After examining the data, several comparisons yielded interesting findings among responses of music teachers and administrators. While some data supported, other sets of collected data refuted, findings and viewpoints previously shared by other authors. The discussion is presented with the following themes (describe the source of the themes):

1)Experience 2)Administrator Duties and Responsibilities 3)Music Teacher Duties and Responsibilities 4)Communication 5)The 'Big Picture'.

Experience

The population of respondents overall represented an appropriate balance of levels (elementary, middle, secondary) and areas (choir, string, band, elementary). However, in examining the data, factors of experience could not be considered in the relationship between music teachers and administrators because the answers of each respondent were not linked. In assuring anonymity, responses to questions were not correlated and therefore, could not be compared to determine whether certain factors influenced the relationship between music teachers and administrators.

An interesting trend was observed of the population of respondents. When considering optional graduate work, a slight majority of music teachers (MT) respondents chose to obtain a higher degree (beyond bachelors) while very few administrator (Ad) respondents chose to earn a higher degree (beyond masters). This data may suggest a desire by music teachers to become experts in their field, while administrators may not consider further degree work to serve the same purpose. This proved interesting because MT respondents described being an expert in their field as a duty and responsibility, but was not perceived by Ad respondents (not sure what you mean – Ad didn't share this

sense of duty? Or perceive it as important to music teachers?). However, when identifying characteristics of positive music teachers, Ad respondents listed being an expert in music as an important characteristic. This may suggest that while Ad respondents did not consider being a music expert a duty, they did consider being an expert an action of a positive music teacher.

Administrator Duties and Responsibilities

Both Ad and MT respondents perceived *Management of Resources* as a duty of administrators. This supports the findings of Loch and Abril & Gault in their studies (Loch, 1991; Abril & Gault, 2006). Resources identified by respondents included staffing decisions, budgeting and managing the school schedule. It is notable that MT respondents perceived *Management of Resources* as an administrator's duty more so than Ad respondents. This data may downplay Abril & Gault's suggestion that administrators have control over some resource decisions in their schools (Abril & Gault, 2006), and may simply force the question 'how much control?' The control is such that Ad respondents wanted music teachers to know that administrators struggled with making *Tough Resource Decisions* within the school. This presents some ambiguity as to how much control administrators really have over *Management of Resources*. MT respondents, assuming administrators had control over *Management of Resources*, asked how much control they had and what factors influenced such decisions.

Another major difference appeared in Ad respondents' description of their interaction with *Facilitating and Reviewing Curriculum*. While MT respondents perceived curriculum to be very little of administrator's duties, Ad respondents described a much larger part of their duty to be *Facilitating and Reviewing Curriculum*. This

discrepancy may suggest that while administrators are involved in curriculum, they may not be directly involved in music curriculum, leading MT respondents to not perceive Ad's reviewing and facilitating.

This study seems to contradict Schieb's (2006) claim that administrators are concerned primarily with production and efficiency more so than being concerned about students. Nearly half of Ad respondents' responses identified *Supporting Teachers* as their duty, which included observing teachers and working with teachers on curriculum. Additionally, Ad respondents specifically identified working with students and providing leadership for the school climate. While the emphasis is **to the same level** (?), MT respondents also contradict Schieb's claim, describing administrator duties and responsibilities as supporting teachers and working with students more so than duties and responsibilities that could be construed as dealing only with production and efficiency.

Music Teacher Duties and Responsibilities

MT respondents described one of their responsibilities as *Administrative Duties*, including inventory, budgeting (and fundraisers), and organizing travel. This finding is congruent with the several previous studies (Harvey & Beauchamp, 2005; Heston, Dedrick, Raschke & Whitehead, 1996). In contrast only two Ad respondent incidents (less than 1%) addressed music teacher administrative duties. This difference may be due to a lack of communication on the music teacher's part, in letting an administrator know all that is done throughout a normal day. The difference may also be blamed on a failure to perceive, on the administrator's part, that these duties are being accomplished on a regular basis. It is certain that this broad category of *Administrative Duties* not being perceived by Ad respondent exhibits a gap between the description and the perception of

a music teacher's duties and responsibilities. Interest in closing this gap was addressed as some administrator respondents asked for a specific description of music teacher duties.

MT respondents, as well as Schieb (2006), described lessons as a specific course music teachers were responsible to teach. In contrast, few Ad respondents perceived lessons as a duty or responsibility. This may suggest that Ad respondents either don't perceive lessons being taught, or more specifically, don't perceive lessons as a class that requires preparation time. Ad respondents asked for more information regarding lessons, specifically asking why students needed to leave class for lessons and how many lessons students needed within a grading term. In regards to other courses, a majority of Ad respondents labeled courses as "K-5 music" or "6-8 band" whereas music teacher respondents specifically labeled their courses as '7th grade choir' or '6th grade general music'. This finding may suggest that Ad respondents perceived the whole program, whereas MT respondents perceived their duties and responsibilities as specific classes.

Stepping back from individual courses, two interesting differences in description and perception of content and curriculum emerge. First, MT respondents described *Planning and Learning Content*, while Ad respondents perceived music teachers as *Following District Curriculum and State Standards*. This may suggest that while Ad respondents perceive music teachers to be following a set curriculum for music classes, MT respondents are adapting and modifying curriculum for music classes on a regular basis.

The other interesting difference in description and perception occurred when Ad respondents perceive five specific concepts (*Culture, History, Theory, Reading Music and Performance Skills*) and one vague concept of 'Teaching Music' as a part of what

music teachers should teach in their classroom. The only specific teaching concept mentioned by a small portion of MT respondents was teaching *Performance Skills what else did they list? This comparison is unclear to me.* This difference may suggest that Ad respondents have a desire for specific content in the music classroom, but may not be communicating such desires to music teachers. This becomes especially interesting when considered alongside the studies by Greenwood (1991), Payne (1990) and Abril & Gault (2008). Each of these studies described the administrator's perception of music to be largely utilitarian, and to serve a purpose outside of music. Ad respondents of this study seem to perceive music classes actually teaching musical concepts within the classroom. By perceiving many different concepts, all of which are musical, Ad respondents are suggesting a differing attitude from participants of previous studies. It could be the word "perceiving" that is confusing? Should it be "reporting" or "identifying"?

Finally, MT and Ad respondents placed different value on the music teacher's duty in *Creating a Lifelong Appreciation of Music* in students. Ad respondents mentioned the duty of creating a lifelong appreciation of music in students more often than MT respondents. This **difference** may suggest a **difference** in point of view. Ad respondents may hope for students to take their knowledge outside of the classroom while music teachers may be more focused on present interactions. Again, this may also refer to a larger issue of administrators not? communicating their own goals for the program to the music teachers, and music teachers being, or not being?, receptive to an administrator's goal.

Communication

The issue of communication appeared in nearly every open-ended question for both MT and Ad respondents. Both groups described and perceived communication as an important part of their respective jobs. When asked to identify characteristics of a music teacher and administrator, both groups identified communication as a top response for an observed action. Both MT and Ad respondents cite communication as one of the most important suggestions for facilitating a positive working relationship with the other. But, when asked ‘What would you like to know or be? Have? clarified about the other group?’’, the top response was overwhelmingly ‘no clarification needed’, or ‘already have a good understanding’. This data suggests that while MT and Ad respondents may value communication, which included but was not limited to praise and stating opinions, they may not be interested or perhaps are not willing to engage in communication with each other. (or not sure how or what to communicate . . . that’s what this paper can help address!!) This is evidenced by the differences between perception and description in the duties and responsibilities findings.

When MT respondents were asked what they wanted administrators to know about the duties and responsibilities of music teachers, MT respondents wrote about the aspects of running the music program. Some responses given were ‘we work long hours’ and ‘running the program takes a great deal of effort and time’. They also wrote of the details and events required for keeping a program running, such as trips, festivals and administrative duties. This may suggest that MT respondents do not perceive that administrators know and understand the makings of a successful music program. It may also suggest that MT respondents wish for some sort of positive acknowledgement of successfully running a music program.

Some Ad respondents asked questions involving the music classroom, specifically regarding classroom decisions and lesson programs. These questions suggest that the Ad respondents are curious regarding the curricular aspect of the program, but may not be getting answers from music teachers in their own buildings.

As previously found, administrators lack knowledge in some areas of the music program (Abril & Gault, 2008) and have a desire to learn more about the music program (Abril & Gault, 2006). The MT respondent's responses seem to suggest that they also want administrators to learn more about the music program. However, at some point between desire and need, communication between the two groups is failing.

The 'Big Picture'

Ad respondents expressed the concept of the 'big picture' in a number of responses, best described as a global view of the school, its programs and its community (staff and students). Ad respondents wanted music teachers to remember that administrators are responsible for all departments in the school, including music. This may suggest that Ad respondents perceive music teachers as having issues with seeing the 'big picture', including the needs of departments outside of music. Ad respondents identified a positive music teacher as someone who worked collaboratively throughout the school, while very few MT respondents identified this type of collaboration as their active contribution to a positive working relationship. This may support the Ad respondents' perception of music teachers having difficulty seeing the 'big picture', in this case, through school-wide collaboration.

MT and Ad respondents made similar suggestions for facilitating for a positive working relationship. While MT respondents placed an emphasis on understanding the

unique nature of the music program more so than the ‘big picture’ of the school, Ad respondents placed an emphasis on the ‘big picture’ of the school more so than the music program. This difference may point back to Ad respondents’ desire for music teachers to keep the ‘big picture’, global perspective in mind.

These findings may suggest that the Ad respondents are justified in feeling that some music teachers (particularly the respondents for this study) are more focused on their program than the whole school. However, one must consider whether music teachers should consider the ‘big picture’ before the music program, as suggested by Ad respondents. Is this a shared expectation of all teachers in all departments? To what extent should a music (or any subject) teacher advocate for his or her own program and how can they balance advocacy with the ‘big picture’ of the whole school?

Implications

Both administrators and music teacher respondents indicated that communication was an important aspect of maintaining a positive relationship, as it appeared as the top incident category in each question. However, when asked what they wanted to know about each other, both groups indicted 'nothing' as their top answer (Ad-43%, MT-26%).

This study suggests that while overall relationships between music teachers and administrators seem to be characterized as positive, music teachers and administrator's perceptions of each other's duties and responsibilities are not completely accurate. While both groups seem to value communication, they do not engage in enough, perhaps specific, communication needed to understand each other's duties and responsibilities.

While some inaccuracies are small, others, such as the administrator's lack of perception of music teacher's administrative duties, illuminate gaps. Likewise, administrators want music teachers to gain a better of understanding of the school climate, but such understanding does not appear in music teacher descriptions. Clearly, there is a gap between what is known and what is perceived. Erroneous perceptions may lead to misconceptions of the qualities needed to successfully do one's job, and provide a high quality music program for the benefit of students. It is for the student's advantage that both groups move toward an understanding so that perceptions match descriptions.

Further Study

This study addressed the perceptions and descriptions of music teachers and administrators. For future research, it may be beneficial to investigate music teacher and administrator preparation programs, to discover what is being taught in regard to the relationship between music teachers and administrators. Perhaps bias and misconceptions are created in these settings (knowing or unknowingly). By discovering such situations, future issues of perception could be addressed before either teacher or administrator enter their roles in education.

Another area of further study could include a case study in which several music teachers and administrators who work together are asked their perceptions and descriptions of?. One of the limitations of the present study involves the population sample. It is unknown if music teachers respondents actually work with the administrator respondents. A case study with participants that work together may lead to more accurate data in which more precise conclusions can be drawn. Specifically, a pair (music teacher and administrator that work together) who describe their relationship as positive could provide specific characteristics for maintaining a positive relationship while pairs that describe their relationship as negative could provide specific characteristics to avoid.

Perhaps with additional research, music teachers and administrators may discover that they struggle with many of the same issues of wearing many hats and working long hours for the benefit of students. In fact, music teachers and administrators may discover that out of all groups of people in a school building, they may be the most alike.

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