

DEIB IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM: A SELF-STUDY

IMPLEMENTING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND

BELONGING IN THE MUSIC CLASSROOM WITHOUT

A DISTRICT-LEVEL MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR:

A SELF-STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this self-study was to investigate the implementation of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in the music classroom without a district-level music administrator. With two guiding research questions, the study involved using culturally responsive music education and a community of practice to implement DEIB music lessons. Qualitative self-study research was the means of following action research principles and emphasizing self-reflection and improvement. The study occurred in a Northern New Jersey public middle school and included six participants: three administrators, two critical friends, and the researcher as a primary participant. Data collection methods included journaling, administrative interviews, and lesson plans triangulated through the literature. The study produced three key conclusions. First, cultural exploration significantly influenced DEIB implementation, supporting inclusivity and critical thinking. Second, reflective practices were an effective means of facilitating the DEIB lesson development and enhancing student comprehension of race and ethnicity, sexual and gender orientation, and disability and ability. Third, nonmusic administrators supported my ability to teach DEIB lessons, indicating the need for administrative advocacy. This study could provide a model for educators facing similar challenges. This research contributed to broader discussions on educational equity and inclusion. The study's findings suggest all stakeholders should sustain DEIB implementation efforts in the music classroom and employ dedicated music administrators in every school district with music educators. These recommendations indicate how to foster inclusive and equitable music education practices, create culturally responsive learning environments, and promote educational social justice.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my son Daniel because working toward social justice in education will improve the lives of the next generation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I begin by expressing my gratitude to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13). To my beloved wife, Jennice Webb, and our cherished son, Daniel, your support and sacrifices have been my foundation. Heartfelt thanks extend to my family, friends, students, and colleagues in education for their encouragement and belief in me, infusing my research with purpose and passion.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2011, I began teaching in a Northern New Jersey public middle school with predominantly Latinx and Black students. After coming off the road from touring as a full-time jazz musician, I approached music education with a less traditional lens to motivate and engage my learners. I used performances, literature, and curricula to engage and embrace students' cultures and bring their experiences to life in the classroom. However, my biggest challenge was engaging Latinx students with limited English proficiency (LEP).

I investigated my teaching practices in a self-study to better serve students. In my master's thesis (Webb, 2015), I motivated and engaged LEP students by incorporating their culture and language. Ladson-Billings (1995a) considered culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) crucial in ensuring academic success for underserved children in the nation's public schools. CRP involves educators demanding academic excellence from all students while using their cultural backgrounds to facilitate learning. Gay (2000) asserted that effective culturally responsive teaching (CRT) involves acquiring cultural proficiency and using cultural assets to enhance teaching and learning.

The cultural responsiveness approach gave the students a sense of belonging, so they felt motivated and engaged in the classroom. The CRP experience also enabled the students to lead and assist one another in learning. Through my thesis and subsequent teaching practices, I implemented cultural responsiveness into my curriculum six years before New Jersey's Legislative Bill A4454 required curriculum instruction on diversity and inclusion.

Several state education departments have addressed the need to incorporate culturally responsive education. Connecticut was the first state to mandate that high schools provide Black,

Puerto Rican, and Latinx studies courses in 2020 (Akbarzai, 2021). In 2021, California state education leaders approved an ethnic studies model curriculum for Grades K–12. Although voluntary, the model was the country’s first ethnic studies curriculum. The curriculum focuses on several ethnic groups—Blacks, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Latinx Americans, and Native Americans—and includes the histories and experiences of Arab Americans and Jewish Americans (Asmelash, 2021).

In New Jersey, Legislative Bill A4454 requires school districts to include diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) instruction as part of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Signed into law in March 2021, the bill requires implementing DEIB in all Grades K–12 subjects to support economic diversity, equity, inclusion, and a sense of belonging for gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disabilities, and religion. Although mandatory, New Jersey school district leaders can govern the implementation process independently (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d.-b). However, limited New Jersey Department of Education enforcement has caused some to perceive the bill as a lofty goal. At the time of this study, the education commissioner had not established concrete measurements or guidelines for DEIB enforcement in each district.

The lack of clarity in DEIB implementation is a significant challenge, particularly in school districts lacking midlevel leaders proficient in all subject areas. In New Jersey, numerous small to mid-sized districts lack dedicated district-level administrators who are content specialists (Pierce, 2005). Middle administration is vital for successful curriculum change, as supervisors have a crucial role in monitoring instruction, developing curriculum, fostering a positive school atmosphere, and cultivating community relationships. The lack of midlevel administration can impede the effective implementation of curricular changes in music and other subjects. Midlevel

administrators are intermediaries between teachers and upper-level district administrators who translate policies into actionable plans and provide essential support and guidance to teachers in implementing new initiatives. The absence of such administrators can cause teachers to feel overwhelmed and ill-equipped to navigate changes and implement curricula effectively (Glickman et al., 2017).

Some school districts have district-level music administrators, but many do not (Pierce, 2005; White, 2021). Pierce (2005) argued that the absence of district-level music administrators leads to additional responsibilities on building-level administrators and music teachers, such as curriculum development, teacher training and support, and program coordination. New academic prerequisites, such as mandated state directives, further compound these difficulties and show the significance of district-level music leadership.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges to implementing the New Jersey legislative DEIB mandate. Educational leaders navigated diverse instructional settings, including hybrid, in-person, and remote learning. In addition, the state's health curriculum caused controversy over content, appropriateness for various age groups, and alignment with cultural and societal values (New Jersey Department of Education, n.d.-a). Simultaneously, exacerbated learning disparities during the pandemic showed the imperative of social-emotional learning (SEL) in bolstering students' emotional and psychological well-being. Despite substantial educational transformations, the state did not provide a clear directive or comprehensive guidance for effectively implementing DEIB mandates.

Statement of the Problem

Many school districts lack a district-level music administrator; thus, the responsibilities typically assigned to this role fall onto school principals and music educators (Pierce, 2005). The

lack of a district-level music administrator impacts stakeholders, particularly students, especially when introducing mandates and curriculum changes. Pierce (2005) focused on supervision tasks in school districts in Northern New Jersey lacking district-level music administrators. The findings showed that many teachers felt empowered without direct supervision. The lack of centralized leadership also caused feelings of isolation among teachers and disrupted educational continuity in music education. Pierce considered a supervisor in music education essential for overseeing instruction, curriculum development, a positive school climate, and community relations. The researcher also raised questions about the adjustments necessary in building-based administrative structures to provide adequate support in the absence of district-level music administration.

White (2021) compared the music programs of two districts: one with and one without district-level music administrators. The study included 26 music teachers from the district with music administration and 24 music teachers in the district without. White showed the significant influence of music administrators in supporting music teachers. School districts without a music administrator had challenges with advocacy, communication, department representation, curriculum management, and grade-level alignment. Music teachers in districts with a music administrator enjoyed enhanced opportunities for support, increased collaborative networking with fellow music educators within and beyond their districts, improved staff recruitment, and higher retention rates. White (2021) indicated the compelling need for a district-level music administrator.

Pierce (2005) and White (2021) showed the pivotal role of district-level music administrators in school music programs. Pierce underscored challenges with supervision, advocacy, communication, department representation, curriculum management, and grade-level

alignment issues without a music administrator. White emphasized that music administrators positively impacted teachers' professional growth and development. Administrators foster opportunities for professional development, collaborative networking, staff recruitment, and retention. These studies suggest that district-level music administrators are essential for the quality and continuity of music education and vibrant and effective music programs within schools.

A music supervisor can support effective DEIB implementation in music education. Music supervisors shape curricula, offer professional development opportunities, select inclusive resources, advocate for teachers, and foster community engagement. In addition, music supervisors can be role models for DEIB practices, creating an inclusive environment that reflects the diverse musical traditions of the world. Thus, music supervisors' guidance and leadership are essential in ensuring music education is a vehicle for embracing and celebrating diversity and equity.

Experience With the Problem

I am a music teacher in a Northern New Jersey school district without a district-level music administrator. I also served as a curriculum writer who implemented the 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Without a district-level music administrator, the three music educators in my building, who were also curriculum writers, implemented DEIB differently in their teaching. The depth of implementation also varied. One example of implemented DEIB is LGBTQIA+ inclusion in the music classroom by instructing the students to listen to a song composed by Elton John. However, a deeper level of DEIB implementation could involve interacting with artists' experiences and identities. For example, students could research artists representing the LGBTQIA+ community, explore the repertoire of the discovered artists, and

compare the selections. Next, the students could create a Google Slide presentation to highlight the artists and their music. To finish the unit, the students could create a performance playlist. These mentioned class activities include drastic differences in implementation. Thus, music educators without a district-level music administrator implement the mandates at their discretion.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the properties and elements of a community of practice and their effect on a music teacher without music administration. The self-study method of inquiry was the means of implementing the NJDOE's diversity and inclusion mandate.

Research Questions

The following research questions addressed the challenges music teachers face in implementing DEIB in their classrooms, particularly without district-level music administration.

The following two research questions guided this study:

RQ1: How does a music teacher incorporate CRT practices when implementing lessons on DEIB?

RQ2: How does a CoP support a music teacher's ability to implement DEIB music lessons without the support of a district-level music administrator?

Definition of Key Terms

This section presents the two critical terms within the research questions: district-level music administrator and DEIB. There is a discussion of the term *district-level music administrator* and its origins and responsibilities. Finally, the definition of DEIB appears in this section.

District-Level Music Administrator

This study included the term *district-level music administrator* as the leader overseeing music staff throughout the district. Clinton (2015) defined a district-level music administrator as an administrator/leader in music, whether this person is a supervisor, chair of a department, director of a music school, or Dean at a university, can make a significant and positive impact on faculty, staff, students, and the community as a whole. (p. 9)

A district-level music administrator in the K–12 setting may be a supervisor, director, coordinator, or other staff member who provides centralized music leadership for the school district. In this study, I used district-level music administrator, supervisor, director, and coordinator interchangeably.

Origins

In 1838, Massachusetts became the first U.S. state with music integrated into the curriculum (Mark & Gary, 2007). Following this development, school district leaders recruited music specialists to oversee music teaching by general classroom instructors. However, general classroom teachers needed specialized guidance from music education supervisors (Pierce, 2005). Lowell Mason, the nation's first music supervisor, pioneered the framework for music supervision. Mason's personnel, curriculum, and instruction methods profoundly influenced the trajectory of music education (Mark & Gary, 2007).

Ripley (1907), a noted author in music education, characterized the music supervisor position heroically, stating that the ideal music supervisor is “stronger, wiser, greater than even the best extant, or he would not be ideal, yet his superiority must be within reach of emulation. He must be a gentleman, a leader, a scholarly musician, deeply sympathetic, profoundly wise, infinitely gentle” (p. 124). During Ripley's time, music supervisors instructed grade-level

teachers on integrating music into the curriculum. Although the music supervisors oversaw curriculum implementation, they did not directly supervise music teachers. A common assumption was that music supervisors were men.

Definition

Scholars of district-level music administrators have attempted to define the position's roles, tasks, and responsibilities. Bessom (1969), Weyland (1968), and Klotman (1973) agreed that music administrators provide leadership and management to improve program quality, justifying the position's importance. Bessom stated,

Supervision is required to ensure the most efficient operation possible of a music curriculum, for the music supervisor is the one person who is in a position to coordinate all music activities—to provide continuity throughout a system from one level to another to analyze difficult situations and move for improvement, to advise and stimulate teachers, and to expedite the acquisition of essential teaching materials. (p. 1)

Weyland (1968) categorized music administration into four overlapping roles: specialized tasks for helping teachers, coordinating instruction, providing professional development, and providing quality resources. Whereas Bessom (1969) and Weyland outlined managerial characteristics, Klotman (1973) emphasized the objective of music administration and supervision: to offer guidance and leadership in musical and educational domains. Further, Klotman argued that the success of a music program requires leaders to keep the program current with the necessary changes in education. The position papers of the Music Educators National Conference (MENC; 1974) provided a concise definition of the district-level music administrator: “The director, coordinator, or supervisor of music is the district or systemwide

music administrator who functions as the direct link between the district's music teachers and the superintendent and Board of Education" (p. 69).

Roles and Responsibilities

The National Association for Music Educators (NAfME), formerly the MENC and initially the Music Supervisors' National Conference, emerged in 1907, the same year as Ripley's publication. NAfME presented the guidelines for music supervisors, which were identified as providing program leadership, coordinating instructional efforts, and administering district-wide music programs (NAfME, n.d.; MENC, 1974). In 2020, NAfME provided updated music supervision guidelines indicating that each district or school has a single music educator as a coordinator or administrator to supervise the music program. The coordinator or administrator assumes full-time administrative duties in districts with 25 or more music educators, with administrative responsibilities adjusted proportionately for smaller staff sizes (National Association for Music Education, n.d.).

Porter (1994) researched the perceived positions of music educators to clarify the ambiguous and extensive roles of district-level music administrators. The scholar argued that music supervisors should believe in setting an ethical example for others. Music supervisors should also work to increase awareness and support music programs within the school and community. In addition, the individuals in these roles should help find and select music teachers and collaborate with school officials to solve problems and make decisions. Other key responsibilities include managing music textbook adoption; encouraging leadership among the music staff; and developing and submitting music program budgets to cover supplies, equipment, instruments, books, music, audio-visual materials, and repairs. The administrator should regularly visit and observe music classrooms and provide professional development

opportunities. District-level music administrators are vital for successful music education in school districts (Porter, 1994) and critical in integrating DEIB mandates into the music classroom.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

The research questions focus on DEIB implementation. The recent social movements of Black Lives Matter, Me Too, and the LGBTQIA+ community, among others, have shown the increased necessity of incorporating DEIB into the workplace and classroom (Akbarzai, 2021). However, there has been scholarly research on culturally responsive diversity initiatives for decades (e.g., Gay, 2018; Hammond, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Terrell et al., 2018). The following paragraphs present DEIB definitions for this study.

Diversity is an environment of people with differing backgrounds, identities, perspectives, and experiences in a group, organization, or community. Identities can vary from race and gender to religion and socioeconomic status. Recognizing and valuing diversity involves appreciating the distinct contributions of individuals from different backgrounds (Gay, 2018; Terrell et al., 2018).

Equity is fairness, justice, and equal access to opportunities, resources, and support systems, regardless of personal traits or backgrounds. Some individuals may require additional aid or accommodations to achieve equality. The goal of equity is to overcome systemic barriers and take proactive steps to level the playing field and bridge gaps in representation, access, and outcomes (Hammond, 2014; Terrell et al., 2018).

Inclusion is an atmosphere where individuals with diverse backgrounds feel appreciated; honored; and enabled to participate, add value, and flourish. Inclusion involves more than representation; it requires cultivating a sense of belonging and emotional security. Inclusive

practices include proactively eliminating obstacles, prejudices, and discrimination in the educational environment to inspire teamwork, honest conversations, and diverse viewpoints (Terrell et al., 2018).

Belonging comprises feelings of acceptance, connectedness, and value by a group, organization, or community. The goal of belonging is to ensure everyone feels welcomed and can be themselves without fearing judgment or exclusion. Individuals with a strong sense of belonging can engage, contribute, and reach their full potential (Riley, 2022).

Theoretical Rationale

Based on the research questions, this study had two theoretical frameworks: community of practice (CoP; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and culturally responsive music education (CRME; Bond, 2017).

Communities of Practice

CoPs are dynamic environments where individuals with common interests, objectives, and expertise come together to collectively engage in learning, knowledge sharing, and collaboration within structured social settings. In CoPs, individuals interact to enhance their skills and knowledge in an area of interest or practice (Wenger et al., 2002). The CoP framework introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) has undergone extensive examination and refinement by scholars and authors, whose collaborative efforts have played a pivotal role in the early conceptualization and development of CoP. Lave and Wenger underscored the interconnectedness between learning and social contexts and how active participation within a CoP is a way to facilitate learning.

J. S. Brown and Duguid (1991) found that service technicians preferred working in groups to solve complex problems. Despite corporate leaders' views of each job as an individual, the technicians collaborated and shared insights to develop solutions. Similarly, music educators

grappling with implementing New Jersey DEIB mandates could benefit from working collaboratively, especially if they lack support from a district-level music administrator. Collaboration could enable music educators to find practical solutions to implementation challenges.

The lack of a district-level music administrator poses a challenge to music teachers' collaboration. Without a district-level music administrator, content-specific professional development may not occur. Luebke (2013) suggested that music teachers establish collaborative relationships with the general education teachers in the building. The author discovered that informal teacher leadership roles provided an impactful model for districts without district-level music administration. The CoP framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991) could enable educators to learn from each other by participating in shared practices. CoPs consist of individuals united by a common interest, shared issues, or enthusiasm for a particular subject. Luebke argued that music specialists who establish interior support among building colleagues and administrators are well positioned to survive the budget cuts, academic requirements, and governmental pressure, often resulting in music program elimination.

Luebke (2013) studied an elementary school on the West Coast and found that CoPs' impact caused teachers to stretch beyond their job expectations. The building's welcoming climate and culture provided a positive environment where teachers collaborated socially as team members. Zaffini (2018) found that novice music instructors sought guidance and support from established mentors and formed a community of sharing and cultivating knowledge and expertise. Experienced instructors acted as mentors who welcomed and integrated new educators into the community and enriched collective knowledge with diverse perspectives. Dynamic interactions produced a collaborative environment where music educators, regardless of

experience, could participate in their school districts' decision-making processes and promote inclusivity and collaborative leadership within the broader music education community.

Pierce (2005) studied Northern New Jersey public school districts without district-level music administration to investigate music-related task completion and division among staff. The study found that music teachers and building administrators carried out most tasks. The findings showed that many tasks teachers performed could be redefined as teacher rather than supervisor tasks.

A CoP lens to examine Luebke (2013), Zaffini (2018), and Pierce (2005) could provide insight into music program operations without district-level music administration. The lack of district-level music administrators could result in collaborations between music teachers, subject teachers, and administrators at the individual school level. Pierce suggested that successful district music programs without centralized leadership require educators to reconsider supervision and ensure accurate task completion.

Culturally Responsive Music Education

CRME in contemporary educational settings is a way to acknowledge and celebrate students' diverse cultural backgrounds, experiences, and identities (Bond, 2017). Educators can use CRME to address educational disparities, enhance student engagement and academic achievement, and foster social justice. Significant for today's diverse student population, CRME is a concept derived from CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995a), culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP; Paris, 2012), and social justice education (Terrell et al., 2018). Key CRME concepts include cultural competence, student-centered learning, and a safe and inclusive classroom environment. Teachers could explore CRME strategies to integrate students' cultural backgrounds into learning, curriculum development, instructional strategies, and assessment methods. CRME

could be a means of improving student engagement and academic achievement and developing positive racial and ethnic identities.

The CRME framework (Bond, 2017) has five themes: (a) identity and achievement, (b) equity and excellence, (c) developmental appropriateness, (d) teaching the whole child, and (e) fostering positive student–teacher relationships. A sense of belonging and achievement in the classroom may result from fostering student and teacher identity development, respecting diverse perspectives, and recognizing the value of diversity. Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) argued that teachers should reflect on the diversity around them and embrace the differences that students bring to the learning environment. Themed concerts, such as for Hispanic Heritage and Black History Month, could enable students to appreciate and validate all cultural heritages. Students who understand different ethnicities in school can link their home experiences to what they learn in the music classroom. The teacher is crucial in initiating and implementing identity and achievement.

Equal access requires recognizing students' cultural backgrounds, integrating multicultural content, and meeting students' needs for equity in excellence (Bond, 2017). Music educators should embrace equity in excellence and study influential cultural figures. Students may appreciate cultural icons but lack an understanding of the history behind the music. Therefore, equity and excellence in education require thoroughly exploring cultural heritage.

Bond (2017) suggested understanding children's cognitive, emotional, and psychosocial development to create developmentally appropriate lesson plans in culturally responsive education. Through music, students can learn about sensitive topics and memorize important information, such as the alphabet, state capitals, and math tables. Educators could incorporate

DEIB in developmentally appropriate ways to promote an inclusive and culturally responsive learning environment.

Bond (2017) suggested that music teachers should instruct the whole child, not just teach notes, when preparing for concerts and performances. Technical exercises and repertoire preparation are necessary, but prioritizing children's well-being is more crucial. Educators should strive to understand cultural appropriateness, check children's emotional health, and listen to their needs. As specialists, music educators provide a safe space for students to express themselves and offer context and meaning to help the child succeed.

Culturally responsive teachers build strong connections with their students by being firm, facilitative, accessible, and supportive personally and professionally. Educators with cultural responsiveness should build positive relationships with students based on mutual respect. In addition, culturally responsive teachers may contact parents to acknowledge students' achievements and discuss how to improve behavior and development (Gay, 2018). Teachers can establish positive relationships with students by investing in children and understanding their cultural backgrounds.

Rationale for Theoretical Framework

I integrated CoPs within the CRME framework to enhance educational experiences and promote inclusivity. Key factors such as cultural sensitivity, collaborative learning, and personalized instruction show the synergy between COP and CRME. CoPs provide educators with an ongoing platform for learning and reflection for a deeper understanding of cultural diversity, bias awareness, and cultural sensitivity. Educators can exchange experiences, resources, and strategies for creating culturally inclusive classrooms in CoPs. Collaboration and knowledge exchange are central to CoPs, which, when integrated into CRME, could be a way to

facilitate the sharing of culturally relevant teaching methods and materials so educators can adapt and develop curriculum content that reflects students' diverse cultural backgrounds.

CoPs are suitable for the collaborative development of inclusive curricula with diverse cultural perspectives. In CoPs, educators can create learning materials that resonate with students' cultural backgrounds. Educators in CoPs can tailor their teaching approaches to meet the needs of culturally diverse students and align their instruction with students' backgrounds, languages, and life experiences. CoPs can also enable educators to enhance their cultural competence by engaging with peers and experts of CRT. Thus, CoPs provide educators with valuable support networks and avenues for professional development. In the context of CRME, CoPs are secure environments for seeking guidance, sharing challenges, and exchanging strategies to implement culturally responsive practices. Further, CoPs can include educators, community members, parents, and students, resulting in shared ownership and collective responsibility for CRME with contributions from all stakeholders.

Significance

This study involved implementing DEIB in music education in districts lacking a district-level music administrator. Music is a vital academic subject. Therefore, this study is significant to DEIB implementation across all subject areas, including music education. Traditionally, a centralized leader in the role of a district-level music administrator supervises and supports music educators in a district. Thus, this study is significant because it focused on perceptions of DEIB mandates in educational settings without a district-level music administrator. In addition, the study included merging CRME and COP, showing the importance of this research endeavor.

The Significance of Culturally Responsive Music Education

CRME in the classroom is essential. DEIB practices are a way to eliminate disparities in educational equity by addressing the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities among diverse students. Educators who embrace DEIB strive to establish an equitable learning environment, regardless of students' diverse backgrounds. Moreover, DEIB practices align with CRT for greater educational engagement and relevance. From my perspective as a music educator, CRME is a means of fostering an inclusive learning atmosphere and helping students recognize the significance of unifying people and cultures through the transformative medium of music.

CRME contributes to inclusive learning environments and a sense of belonging associated with increased student motivation and academic success. CRME practices could enable educators to reduce achievement gaps and prepare diverse students for a multicultural world. Aligning with broader social justice goals, educators can use DEIB practices to empower themselves to address systemic inequalities and inspire students to contribute to a more equitable society.

The Significance of Communities of Practice

CoPs support instructional enhancement and teacher retention. For instructional enhancement, CoPs are a platform for continuous professional development where educators share best practices, engage in reflective practices, explore innovative teaching strategies, and personalize instruction to meet students' diverse needs. Educators in CoPs can practice invigorate teaching, increase efficacy, and foster job satisfaction. Regarding teacher retention, CoP participation could contribute to professional growth, reduced feelings of isolation, a network of support and resources, and collaborative problem-solving.

Intended Audience

The study may be of interest for diverse educational stakeholders. The results could provide useful insight for music educators, music education scholars with administrative perspectives, administrators with a broader administrative focus, and district leaders such as superintendents and school board members. These key educational stakeholders significantly influence personnel and curriculum decisions for school districts.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Diversity, equity, and inclusion, a phrase with widespread recognition, has been expanded to include belonging (Foster-Smith et al., 2023). Education department leaders nationwide have recently begun incorporating positions emphasizing DEIB due to heightened public awareness of systemic racism and to ensure cultural responsiveness (Starr, 2023). DEIB actions were prevalent after the tragic deaths of Black individuals at the hands of the police, notably George Floyd in 2020. This study's goal was to explore DEIB in music classrooms without a district-level music administrator; however, I anchored the research in culturally responsive education and the variant terminology for culturally responsive education (multicultural education, CRP, CRT, and CSP). The literature review appears in two sections: culturally responsive education and CRME. The review addresses the gap in the literature addressed by this study.

Culturally Responsive Education

This review presents studies on cultural education, beginning with multicultural education (Banks, 1993), CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995b), CRT (Gay, 2000), and CSP (Paris, 2012). The studies in this section include various subjects and grade levels in the K–12 school system. A noticeable lack of research indicated the need for this study explicitly centered on music educators in the K–12 domain.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a reform movement to achieve fairness and inclusion in education (Banks, 1997). The goal of multicultural education is to provide opportunities for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or social class. The essence of education is transforming

the system to reflect diversity with the various cultures and groups in society and educational environments. Banks and Banks (2019) discussed the five dimensions of the comprehensive framework of education: (a) integrating diverse content into the curriculum, (b) fostering a constructive process of knowledge construction, (c) reducing prejudice, (d) adopting equitable teaching methods, and (e) creating an empowering school culture and social structure.

Integrating diverse content into the curriculum is an aspect of multicultural education that extends beyond inclusion. As such, teachers should explore perspectives, histories, and contributions to create more inclusive learning experiences. Educators can incorporate content throughout the curriculum to enhance students' cultural competence and prepare them for an increasingly interconnected world (Banks, 1993).

Rather than limit content integration to certain subjects, educators should include all aspects of education. Educators should explore ways to incorporate diversity into math, science, literature, and history. A comprehensive approach to education is a way to ensure that students gain exposure to contexts and perspectives in a well-rounded and relevant education (Banks, 1993). Integrating content is a means of breaking down barriers, promoting understanding, and creating a fair learning environment.

Knowledge construction (Banks, 1996) involves more than acquiring information. Educators can construct knowledge by emphasizing thinking and encouraging students to question, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge. Through the knowledge construction process, students learn not *what* to think but *how* to think. Students can use knowledge construction skills to navigate a diverse world. According to Banks (1996), knowledge construction enables students to actively engage in their education while gaining an understanding of knowledge across disciplines. Thus, knowledge construction contributes to students' growth.

Prejudice reduction is the strategy educators use to foster more inclusive attitudes among students toward racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. Many children enter school with attitudes or misconceptions about various groups (Phinney & Rotheram, 1987). However, teachers can strategically design lessons and teaching materials with a variety of content to change students' attitudes about different groups.

Equity pedagogy occurs when educators adjust their teaching methods to support the success of students from different racial, cultural, and social backgrounds (Banks & Banks, 2019). For example, cooperative teaching approaches could contribute to the achievement of Black and Mexican American students. The success of cooperative learning activities may vary based on factors such as student status, encouragement from teachers and administrators for racial interactions, and collaborative efforts within diverse student groups (Allport, 1954). The creation of a school culture and social structure involves transforming the school environment and organization to ensure equitable treatment and status for students from various racial, ethnic, and gender backgrounds. An equitable school culture and social structure may require reforming teachers' and administrators' attitudes and beliefs, curricular content, assessment procedures, teaching strategies in the classroom, and the overall school culture (Banks & Banks, 2019).

Black Achievement Through Whiteness

Numerous studies have shown the necessity of multicultural education. Although academic success is critical for students, some scholars have emphasized the significance of establishing a connection. Notably, Nieto (2010), Banks (1984), Ogbu (1987), and Steele (1997) underscored the need for a multicultural education framework.

Nieto (2010) studied Black students attending Catholic schools. Despite the Eurocentric teaching methods in the schools, the students made remarkable academic progress compared to

their peers in public schools. The findings showed higher achievement trends among students with higher risks of underachievement. Nieto attributed the students' success to nurturing and supportive school environments and high student performance expectations. Values and ethics in these schools contributed to a sense of purpose and motivation among students.

In a study of 64 families in White suburban areas in a metropolitan region in the Pacific Northwest, Banks (1984) found that families with positive attitudes toward White individuals had higher academic achievement. The children in these families adopted certain perceptions of White society, even viewing it more favorably than their own racial identities. This assimilative perspective negatively influenced their views on their Black community. Banks questioned why the participants had this opposing viewpoint toward society, wondering whether it occurred because they lacked exposure to education about culture and Black people's contributions.

Ogbu (1987) studied the academic performance of minority students to gain insight into the concept of acting White. The researcher suggested that the sociocultural environment of underprivileged communities could cause minority students to experience doubt and fear about achieving academic excellence. Ogbu also found a relationship between identity, societal expectations, and educational achievement for minority populations. Steele (1997) expanded on Ogbu by studying stereotype threat. Steele found that individuals aware of stereotypes about their ethnic group's intellectual abilities experienced anxiety and performed below their potential in academic settings. These findings suggest the interconnections between identity, psychological well-being, and educational outcomes.

Black Teachers

Banks (1993) indicated that a teacher's effectiveness depends not on race but on qualities and characteristics. However, Black teachers have historically played a role in creating a fair

learning environment through their presence and teaching methods. Cole (1986) discussed the impact of teachers during the Civil Rights Era in shaping the path toward education.

Many educated Black Americans pursued teaching careers during the reform and Civil Rights Movement. In the 1950s, nearly half of all professionals were teachers (Cole, 1986). Educators' prominence during this time resulted from segregation in the South and limited employment opportunities. Teaching was one of the paths available to Blacks. However, with school integration in the mid-1960s and 1970s, many Black educators and principals lost their jobs (Cole, 1986).

Several studies have focused on how teachers influence Black students' educational experiences and outcomes (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015; Adkins, 2012; Cole, 1986; Howard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Ware, 2006). These studies have shown the importance of teachers in Black students' lives in the multicultural education framework. Among other scholars, Cole (1986) examined perspectives to provide insight into Black teachers' legacy during segregation. Black teachers fostered growth among Black students by creating an empowering school culture.

Siddle-Walker (1996) also delved into the complexities and challenges teachers face and their resilience while nurturing generations of Black students through equitable teaching practices. Ladson-Billings (1995a) and Adjapong and Emdin (2015) explored how Black teachers establish connections with their students by integrating content into their instruction, employing effective teaching methods, promoting equity in education, and increasing engagement and academic achievement. In another study, Adkins (2012) examined mentorship dynamics in empowering school cultures and found that Black educators were instructors and role models who inspired their students to pursue educational and personal goals.

Howard (2001) studied the emotional advantages for students with teachers who truly understood and validated Black students' experiences within the larger societal context. These teachers provided knowledge instruction and reduced prejudice. Ware (2006) explored how Black teachers impacted education by creating diverse and inclusive learning environments, benefiting Black students, and promoting cross-cultural understanding through multicultural education. Howard and Ware showed how Black teachers positively influence students across five dimensions of education. Black teachers' presence and teaching methods contribute to students' success, personal growth, and empowerment, significantly impacting their journeys.

Cultural Congruence

Research has also indicated the impact of educators who share students' backgrounds and experiences, suggesting the importance of congruence in education (Banks & Banks, 2019). For example, Au (1980) focused on teachers who incorporated traditional Native Hawaiian talk stories into classroom discussions. The findings showed improved literacy and writing skills among students as the educators attuned themselves to their students' cultural contexts and created engaging learning environments. Educators who incorporate students' cultural perspectives and experiences into the curriculum can foster a sense of relevance and connection that contributes to student achievement.

Chang and Rosiek (2003) examined how a Hmong teacher integrated cultural knowledge elements to assist Hmong American students in navigating a science curriculum that did not align with their cultural and religious beliefs. The authors concluded that educators who share backgrounds with students can understand the challenges and strengths that shape students' lives. Educators with a shared understanding with students can use strategies aligned with their students' experiences, resulting in improved engagement and educational outcomes.

Galindo (1996) focused on Latinx teachers who used their life experiences and stories to validate Latinx students' identities and find strategies for addressing racial discrimination. This study showed the significance of language and communication in the educational setting. Educators who share a background with students can better facilitate effective communication, promote understanding of complex concepts, and create a supportive learning environment. Therefore, educators' cultural alignment can enhance experiences and outcomes (Banks & Banks, 2019).

Summary

Multicultural education is an ongoing movement to promote fairness and inclusivity in education (Banks, 1997). The goal of multicultural education is to ensure that each student has opportunities regardless of race, ethnicity, or social background. However, multicultural education goals require dedication from educators and administrators. Multicultural education involves recognizing and addressing inequalities in education and society. Educators who engage in multicultural education can foster respect, DEIB, and a more democratic society.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Multicultural education addresses disparities with diversity and equitable environments (Banks, 1997). Ladson-Billings (1995b) furthered the concept of multicultural education with CRP, which involves empowering students through cultural experiences. The goal of CRP is to build on the foundation of education to promote inclusivity and enhance students' understanding and academic success. CRP is a shift from focusing on inclusion to leveraging students' backgrounds for engagement and achievement in multicultural education (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Because Ladson-Billings (1995b) felt concerned by literature presenting Black students negatively, the scholar developed CRP to draw on students' lived experiences to facilitate comprehension and view achievement as attainable rather than impossible. Ladson-Billings delineated three significant CRP domains: (a) academic achievement, (b) cultural competence, and (c) sociopolitical consciousness. Academic achievement is the development of students through classroom teaching and educational experiences. Cultural awareness involves supporting students in appreciating and embracing their heritage while acquiring knowledge and cultural competence. Sociopolitical awareness enables students to expand the application of knowledge and skills acquired in school to recognize, analyze, and tackle real-world issues beyond the classroom environment (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Hip-Hop

An example of CRP would be deliberately and thoughtfully incorporating hip-hop culture into class content. In this lesson, educators acknowledge hip-hop as an art form that resonates with students, especially those from historically marginalized backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Through hip-hop implementation, teachers can establish connections between students' interests and academic content by integrating elements such as music, lyrics, dance, and visual arts into the curriculum.

CRP educators can embrace the contexts of students' local neighborhoods and recognize the community dynamics of their everyday lives by linking the curriculum to real-world experiences in these neighborhoods (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). This connection could involve exploring the community's history, traditions, and social issues. When educators link the curriculum to students' experiences, they validate learners' backgrounds and experiences while fostering a sense of belonging and relevance.

Ladson-Billings (1995a) conducted a study with eight teachers of Black students in California to gain insight into CRP's transformative potential in education. An in-depth analysis showed CRP's potential as a means of bridging gaps and enhancing students' learning experiences. Ladson-Billings found that students exposed to CRP strategies had higher achievement and outperformed their White counterparts on standardized tests. Therefore, CRP could be an effective way to reduce disparities among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. CRP educators who create a learning environment by valuing and leveraging students' cultural experiences can empower students to excel academically and achieve seemingly unattainable goals.

In another study, Ladson-Billings (1995b) discussed how teachers could use CRP to transform students' problem-solving and encourage learning. The participants showcased their problem-solving skills and engaged in peer assessments of solutions, which allowed them to foster academic growth and crucial skills beyond the classroom setting. The study's results indicated CRP's effectiveness in providing a setting conducive to critical thinking, collaboration, and strong communication skills.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Contemporary Studies

Ladson-Billings (1995b) and recent studies have suggested that implementing CRP in the classroom has positive educational outcomes. The findings aligned with contemporary case studies, such as Kucan and Cho (2022), which focused on CRP in middle school classrooms in a case study with schoolteachers. Mr. Anderson, a participant in Kucan and Cho's study, introduced students to literacy in the context of history using CRP techniques. Initially, the participant encouraged the students to draw upon their backgrounds to interpret lesson aspects, sharing personal experiences as examples. The researchers emphasized that a critical element of

the participant's strategies was understanding the lived experiences of the individuals involved. Thus, the participant fostered pride and achievement among students while enhancing their engagement with the subject matter.

B. A. Brown et al. (2019) used interview and video data from a one-shot case design to follow a STEM teacher cohort throughout the year. The study occurred in an institution exclusively for male students, and the teachers who participated learned how to apply CRP in the classroom, moving from theory to practice. By transitioning from teacher-centered instruction to student-centered coaching, B. A. Brown et al. ensured that students saw the connection between science, math, and daily community living.

Kucan and Cho (2022) and B. A. Brown et al. (2019) contributed to the discourse on CRP by showing its implementation in educational contexts. Kucan and Cho addressed how educators applied CRP in middle school history classes; for example, Mr. Anderson encouraged students to draw upon their cultural backgrounds. Similarly, B. A. Brown et al. connected STEM and students' daily lives. Both studies showed the effectiveness of CRP in enhancing student engagement and academic achievement across different educational domains.

Muhammad (2022) focused on the CRP domain for student engagement and academic achievement, highlighting identity as pivotal in shaping young individuals' educational journeys. The researcher suggested creating supportive environments in educational settings to empower students to navigate their self-perceptions and challenge negative stereotypes. Educators should acknowledge and appreciate students' cultural genius and ancestral heritage and foster self-esteem and value. Muhammad also recommended that students explore diverse cultural perspectives to foster empathy and diminish biases.

Muhammad (2022) found that students engaged with informational texts such as *Freedom's Journal* (Bacon, 2007) to understand the history and purpose of Black newspapers and gain critical-thinking skills and a sense of empowerment. Students also explored literary works like Du Bois's (1919) poem *The Brownies' Book*, which served as a springboard for discussions on joy and friendship. Muhammad also encouraged students to create a digital newspaper to center on issues in their communities.

James-Gallaway and Harris (2021) found that Black female teachers incorporated three core aspects of CRP in segregated Black schools before CRP was a recognized term in educational research: promoting success, developing cultural competence, and fostering sociopolitical consciousness. Promoting success involved emphasizing the importance of facilitating academic achievement. The study showed that teachers established connections with students and a nurturing environment, recognizing and developing students' intelligence. These educators also normalized and encouraged achievement in their students' educational journeys.

The second aspect, developing cultural competence, involved fostering competence among students. James-Gallaway and Harris (2021) found that teachers stressed the importance of students perceiving themselves as complete and deserving citizens beyond academic learning. The teachers acknowledged individuals' contributions to American society, creating a sense of pride and belonging for all students in a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The third component, sociopolitical consciousness, involved cultivating students' awareness to question prevailing norms. James-Gallaway and Harris (2021) found that Black female teachers in Nashville during the Civil Rights Era integrated activism into their teaching, and that students engaged in sit-ins and contributed to the fight for justice. Thus, the teachers

offered a tangible pathway for action, empowering students to realize their potential and pursue their aspirations in a lived experience of empowerment.

Summary

Ladson-Billings (1995b) introduced CRP to address concerns about negative portrayals of Black students in academic literature. CRP educators incorporate students' real-life experiences to enhance their understanding of concepts and promote success. Ladson-Billings (1995a) provided examples of CRP, such as integrating hip-hop culture and local neighborhood experiences into content to bridge the gap between students' interests and the curriculum.

Kucan and Cho (2022) showed the effectiveness of CRP in school instruction, whereas B. A. Brown et al. (2019) highlighted CRP's impact on STEM education. Both studies indicated the significance of community relevance in engaging students and promoting achievement. Similarly, Muhammad (2022) advocated for educators to affirm students' identities, foster understanding of their cultural heritage, and encourage empathy by studying diverse cultural perspectives while connecting the curricular content to students' lives and communities and promoting critical engagement with social issues. Finally, James-Gallaway and Harris (2021) showed how Black female teachers historically used CRP principles in segregated schools before CRP's formal introduction as a term in academic research.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Ladson-Billings (1995b) and Gay (2000) presented two approaches with common goals but different foci and perspectives. According to Ladson-Billings, CRP involves creating an environment where educators acknowledge and respect students' cultural identities and backgrounds and integrate them into the curriculum. Similarly, Gay developed CRT so educators could recognize and value cultural diversity in the classroom, advocate for transformative

teaching practices, and accommodate students' diverse needs and experiences. Gay suggested incorporating perspectives into the curriculum, instruction, and classroom interactions to create an inclusive and equitable learning environment where every student feels seen, heard, and understood. The purpose of both educational approaches is to enhance experiences for student populations. However, CRP involves building cultural strengths and affirming identities (Ladson-Billings, 1995b), and CRT focuses on curricula and instruction adaptations to incorporate diverse perspectives (Gay, 2000). CRT and CRP are complementary approaches that contribute to student empowerment and identity.

Synthesizing Gay With Contemporary Studies on Culturally Responsive Teaching

Gay (2002), Howard (2001), and Villegas and Lucas (2002) contributed to discussions on CRT and educator training to engage with diverse student populations. Each study provided insights and suggested the importance of understanding students' perspectives, promoting inclusion, and equipping teachers with the strategies and attitudes to create inclusive learning environments.

Gay (2002) focused on teacher preparation by integrating diversity and multicultural perspectives into teaching practices. The author emphasized that educators should develop an understanding of students' cultural backgrounds. Further, Gay suggested teachers self-reflect to recognize biases and assumptions and advocate for and prioritize students' diverse needs.

Where Gay (2002) focused on teacher preparation, Howard (2001) examined students' perceptions of CRT. Howard indicated that responsive practices impact student engagement and academic experiences. Therefore, educators should acknowledge and validate students' cultural identities by incorporating their voices into education.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) provided a CRT approach to preparing educators. The authors concluded that educators should gain competence, reflective practices, and a nuanced understanding of students' diverse needs. Ultimately, the researchers emphasized incorporating CRT into teacher training programs.

These studies showed the connections between teacher preparation, pedagogical practices, and student experiences in promoting education. Gay (2002) focused on teacher readiness, aligning with Howard (2001), who prioritized students' perspectives and suggested that educators who grasp their students' cultural backgrounds can better implement CRT strategies. Villegas and Lucas (2002) discussed teacher preparation for creating inclusive learning environments. The three studies indicated the necessity of equipping educators with the tools and compassion to engage with student populations.

Synthesizing Gay With Recent Studies on Culturally Responsive Teaching

Gay (2000, 2002), Truscott and Stenhouse (2022), Tanase (2022), and Abacioglu et al. (2020) contributed to CRT discourse and application across diverse educational contexts. Each study addressed distinct CRT aspects. There were commonalities and differences in the researchers' emphases and findings.

Commonalities

First, the aforementioned studies presented the importance of providing inclusive education to meet the needs of students from different cultural backgrounds. All researchers recognized the limitations of teaching methods and advocated for inclusivity and equity in learning settings. Second, the four studies showed the value of engaging with perspectives to enhance educational experiences. Gay (2000) and Abacioglu et al. (2020) advised incorporating viewpoints into the curriculum. Gay (2000) emphasized integrating perspectives, whereas

Abacioglu et al. examined teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism and their ability to understand perspectives as factors in CRT. Third, the authors recognized and validated students' cultural identities. Gay (2000) and Tanase (2022) suggested acknowledging and incorporating students' cultural backgrounds to empower students and encourage engagement with the subject matter. Finally, the researchers focused on families and communities in education. Gay (2002) described the value of family engagement; Truscott and Stenhouse (2022) emphasized how teachers' attitudes have a role in establishing relationships with families and communities.

Differences

Truscott and Stenhouse (2022) discussed how teachers implemented CRT methods to embrace different cultures. The researchers explored the emotional aspects of educators' ability to engage with diverse perspectives, providing valuable insight into the internal factors influencing CRT practices. Tanase (2022) examined the relationship between teacher attitudes and CRT, exploring the practical application of CRT practices in secondary schools in urban settings. Abacioglu et al. (2020) investigated how teachers' multicultural attitudes and perspective-taking abilities contributed to responsive teaching. The scholars provided a nuanced understanding of how educators' cognitive and emotional dispositions influence their effectiveness in implementing teaching methods.

Summary

CRT is a method to value and incorporate diverse cultural backgrounds to enhance student engagement, learning outcomes, and inclusivity (Gay, 2000). Various scholars have addressed the CRT framework. For example, Gay (2002), Howard (2001), Villegas and Lucas (2002), Truscott and Stenhouse (2022), Tanase (2022), and Abacioglu et al. (2020) researched CRT strategies, preparations, and implications. The researchers recognized and appreciated

classroom diversity and suggested that educators promote education practices, integrate multiple perspectives, validate students' cultural identities, and involve families and communities.

The CRT studies, however, had distinct foci. For instance, Gay (2000) emphasized teacher preparation, and Howard (2001) explored students' perceptions. Villegas and Lucas (2002) provided a comprehensive approach to teacher training, whereas Truscott and Stenhouse (2022) investigated teacher dispositions. Tanase (2022) examined CRT implementation in urban secondary schools; alternately, Abacioglu et al. (2020) considered the interplay between attitudes and perspective-taking abilities. These studies contributed to the CRT by addressing its intricacies and importance in fostering successful learning environments across various educational contexts.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

CSP is another transformative educational approach that emerged from the foundations of CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). With CSP, educators establish inclusive and empowering learning environments, prioritizing and nurturing various cultures and identities. Paris (2012), Crenshaw (1989), and Ladson-Billings (2014) provided formative insights into CSP.

Paris (2012) introduced CSP as a needed evolution from the antecedent CRP framework. Seeking to refine how educators perceive and engage with students, Paris critically engaged with the established term CRP (Ladson-Billings, 1995b) and advocated for CSP. The researcher suggested addressing CRP's limitations and moving beyond viewing students' cultures as resources for instruction. According to Paris, educators should perceive students' cultures as invaluable and intrinsic to education and engage in a respectful and sustained integration of diverse cultural identities.

CRP focuses on fairness and inclusivity. Paris (2012) indicated that educators should go beyond acknowledging students' cultural backgrounds. Educators should also seek to understand the changing nature of cultural identities and acknowledge the intersections between race, ethnicity, gender, and other social dimensions. Paris suggested that educators self-reflect to encourage learning experiences and acknowledge personal practices and biases.

Intersectionality

Predating CSP over two decades, Crenshaw (1989) produced the seminal work on intersectionality, a significant concept in CSP discourse. According to Crenshaw, interconnected systems of oppression had a compounded impact on individuals with multiple marginalized identities. By delving into intersectionality, educators can gain insight into how cultural, racial, and gender identities intersect in distinct and compounded student experiences. Such insights enable educators to devise pedagogical strategies tailored to the dynamics of students' identities. When educators understand the various aspects of identity, they can provide students with an effective and well-rounded educational experience. Teachers should consider intersectionality when exploring the different realities in students' lives to provide a more meaningful and relevant education (Crenshaw, 1989).

Passing the Baton

Ladson-Billings (2014) deepened the discussion of CSP by advocating for the framework as a CRP extension and enhancement. Ladson-Billings shared a perspective with the viewpoints of a graduate student, Paris (2012), resembling the passing of a baton in a relay race:

My work on culturally relevant pedagogy has been widely cited and, in many spaces, has become a common way of approaching teaching and learning. Other scholars have extended my work, seeking ways to emphasize the political consciousness of students

and teachers or focusing on gender as an important component of who and how teachers are in classrooms. (Ladson-Billings, 2014, p. 75)

Ladson-Billings promoted CSP's dynamic nature and championed its seamless integration into educational practices. CSP involves recognizing and incorporating students' cultural expressions and lived experiences to foster critical consciousness. Moreover, CSP can provide an in-depth understanding of the intricate power dynamics in educational contexts.

Recent Studies Incorporating Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

This section presents studies on CSP in various educational contexts by Román et al. (2022), Marshall (2023), and Tran and Selcen Guzey (2023). Each study contributed to the broader CSP discourse on subject matter, research methodologies, and practical implications. The similarities and differences among these studies could provide insight into integrating culture and education, enriching the pedagogical landscape, and promoting more inclusive and effective educational practices.

Román et al. (2022) delved into the intersection of creativity, Latinx cultural identity, and environmental education and discussed integrating these elements within the CSP framework. The research addressed the gap of cultural and identity underrepresentation by focusing on how educators can harness cultural identities and creativity to promote engagement and inclusivity in environmental education. Román et al. used CSP as a conceptual lens to explore how educators could value students' cultural backgrounds and foster creative thinking in environmental education. The researchers positioned the study at the intersection of cultural relevancy, creativity, and environmental stewardship. The findings showed how educators integrated Latinidad into environmental education curricula. For instance, middle school English learners drew on their native languages and previous gardening experiences during a garden activity.

Fourth-grade teachers organized park trips, offering students their first outdoor learning experience. High school science classes had a justice-centered pedagogy for community environmental issues, enabling students to connect their cultural identities with the subject matter. Román et al.'s study showed the potential of creatively tailored approaches that resonate with Latinx students and their lived experiences and perspectives. Educators in the study used tailored approaches to enhance Latinx engagement and understanding of environmental concepts.

Marshall (2023) addressed CSP education practices in mathematics to bridge the gap between theoretical CSP discussions and practical implementation in the mathematics classroom. Marshall developed a CSP framework for mathematics with four dimensions: (a) anti-assimilationism, (b) strengths-based teaching, (c) power and justice, and (d) affirming identities. In the anti-assimilation dimension, educators included marginalized forms of expression in the math classroom. Specifically, Marshall encouraged teachers to embrace all cultures and languages in math discourse. The strengths-based teaching dimension suggests that students can bring their home experiences to better understand math. Educators can make strengths-based learning effective by familiarizing themselves with the communities in which they teach (Marshall, 2023).

In the power and justice dimension, Marshall (2023) suggested teachers understand and find ways to work around areas of oppression and injustice to benefit students in the mathematics classroom. Finally, the affirming identities dimension involves teachers establishing nondominant forms of competence in mathematics. Differentiation is crucial in affirming identities, especially for students who have historically struggled with a sense of belonging in the mathematics classroom (Marshall, 2023).

Tran and Selcen Guzey (2023) used narrative inquiry to delve into the intricate dynamics of cultivating CSP in STEM classrooms. The researchers aimed to better understand how educators engage diverse student populations while emphasizing the interconnectedness of STEM disciplines. The authors explored a science teacher's experiences and practices integrating STEM subjects while considering cultural relevance. Through narrative interviews, the teacher presented their journey, challenges, strategies, and impact on students' learning experiences. Tran and Selcen Guzey gained insight into effective instructional methods, curriculum development, and classroom management that support cultural relevance. According to the study, the teacher created nurturing environments and integrated students' experiences to incorporate diverse perspectives in STEM teaching and learning. The study's findings indicated how educators can shape educational policies, teacher training programs, and curriculum design to become more responsive to diverse student populations.

Román et al. (2022), Marshall (2023), and Tran and Selcen Guzey (2023) addressed different facets of integrating CSP in various subjects and pedagogical contexts. The studies had an overarching goal of promoting inclusivity and cultural relevance in education but had different research objectives, methodologies, and outcomes.

Summary

CSP is an innovative educational approach that stems from Ladson-Billings's (1995b) CRP. CSP is a means of creating inclusive and empowering learning environments where educators prioritize diverse cultures and identities. Further, CSP indicates that intersectionality can compound the impact of multiple marginalized identities (Crenshaw, 1989). Paris (2012) urged educators to move beyond viewing students' cultures as resources to integrate cultural identities deeply into the educational process. Paris extended CSP by broadening the concept of

culture to include linguistic practices and community histories, emphasizing the fluidity of diversity. Ladson-Billings (2014) further enriched the discourse by positioning CSP as an extension and enhancement of CRP. Román et al. (2022), Marshall (2023), and Tran and Selcen Guzey (2023) explored CSP application in various contexts, such as environmental education, mathematics, STEM, and literacy. These studies showed how CSP is a way to enrich educational practices, foster inclusivity and relevance, and embrace students' diverse cultural backgrounds.

Culturally Responsive Music Education

Scholars have explored CRME, inclusive learning environments, and diverse student identities. This section presents a cohesive overview of critical insights with the previously discussed culturally responsive education theories through a music lens. The synthesis includes (a) student perspectives, (b) teacher preparation, (c) challenges and opportunities in urban settings, (d) impact of teachers' convictions and practices, (e) instructional frameworks, and (f) culturally specific methods. The following studies provide insight into multidimensional and culturally responsive music education.

Understanding Student Perspectives and Identity

Shaw (2016) and Boon (2014) researched perspectives and identity in music education, highlighting the critical intersection between pedagogy and students' identities. In an attempt to align music education with students' cultural heritage, Shaw focused on CRME and students' positive reception to content steeped in their cultural narratives. The case study included a nonprofit children's choir organization in an urban area. The teacher designed instruction that was responsive to the community, which had many migrant and immigrant Hispanic people. Students perceived their teacher's culturally responsive practice positively. By encouraging style shifting between performance practices and bridging students' musical experiences, the teacher

fostered a culturally responsive learning environment and connections between students' musical and cultural identities (Shaw, 2016).

Like Shaw (2016), Boon (2014) emphasized the importance of bridging classroom instruction and students' lives beyond academia. Boon investigated the violin experiences of Black students at an elementary school in Northern Florida to consider the potential for culturally responsive string education. The results showed that the participants shared perceptions of music, mainly of music as a storytelling device with a distinctive beat. The students' musical lives and perceptions of playing violin affected each other. In addition, the children wanted to connect their experiences in the school violin classroom with their lives (Boon, 2014).

Expanding Shaw (2016) and Boon (2014), Davis and Culp (2023) discussed the autonomy of curricular content and student preference. Davis and Culp focused on 42 upper-elementary children: 17 third-graders, 15 fourth-graders, eight fifth-graders, and two additional students not identified by grade level. The objective was to explore and understand the students' music preferences with a student-centered approach to their learning dynamics. Davis and Culp surveyed students' music education preferences with three primary components: (a) music listening sessions, (b) computer lab engagements, and (c) music creation workshops. The students preferred using platforms such as Soundtrap and GarageBand to analyze songs and explore chord structures. Further, the students preferred movement, dance, and interactive games to create an immersive and dynamic learning environment. These diverse approaches showed the students' musical inclinations and preferences, resulting in a deeper connection between educators and learners. Davis and Culp's results indicated the pivotal role of innovative methodologies in reshaping the educational curriculum. Educators can involve students in their

academic journeys by incorporating students' musical preferences into the learning process and fostering inclusion and empowerment in the classroom.

Teacher Preparation and Cross-Cultural Competence

Efforts to enhance the effectiveness of music education provide a vital background to the significance of cross-cultural competence. McKoy (2012) and Baker (2012) emphasized the link between appreciating intricacies in diverse environments and nurturing impactful teaching practices. Collectively, the researchers indicated the need for cross-cultural competence in music education.

Exploring the facets of cross-cultural competence among aspiring music student teachers, McKoy (2012) found how race, ethnicity, and community settings affected music teachers' cross-cultural competence during early field experience and student teaching. The study included 337 participants from 36 colleges and universities across the United States. According to the results, the school community setting did not affect cross-cultural competence. However, race and ethnicity significantly impacted preservice teachers' competence. McKoy identified a correlation between practical teaching experiences in various settings and the pedagogical benefits of a multicultural curriculum.

McKoy (2012) aligned with Baker (2012), who investigated effective teaching strategies in urban music education contexts. Like McKoy, who emphasized experiential learning, Baker highlighted the value of becoming acquainted with the unique dynamics of urban settings. Baker aimed to develop the profile of an effective urban music educator and provide strategies for teacher training programs. To achieve these objectives, the researcher analyzed 158 urban music teachers' backgrounds, effective characteristics, challenges, and the traits essential for a long-term career. Challenges included discipline, unsupportive parents, cultural diversity, limited

musical training, and unstable home environments. The findings indicate that effective urban music teachers are empathetic, patient, flexible, enthusiastic, and committed to student learning. The study's findings have implications for teacher preparation programs.

Challenges and Opportunities in Urban Music Education

Educators' challenges and opportunities in urban music education can impact their pedagogical practices. Fitzpatrick (2011, 2022) provided insight into the complex urban music education landscape. In a 2011 study, Fitzpatrick investigated the experiences of instrumental music educators in Chicago, highlighting their adaptability, resilience, and commitment to fostering students' potential in urban settings. Data collection instruments in the mixed methods study included a focus group and a survey. The outcomes showed that the instrumental music instructors harnessed their understanding of the urban educational landscape to tailor their overarching pedagogical approaches. The instrumental music programs were sanctuaries for students amid challenges in school and neighborhood settings. Also, the instructors perceived their programs as secure and ambient environments that enabled students to unwind and create music. The findings indicate the importance of cultural relevance and sensitivity to the needs of at-risk students in urban music education (Fitzpatrick, 2011).

Fitzpatrick (2022) also investigated how Hawaiian music teachers incorporated Hawaiian cultural-based educational methods in music classrooms. With a foundation of culture-based education theory, the study found four themes: (a) diverse teaching strategies, (b) origins of cultural comprehension, (c) navigating challenges, and (d) significance. The music teachers wove Hawaiian values like respect for ancestors into student interactions to deepen cultural understanding. Fitzpatrick suggested further research to evaluate teachers' cultural competence

and design innovative strategies to enhance cultural responsiveness in the curriculum and classroom, especially for White teachers.

Impact of Teacher Convictions and Practices

Educators are knowledge sources and builders of transformative learning experiences. This section presents the impact of teachers' beliefs and instructional practices in the dynamic landscape of music education. Kelly-McHale (2013) and Saplan and Holmes (2023) addressed how music teachers and choral educators cultivate inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments. In culturally responsive learning environments, educators foster the development of student identities and open doors to self-discovery.

In a study focused on the imperative of music educators to commit to cultural responsiveness, Kelly-McHale (2013) described music teachers as pivotal in fostering a transformative environment. The study focused on a teacher who created a welcoming music environment for four immigrant students from Mexico. The author reframed the music classroom as a dynamic stage for the interplay of cultural influences where the teacher's dedication to cultural integration is the spark for identity development. The research found that blending cultures could cause people to alter their musical identities; thus, music educators should acknowledge and integrate students' cultural backgrounds into educational programs so students can discover more about themselves. Just as Kelly-McHale emphasized the significance of cultural responsiveness, Saplan and Holmes (2023) indicated the necessity of an all-encompassing appreciation of students' varied backgrounds.

Saplan and Holmes (2023) focused on personal insights from two choral educators who reflected on how intersectionality contributed to their approach to choral arts education. The educators explored how their identities and experiences merged with their students and

influenced their instructional practices. The study showed the importance of inclusive repertoire selection, CRT methods, and a secure and supportive environment for all students; thus, educators should recognize and value diverse student identities and experiences in the choral classroom. Saplan and Holmes encouraged choral educators to assess their biases and preconceptions introspectively and educate themselves about intersectionality and social justice concerns. In addition, the researchers emphasized continual learning and development to foster more comprehensive and equitable choral programs. Kelly-McHale (2013) and Saplan and Holmes urged music educators to recognize their influence in their field and embrace their role as promoters of inclusivity and creators of diverse environments.

Frameworks and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Incorporating CRP in music education is a dynamic and evolving way to create inclusive and engaging learning experiences for diverse students. Palmer et al. (2021) developed a comprehensive framework for cultivating culturally relevant and responsive music instruction to foster student achievements, cultural awareness, and involvement in sociopolitical endeavors. The framework includes various dimensions of musical experiences, contexts, cultural diversity, and content and has four quadrants: (a) teacher competencies, (b) informed decision-making, (c) authenticity, and (d) holistic lessons. The goal of the framework was to empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by integrating cultural elements to convey knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Palmer et al.'s framework also covered other aspects crucial to music instruction and teaching, such as teacher disposition, authenticity, cultural aptitude, style interpretation, repertoire selection, sociopolitical awareness, aural pedagogy, critical awareness, sociocultural awareness, cultural fluency, and artistic significance.

Effective cultural instruction includes an appropriate repertoire. Repertoire choices can indicate music teachers' willingness to provide education in a relevant and contextual framework to meet students' needs in classrooms and broader school environments. However, others challenged the implementation of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy in music education, suggesting that educators need a deeper understanding of the approach. The key findings showed that teachers integrated culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy into music education to foster inclusivity, cultural comprehension, and student empowerment.

Culturally Specific Methods

Bernard and Talbot (2023) explored DEIB in music education through the experiences of six teachers of various identities. The teachers discussed DEIB conceptualization and implementation in diverse teaching contexts as they navigated identity intersections, curricular strategies, and instructional methods to advance DEIB. The researchers discussed the need for a holistic DEIB understanding and consideration of visible and unseen identity facets, likeability, and class. Bernard and Talbot also described DEIB implementation challenges, highlighting concerns about representation-focused efforts and intersectional complexities. In addition, the authors emphasized that educators should value diverse student identities, experiences, and interests. Bernard and Talbot advocated for nuanced professional development and curricula that consider multiple identity intersections. Intersectionality discussions should address identity markers' interplay and concurrent interactions among aspects such as gender, ability, migrant status, race, and class.

Campbell (2020) investigated the fusion of ethnomusicology and music education and their joint impact on promoting DEIB in music education. The study focused on how educators used ethnomusicology to enhance music education by integrating diverse musical traditions and

perspectives. The author urged a shift away from Eurocentrism toward a comprehensive approach to embracing music from various cultures. The researcher also recognized music as more than a universal language but a cultural expression reflecting community values and experiences. Suggestions included continuous professional development and cultural competence for music educators. Campbell also indicated the importance of belonging and cultural identity through music education and comprehensive and supportive learning environments where educators validate diverse musical experiences and foster active participation and creativity. The study's findings showed challenges to DEIB implementation in music education, which included limited resources and institutional resistance. However, Campbell presented collaborative efforts, advocacy, and commitment to social justice as solutions to inclusive music education.

Conclusion

The studies have provided insight into culturally responsive music education. Researchers have emphasized the significance of integrating diverse cultural perspectives, exploring complex student identities, preparing educators for cross-cultural competence, and fostering inclusive classroom environments. The literature shows how music education is a means of imparting musical skills, empowering students, celebrating diversity, and preparing students for a more inclusive and culturally enriched world.

The Gap in the Literature

This study aimed to address the literature gap for practical exploration and implementation of culturally responsive music curricula in the middle school classroom, particularly in the absence of direct supervision from district-level music administrators. The literature reviewed in this chapter provided the history of culturally responsive education. There

was a presentation of the changing DEIB landscape in education with a growing emphasis on acknowledging and addressing intersectional complexities in student identities.

This literature review presented prominent scholars and their studies to show the transformative power of multicultural education and its role in DEIB promotion in the classroom. Building on the foundational work of Banks (1993), Ladson-Billings (1995b), Gay (2000), and Paris (2012), this study bridged the gap in the implementation of culturally responsive educational pedagogies in the middle school music classroom. The current educational landscape increasingly shows the importance of DEIB. Therefore, this study contributed to ongoing DEIB efforts by focusing on the music classroom.

Although scholars have discussed the positive outcomes of cultural unity and educators with similar backgrounds, certain areas require further research. There is a need for more practical strategies and approaches in the classroom context. In addition, there should be further guidance on how teachers can translate culturally responsive education concepts into actionable classroom strategies, especially in music education. The literature review showed a pronounced gap in culturally responsive education in music classrooms, where educators may have different administrative support or guidance in implementing culturally responsive approaches. In addition, further studies should address individual music educators' practical challenges and strategies when integrating CRP without a district-level music administrator and the results of their efforts. This study filled the literature gap with insights, strategies, and experiences that could enable music educators to integrate culturally responsive practices into their classrooms.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

The purpose of this self-study was to explore DEIB in the music classroom without a district-level music administrator. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How does a music teacher incorporate CRT practices when implementing lessons on DEIB?

RQ2: How does a CoP support a music teacher's ability to implement DEIB music lessons without the support of a district-level music administrator?

Qualitative self-study enabled me to enhance the practicality and relevance of my research as a teacher-practitioner aspiring to become a district-level music administrator. Rooted in action research (Samaras, 2011), qualitative self-study research focuses on self-reflection and self-improvement. The goal of qualitative self-study research is to investigate the relationship between individual and collective cognition in teachers' professional development and the role of dialogue in fostering a community of engaged scholarship (Loughran, 2008).

This investigation occurred with the qualitative approach of teacher action research, specifically self-study. Teacher action research is a deliberate and systematic approach to addressing the challenges encountered in daily educational settings (Hendricks, 2013). Unlike traditional participant selection methods, such as random or systematic sampling, teacher action research involves close collaboration between educators and colleagues in their educational institutions. Teacher action research includes introspection and strategic planning phases to refine classroom curricula and implement action-oriented strategies in educators' professional practice.

Self-Study

Self-study research is aligned with action research and uses an inquiry-based approach to assessing and enhancing professional practice and continuous development. Educators conducting self-study research implement curriculum strategies while critically evaluating their impact on student learning outcomes (Samaras, 2011). Self-study research has five essential components: (a) self-initiation and focus, (b) a commitment to improvement, (c) interaction and collaboration, (d) reliance on various data sources, and (e) a dedication to trustworthiness. The five elements enable self-study researchers to enhance their teaching competence, bolster the findings' credibility, and contribute to education.

In educational settings, self-study educators examine aspects of their instructional approaches in the dual roles of subject and investigator. The dual role requires researchers to explore their positionality, which can influence research outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The self-study process includes iterative reflection cycles with the goal to achieve transformative educational change and improve institutional practice via systematic analysis and practice review (Loughran, 2008).

Collaboration has a transformative role in self-study research beyond the exchange of ideas and experiences; it is a means of strengthening the method of inquiry. Collaboration involves shared insights and observations in the data collection for a dynamic exchange of perspectives, experiences, and interpretations. Through collaborative reflection with critical friends, self-study practitioners engage in dialogue to deepen their understanding of their teaching practices. Critical friends provide invaluable input and alternative viewpoints as sounding boards and constructive critics. Self-study's collaborative and interactive elements

enable educators to better understand their instructional methods, challenge assumptions, explore new strategies, and strive for continuous improvement (Loughran, 2008).

Trustworthiness in self-study research contributes to the credibility and reliability of the findings. As noted by Guba and Lincoln (1989), trustworthiness has several parts. First, trustworthiness requires scholars to document research procedures, data collection, and analysis methods. Transparent documentation shows the credibility of the findings and enables others to scrutinize, validate, and replicate the research. Second, trustworthiness requires a transparent and open presentation of the research, including motivations, biases, and potential limitations. Transparency enables readers and fellow researchers to critically evaluate the research's integrity and rigor, contributing to study trustworthiness (LaBoskey, 2004). Collaborative endeavors, such as self-study with critical friends, contribute to research credibility and trustworthiness.

Significance of Self-Study Teacher Research

Many educators have felt that academic research does not accurately reflect classroom experiences (Hendricks, 2013). However, the self-study method of inquiry is a valuable research approach for promoting communication and mutual understanding between researchers and practitioners, especially classroom educators. Samaras (2011) criticized academic research outside the classroom led by self-proclaimed academic educational experts.

Such critiques have contributed to the surging interest in self-study research in education. Self-study research is an empowering paradigm shift that gives teacher-researchers a prominent voice in academic research. In self-study research, teachers are researchers and practitioners who challenge the conventional research paradigm. The escalating relevance of self-study in educational contexts has one objective: enhancing teacher instruction. School improvement initiatives often include alliances between researchers and action-takers to facilitate positive

transformation in education (Hendricks, 2013). Thus, self-study provides teachers with a platform for active participation in research and education.

Participants

This research occurred in a music classroom at a public middle school in Northern New Jersey. The sample comprised six participants selected with predetermined criteria for data richness and relevance. I was the primary participant in this self-study, serving the dual role of researcher and educator. In addition, three critical nonmusic administrative figures in the school district participated, providing diverse viewpoints and insights. The district director of secondary education (DSE) oversaw education policies and programs and brought a district-level perspective to the study. The district director of curriculum and instruction, who had a pivotal role in shaping district initiatives, offered a crucial view on my DEIB implementation in the music classroom. Finally, the middle school principal added a school-level administrative perspective to the study, complementing the broader district-level viewpoints.

In addition to the administrators, two educators in the school building served as critical friends, per Samaras (2011). One critical friend was a music educator, and the other was an English language arts educator; both were fellow educators in the school building. The critical friends engaged in reflective discussions and provided valuable feedback and insights throughout the study. Critical friends ensured a comprehensive and well-rounded examination of my journey toward becoming a district-level music administrator. I conducted meetings with my critical friends before implementing each lesson. Further, I maintained regular and informal interactions with critical friends regarding DEIB implementation.

I sought participants with high expertise and relevance. All administrators selected for this study completed at least a master's degree, and all educators completed undergraduate

degrees, a prerequisite for their positions in the school district. Further, administrators and educators had at least three years of professional experience.

Researcher–Participant Relationship

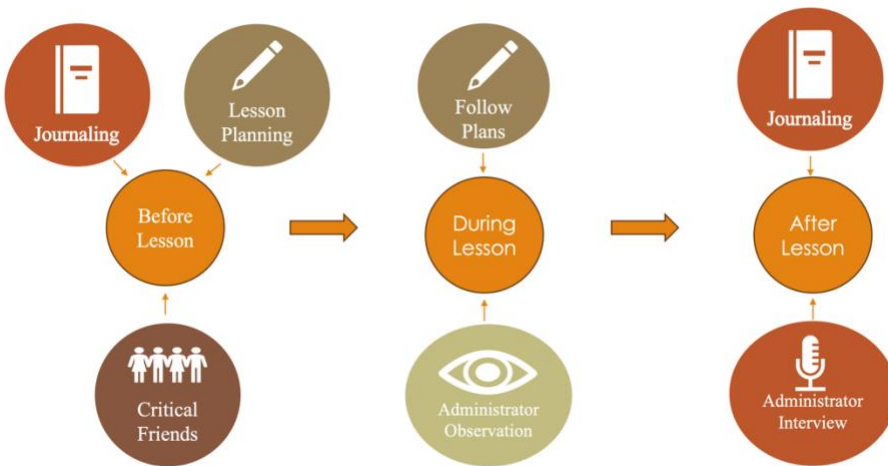
I did not include participants with familial connections with me to attain impartiality and objectivity in the data collection and analysis and to eliminate biases or personal relationships that could impact the study's results. Instead, purposeful selection occurred for participants with an interest in the study. Invitations (see Appendix E) were the means of soliciting the participation of individuals who accurately represented the population under study. Therefore, the participants provided high-quality and reliable data.

Data Collection

The research inquiry had three data collection methods: (a) reflexive journaling, including critical friends meetings; (b) administrator interviews; and (c) carefully constructed lesson plans. The data collection techniques were appropriate to provide insight into implementing DEIB in the music classroom.

Scope and Format of the Data Collection

Figure 1 presents the data collection path.

Figure 1*Data Collection Path*

Before each lesson, I convened with critical friends for collaborative conversation and feedback regarding the upcoming lesson. I then created the lesson plan accordingly (see Appendix F). After planning, I journaled my thoughts and expectations for upcoming lessons (see Appendix J). I also included insights from the critical friends. During the lesson delivery, I provided the nonmusic administrator with the lesson plan alongside the DEIB checklist provided by the NJDOE (see Appendix A). After the lesson, I engaged in a reflective dialogue with the administrator, who shared an observation, and we furthered the conversation on DEIB implementation. I recorded the insights in my journal alongside personal reflections and thoughts for future lessons.

This study had three corresponding segments to the New Jersey legislative mandate: (a) race and ethnicity, (b) gender and sexual orientation, and (c) ability and disability. The three lessons in this study were samples of potential instructional approaches throughout the academic year. For instance, this study included a lesson about race and ethnicity as students prepared for the Hispanic Heritage concert. The lesson had content rooted in Latin American culture, but the

underlying instructional structure and methodology could apply to other racial, ethnic, and cultural contexts. For example, educators could apply similar instructional frameworks to events for Black History Month or multicultural concerts. This lesson planning framework indicates the adaptability and transferability of the instructional strategies used in the context of diverse cultural celebrations.

The lesson on gender and sexual orientation addressed gender stereotypes, challenging students' perceptions of these identities by having them assume nontraditional roles. In this context, students dismantled conventional stereotypes by portraying characters, showcasing a nuanced understanding of gender dynamics. Likewise, the lesson on ability and disability showed the remarkable achievements of the blind pianist Matthew Whitaker, inspiring students. Additionally, the lesson showed the students' ability to navigate challenges, such as the absence of a lead role, while preparing for a holiday theatrical production.

Meetings With Critical Friends

Critical friend meetings provide a structured space for collaborative feedback and insights (Loughran, 2008). In this study, the critical friend meetings were a dynamic exchange of perspectives to enrich the research and influence the effective integration of DEIB principles into teaching practices. I positioned the sessions strategically before the observed lessons to prepare for DEIB strategy implementation because the critical friends contributed insights, suggestions, and alternative viewpoints.

Journaling

Reflective journaling was an essential data collection component in this self-study method of inquiry. Through journaling, I documented my experiences and reflections on practical DEIB implementation. Each journal entry included implementation nuances,

challenges, and successes. The reflections provided a glimpse into my evolving understanding of and ability to incorporate DEIB into my teaching practice. I journaled before each lesson after a critical friends meeting. I also journaled after each administrative interview to compile my reflective thoughts on the lesson. Further, the journals also contained data on critical friend conversations. The critical friends provided a collaborative dimension to the journaling process. My reflections on the dialogue included external viewpoints, insights, and the study's reciprocal influence (see Appendix G).

Lesson Plans

Effective DEIB mandate implementation in education requires well-structured lesson plans for inclusive teaching practices. I created three lesson plans on (a) race and ethnicity, (b) sexual orientation, and (c) ability and disability. Collaboration with critical friends and administrators enabled me to refine and align the plans with DEIB implementation in the music classroom. Furthermore, I engaged in reflective journaling (see Appendix F) to develop nuanced lesson plans. Journaling was a valuable tool for documenting experiences, challenges, and growth within my teaching.

Administrative Observations and Interviews

The study focused on DEIB strategy implementation in the music classroom. Three administrators from the studied district participated in the observations. After each classroom observation, I conducted postlesson semistructured interviews with each administrator with seven open-ended questions (see Appendix B). In addition to providing lesson feedback, the administrators shared practical advice on DEIB implementation. Thus, the administrators were integral to my CoP, as they shared insights and strategies to support the state mandate. I audio-recorded the interviews with a recording device.

Data Analysis

The data underwent analysis for significant themes and a comprehensive understanding of the research inquiry. Initially, the process involved selecting and simplifying information from the various data sources. Information organization within the contexts of CRME and CoPs was part of theme identification and inductive coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Inductive coding involved color-coding the data in Microsoft Word. Although the coding process initially appeared ambiguous, new themes emerged based on the iterative data collection and analysis (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967). After the first and second coding cycles, I condensed the data into thematic categories to address the research questions. Data triangulation also occurred to ensure validity.

Participant Protection

Adherence to rigorous standards of integrity and honesty is paramount to ensuring participants' well-being and ethical treatment. This study commenced after formal approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school district. All participants signed a formal consent form for their voluntary participation (see Appendices C and D). Each participant received a pseudonym for anonymity.

Ethical Considerations

One means of data collection was in-person, audio-recorded, and transcribed interviews. The research included several ethical standards and safeguards for participant security and confidentiality. I electronically stored all digital research materials, including audio recordings and transcripts, on a password-protected WPCoast drive. I was the only user authorized to access these electronic data files. The research remained confidential for participant privacy and anonymity during and after the study.

Risks and Benefits

The participants did not encounter risks beyond those experienced in everyday life. By taking part in this research, participants contributed to a pioneering group of administrators and educators working to implement DEIB principles in the music classroom without a district-level music administrator. The benefits of participating outweighed any risks.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings from data analysis of journals, lesson plans, and transcribed administrative interviews. The data underwent analysis for significant themes and a comprehensive understanding of the research inquiry. The data analysis occurred per the grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Scholars using the grounded theory approach identify critical issues, recurring patterns, shared research themes, and similar outcomes in the data. After the first and second coding cycles, I condensed the data into thematic categories to address the following research questions:

RQ1: How does a music teacher incorporate CRT practices when implementing lessons on DEIB?

RQ2: How does a CoP support a music teacher's ability to implement DEIB music lessons without the support of a district-level music administrator?

The research questions produced two themes each, for four overall themes. The themes and subthemes in Table 1 show the outcomes of a self-study on implementing DEIB without district-level music administration.

Table 1*Themes and Subthemes*

Research question	Theme	Subthemes
How does a music teacher incorporate culturally responsive teaching practices when implementing lessons on DEIB?	Cultural exploration and representation	Cultural immersion in music selection
	Promotion of inclusivity and belonging	Instructional practices Celebrating diversity and ability Challenge of social norms and stereotypes
How does a community of practice support a music teacher's ability to implement DEIB music lessons without the support of a district-level music administrator?	Support and advocacy	Integration of collaborative feedback
	Encouraging communication	Administrative support of DEIB implementation Open dialogue Creating a safe space

Research Question 1

How does a music teacher incorporate CRT practices when implementing lessons on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging?

The data analysis in this self-study found two themes for the first research question. The first theme, implementing DEIB practices through cultural exploration and representation, involved recognizing and taking proactive measures to integrate diverse cultural backgrounds into educational practices. The second theme was strategies to promote inclusivity and foster a sense of belonging in the academic environment. Analysis of the lesson plans, reflective journals, and administrator interviews provided insight into the approaches used to create an inclusive and welcoming environment.

Theme 1: Cultural Exploration and Representation

CRT practice integration in music education is an approach to implementing DEIB (Bond, 2017). At the core of cultural exploration and representation is a commitment to authentic and respectful engagement with diverse cultural perspectives (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). In this study, cultural exploration and representation emerged as a theme, with the subthemes of cultural immersion through music selection and instructional practices.

Cultural Immersion Through Music Selection

The subtheme of cultural immersion through music selection included the efforts to engage students with diverse cultural experiences in the music curriculum. Table 2 presents the excerpts, sources, and lessons.

Table 2*Cultural Immersion of Music Selection Data*

Excerpt	Source	Lesson
Students will be able to prepare for the upcoming Hispanic heritage concert, understand the struggles and triumphs of vocalist Camila Cabello, understand music theory notation, approach the centers and autonomously rotate through them.	Lesson plan	01
DSE: It will be impossible for me to see diversity in a lesson, especially if you look at different cultures, because you may not hit more than one culture in a class.	DSE interview	01
My critical friends suggested I consider providing the students with input towards selecting cultural connections.	Journal 01	01
The collaboration from my critical friends allowed me to see the importance of incorporating some input from the students' preferences.	Journal 01	01
Principal: It is their interpretation of the repertoire. ... Even if they have a favorite type, they are willing to try anything at that point and understand the aspect of music.	Principal interview	02
Director of curriculum and instruction (CNI): All cultures should be incorporated, all-encompassing. All cultures should always be infused into our curriculum.	CNI interview	03

Cultural immersion through music selection included engaging students with diverse cultural experiences within the music curriculum. Analysis of the lesson plans, journal entries, and interviews showed that music was a means of exploring various cultural traditions. For example, the lesson “Dive into Hispanic Culture through Music, Song, and Media” included cultural immersion with songs such as “Que Sabor,” “Stand by Me,” and “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom” (Lesson 01, 10/20/2023). The following were the lesson objectives:

- Students will be able to prepare for the upcoming Hispanic Heritage concert by practicing the songs of “Que Sabor,” “Stand by Me,” and “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom.”

- Students will be able to understand the struggles and triumphs that vocalist Camila Cabello went through regarding performance anxiety and the success she has achieved since she overcame it.
 - Students will be able to understand music theory notation regarding whole notes, half notes, and quarter notes.
 - Students will be able to approach the centers and autonomously rotate through them.
- (Lesson 01, 10/20/2023)

The goal of the culturally diverse music was to achieve immersion and foster student appreciation for the Hispanic Heritage concert. However, the DSE observed the lesson and perceived the instructional approach as monocultural and needing more diverse perspectives. In response, I clarified to the DSE that the lesson showed diversity within various cultural heritages within Latin culture. The following is an exchange during the DSE debrief.

DSE: It will be impossible for me to see diversity in a lesson, especially if you look at different cultures, because you may not hit more than one culture in a class.

Webb: I know the songs we sang hit diversity within Hispanic heritage. “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom” by Selena is Mexican Cumbia/Tejano. Then, we had Prince Royce’s Bachata version of “Stand by Me.” “Que Sabor” is more of a salsa thing, and then we had Cuban with Camila Cabello in music media. The whole thing for me was looking at different cultures within Latin America.

DSE: That is interesting, as I would look at it as if you just hit one [culture]. That is fascinating because I would not have broken any of that down into the subcultures.

Webb: Yes. There are so many countries and cultures, and I am just now trying to prepare for this concert. (DSE Interview, 10/25/23)

I saw this lesson as representative of various subcultures. The music genres connected to different Latino countries, showing the diversity of Hispanic heritage.

Before each lesson, I met with my critical friends for collaborative discussions to share my thoughts and ideas and solicit perspectives and feedback. Before the lesson on race and ethnicity, the critical friends shared input that enabled me to approach this concept. For example, in my journal, I wrote,

When I shared my lesson plans and ideas with my critical friends, they suggested I consider providing the students with input towards selecting cultural connections. After hearing the suggestions from my critical friends, I looked at the introduction assignment that the students filled out at the beginning of the year. (Journal 01, 10/05/2023)

At the start of the school year, I created and assigned a Google Form survey to students to learn about their interests and preferences. Upon reading the responses, I discovered that most surveys contained information about preferred musical artists. My critical friends helped me understand an aspect I failed to consider when I crafted the lesson. For example, in my journal, I stated, “The collaboration from my critical friends allowed me to see the importance of incorporating some input from the students’ preferences” (Journal 01, 10/05/2023). Through collaborative engagement with my critical friends, I discerned the significance of integrating student preferences into the instructional lesson and the value of student input in cultural exploration.

The perspective of the principal and director of curriculum and instruction (CNI) also contributed to the theme of music selection in promoting cultural immersion. By acknowledging students’ preferences and their willingness to explore different musical genres, the principal recognized the potential of music for facilitating cultural exchange and appreciation. The

following is from my interview with the principal: “In music, it is their interpretation of the repertoire. What is their favorite type of music? Even if they have a favorite type, they are willing to try anything at that point and understand the aspect of music” (Principal Interview, 11/16/2023).

The CNI also emphasized integrating cultural diversity across the curriculum, saying, “All cultures should be incorporated, all-encompassing. All cultures should always be infused into our curriculum” (CNI Interview, 12/18/2023). Cultural immersion through music selection showed a dedication to integrating culturally responsive practices into music lessons. Diverse elements and techniques provided a deeper understanding of cultural exploration and representation, addressing the first research question.

Instructional Practices

The analysis found that diverse elements and techniques contributed to cultural exploration and representation. Table 3 presents the excerpts, sources, and lessons from the data analysis.

In my journal, I detailed instructional practices, highlighting percussion instruments such as claves and congas: “Our instrumental exploration for this lesson will include percussion, emphasizing clave patterns and the utilization of congas. The clave rhythms on the Congo drums represented Cuba and the different drumming patterns that emerged from that country” (Journal 01, 10/05/2023).

Table 3*Instructional Practices Data*

Excerpt	Source	Lesson
Our instrumental exploration for this lesson will include percussion, emphasizing clave patterns, and the utilization of congas ... heel-toe-slap-toe-heel-toe-open-open.	Journal 01	01
Students will participate in singing “Que Sabor,” a Spanish-language song. ... We undertook a bilingual rendition of “Stand by Me,” ... blending English with a touch of Hispanic flair.	Journal 01	01
How did you group the students? You grouped them by rows, so I thought there needed to be more diversity... I did not know if you were doing homogeneous or heterogeneous groupings.	DSE interview	01
I understand the importance of heterogeneous groupings. This can add a layer of differentiation and encourage students.	Journal 02	01
I liked the video ... everyone was over there and was engaged.	DSE interview	01

Further, I described techniques taught to students, including hands-on learning and skill development. In the first journal entry, I explained my plan to instruct the students on the “heel-toe-slap-toe-heel-toe-open-open” technique on the congas, indicating a commitment to providing practical skills on the drum (Journal 01, 10/05/2023). I used this hands-on instructional practice to enhance students’ musical abilities and appreciation for cultural diversity. In addition to the instructional practices on instruments, I journaled about vocal selections in English and Spanish:

During this time, students will participate in singing “Que Sabor,” a Spanish-language song with simple yet vibrant lyrics in 3-part harmony. We undertook a bilingual rendition of “Stand by Me,” with students taking on solo verses and a collective chorus, blending English with a touch of Hispanic flair. (Journal 01, 10/05/2023)

The DSE offered recommendations beyond musical instructional strategies. The suggestions did not directly relate to the curricula, but I used them to enhance my instructional practices within music education. For example, during my interview with the DSE, we discussed the benefits of arranging student groupings in the classroom. DSE focused on organizing students with row-based seating arrangements; however, this arrangement resulted in speculation about the absence of diversity within the groups.

How did you group the students? You grouped them by rows, so I thought there needed to be more diversity. It was more that you were putting them by friend groups or by the way they sat in the room, and I was curious to know if those were assigned seats or if that is where they sat. So, that part was interesting because I did not know if you were doing homogeneous or heterogeneous groupings. (DSE Interview, 10/25/2023)

After reflecting on the feedback in a subsequent journal entry, I acknowledged the benefits of grouping students with different abilities. Grouping is a well-documented classroom strategy (Aronson, 2021; Delquadri et al., 1986; Marzano et al., 2001; Slavin, 1990). However, I had not considered how to use this approach to foster differentiation and collaborative learning experiences. In my journal, I stated, “After hearing DSE’s suggestion, I understand the importance of heterogeneous groupings. This can add a layer of differentiation and encourage students to help and learn from each other in ways the homogeneous grouping did not offer” (Journal 02, 10/26/2023).

The DSE further suggested alternating grouping between homogeneous and heterogeneous arrangements to cater to varying skill levels:

You could do homogeneous groupings. You can do your novice, intermediate, and advanced groupings one day, then you can split them all up and do heterogeneous

groupings [to] mix all the kids randomly, so they are sometimes with different kids.

However, you should be able to hit different standards and levels. (DSE Interview, 10/25/2023)

The data analysis also found the instructional strategy of integrating multimedia to enhance cultural understanding. Multimedia integration was an effort to leverage technology and cultivate students' appreciation of diverse cultural experiences. The lessons with multimedia included a video at the music media center. The objective of the multimedia lesson was, "Students will be able to understand the struggles and triumphs Camila Cabello went through regarding performance anxiety" (Lesson 01, 10/20/2023). I used multimedia resources to give students a more nuanced understanding of musical artists' cultural contexts.

Multimedia resources are a way to help students better understand other cultures. I used videos from online sources such as YouTube to introduce students to artists like Camila Cabello and blind pianist Matthew Whitaker. The DSE could not obtain a headset and watch the video on Camila Cabello but appeared impressed with the technology use. The DSE said,

I liked the video, but I wish I had listened to it. I should have grabbed a set of headphones, but you did not have any extra. I could not see what they were watching, but everyone was over there and engaged. (DSE Interview, 10/25/2023)

Accessible technology and videos on YouTube and various websites can be educational resources.

I used technology to give the students a worldview perspective of the lessons and concepts taught in class. Multimedia resources enable students to learn about cultural practices outside the teacher's expertise. Therefore, integrating multimedia components into assignments

could provide students with dynamic and engaging opportunities to interact with cultural content to enhance their understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural perspectives.

Theme 2: Promotion of Inclusivity and Belonging

The second theme, the promotion of inclusion and belonging, focused on creating an educational environment to celebrate differences in abilities and challenge social norms and stereotypes. Educators who create a sense of belonging, celebrate individual strengths, challenge social norms, and foster diversity can create more inclusive and equitable learning environments (Davis & Culp, 2023; Paris, 2012; Román et al., 2022). The theme of promoting inclusivity and belonging emerged in the analysis of journal entries, strategic planning, and administrative feedback.

Celebrating Differences in Abilities

The subtheme of celebrating differences in abilities emerged from my lesson objectives to help students understand individual challenges and successes. Table 4 presents the excerpts, sources, and lessons from the data analysis.

Table 4*Celebrating Differences in Abilities Data*

Excerpt	Source	Lesson
Students will be able to prepare for the upcoming holiday concert through acting, understand the struggles and triumphs that Matthew Whitaker went through regarding overcoming a disability and the success he has achieved through his gift of music, understand that it is important to highlight our differences.	Lesson plan	03
No matter what role we are in ... we all have talents.	CNI interview	03
All of us are individuals, and we have something to share.	CNI interview	03
It was very encouraging for our kids, especially those who may not be so open, who may take a back seat, or who may not participate because they do not think they are good enough.	CNI interview	03
It may be the only time those children can perform in their entire life.	CNI interview	03
In the interview with CNI, they advocated for incorporating diverse perspectives in lessons.	Journal 06	03
You ensured that everyone felt included and that they belonged.	DSE interview	01

My third lesson included the subtheme of celebrating differences in abilities. Lesson objectives included helping students understand the challenges and successes of individuals with disabilities, such as Matthew Whitaker. For example, I included the following in my third lesson plan: “Understand the struggles and triumphs that Matthew Whitaker went through in overcoming a disability” (Lesson 03, 12/13/2023). Therefore, I sought to recognize and celebrate differences in abilities. The following were additional lesson objectives:

- Students will be able to prepare for the upcoming holiday concert through acting.
- Students will be able to understand the struggles and triumphs that Matthew Whitaker went through regarding overcoming a disability and the success he has achieved through his gift of music.

- Students will be able to understand that it is important to highlight our differences.

(Lesson 03, 12/13/2023)

The CNI observed the third lesson. Before the interview, I did not know about the CNI's background in special education. The CNI had previously worked as a special education teacher who taught a range of high school students from Grades 9 through 12 with various disabilities, ranging from behavioral-specific learning disabilities to other health-impaired perceptual impairments and neurological impairments. Thus, the CNI provided valuable perspectives on celebrating ability differences: "No matter what role we are in, what economic or socio-economic background we have, we all have talents" (CNI Interview, 12/18/2023). This statement showed a belief in the inherent abilities of all individuals, regardless of backgrounds or circumstances. The CNI also emphasized the significance of recognizing and valuing individual strengths and weaknesses, saying, "We all have strengths, and we all have what we can call weaknesses. All of us are individuals, and we have something to share" (CNI Interview, 12/18/2023).

The CNI noted the importance of inclusive spaces where students of varying backgrounds and abilities can showcase their strengths. For example, the CNI said,

Turning what can be perceived as a disadvantage into an advantage was a great way to segue into the lesson. It was very encouraging for our kids, especially those who may not be so open, who may take a back seat, or who may not participate because they do not think they are good enough. (CNI Interview, 12/18/2023)

The CNI also focused on fostering a supportive environment where students can feel empowered to showcase their talents and overcome perceived limitations. Additionally, the CNI highlighted the significance of providing opportunities for all students to participate and succeed, regardless

of their backgrounds or abilities: “Every holiday show, every concert, every performance, they sat in the front or stood in the front of the risers. It may be the only time those children can perform in their entire life” (CNI Interview, 12/18/2023). In a reflective journal entry after the interview, I documented the CNI’s perspective on DEIB within educational contexts: “In the interview with CNI, they advocated for incorporating diverse perspectives in lessons. CNI also defined DEIB in educational settings as ensuring everyone feels accepted and valued” (Journal 06, 12/20/2023).

During the interview with the DSE, I felt recognized for my efforts toward inclusivity and belonging. The DSE said,

I would not question belonging because I did not see anybody off alone. So, when I think of belonging, I think of the students who are uncomfortable being in the class and the group. Your reputation is that everyone fits in here. Even in my past observations, you ensured that everyone felt included and that they belonged. (DSE Interview, 10/25/2023)

The subtheme of celebrating differences in abilities showed the necessity of promoting inclusion and belonging in the educational setting. My third lesson plan focused on the challenges and successes of individuals with disabilities, such as the blind pianist Matthew Whitaker. The lesson objectives were to recognize and celebrate diverse abilities among students. The CNI’s observation of this lesson further showed the importance of acknowledging and valuing individual strengths and weaknesses, regardless of background or circumstance.

Challenging Social Norms and Stereotypes

The theme of promoting inclusivity and a sense of belonging included the subtheme of challenging social norms and stereotypes. Table 5 presents the excerpts, sources, and lessons from the data analysis.

Table 5*Challenging Social Norms and Stereotypes Data*

Excerpt	Source	Lesson
Students will be able to prepare for the upcoming holiday concert through acting, understand that gender stereotypes and generalizations should not discourage anyone from pursuing their desires, engage in discourse regarding the importance of breaking the myth of gender roles.	Lesson plan	02
I had preconceived notions of the students and the parts they should receive.	Journal 03	02
I devised a plan to address the importance of challenging and breaking away from the conventional notions of gender-specific roles.	Journal 03	02
You were honest about the predisposed bias that you thought would occur of certain people obtaining specific roles.	Principal interview	02
I asked about the first thoughts associated with the words “Santa Claus” and “criminal.” ... When it came to the word “criminal,” a student’s immediate association was with a male, specifically, a Black male.	Journal 04	02
Today’s lesson took a crucial step in debunking these myths, challenging the ingrained generalizations, and disrupting the stereotypes that have become ingrained in our societal fabric.	Journal 04	02

In my second lesson plan, the goal was to challenge the stereotypes presented in skits. I aimed to initiate discussions, draw attention to the restrictions of gender stereotypes, and encourage students to question and challenge societal norms. I included the following in the lesson plan: “The conversation will pivot to gender stereotypes within the roles of the skit, indicating a deliberate effort to address these issues head-on” (Lesson 02, 11/08/2023). The following are the objectives from the second lesson:

- Students will be able to prepare for the upcoming holiday concert through acting.
- Students will be able to understand that gender stereotypes and generalizations should not discourage anyone from pursuing their desires.

- Students will be able to engage in discourse regarding the importance of breaking the myth of gender roles. (Lesson 02, 11/08/2023)

Before the observed lesson, students auditioned for roles in the holiday skit. Based on student insights, I formed expectations regarding specific roles. However, a surprising result of the audition was that female students who outperformed their peers earned two traditionally male roles: Santa Claus and the criminal. In my journal, I wrote,

Through a collaborative process, the students wrote a holiday script that included the characters Santa Claus, Rudolph, elves, Policeman Bob, and a criminal. When it came time to begin casting the roles for this play, I had preconceived notions of the students and the parts they should receive. However, I entered the audition with an open mind. To my surprise, the student with the best audition for Santa Claus was a female. Also, the student with the best audition for the criminal was female. (Journal 03, 11/02/2023)

For this study, I planned this lesson during the auditions to discuss gender roles, stereotypes, and generalizations. My critical friends suggested conversing with the students about the reverse roles in the skit and their awareness of gender-specific roles. The critical friends also encouraged me to ask students about their feelings regarding their roles to connect them to broader reflections on gender stereotypes. I wrote in my journal,

I devised a plan to address the importance of challenging and breaking away from the conventional notions of gender-specific roles before delving into the rehearsal process. I structured my lesson to include the following questions: What comes to mind when you think of Santa Claus? What comes to mind when you think of a criminal? (Journal 03, 11/02/2023)

The following journal entry addressed my discussion with students on preconceived gender roles:

I asked about the first thoughts associated with the words Santa Claus and criminal. Typical responses emerged, such as the image of a big man in a red suit for Santa Claus. However, when it came to the word “criminal,” a student’s immediate association was with a male, specifically, a Black male. While I felt concerned about this response, I recognized the importance of honoring the perspective, as the student felt safe enough to express what had been ingrained. This interaction illuminated the need for challenging preconceived notions and broadening perspectives. (Journal 04, 11/22/2023)

The building principal (Principal) observed this lesson. During the follow-up interview, the principal commended my honesty in addressing my implicit bias regarding the assumed outcome of the casting audition for the skit, as it indicated my commitment to confronting and overcoming societal stereotypes in the educational setting. The principal said, “You were honest about the predisposed bias that you thought would occur of certain people obtaining specific roles” (Principal Interview, 11/16/2023).

Afterward, I reflected on classroom discussions about conventional gender roles. In my journal, I discussed societal influences on perceptions and stereotypes:

It is crucial to acknowledge that society has, over time, branded, brainwashed, and normalized specific images of individuals, perpetuating stereotypes and generalizations. Today’s lesson took a crucial step in debunking these myths, challenging the ingrained generalizations, and disrupting the stereotypes that have become ingrained in our societal fabric. (Journal 04, 11/22/2023)

Research Question 2

How does a community of practice support a music teacher's ability to implement DEIB music lessons without a district-level music administrator?

Data analysis in this self-study found two themes for the second research question. The first theme was that a CoP was pivotal in DEIB music lesson implementation because it provided collaborative support and advocacy. Educators and nonmusic administrators in the CoP shared learning experiences and exchanged ideas, resources, and strategies to enhance DEIB implementation in the music classroom without a district-level music administrator. The second theme was that a CoP supports DEIB implementation via effective communication. Through open dialogue, community members can collectively identify challenges, brainstorm solutions, and refine DEIB implementation in the music classroom.

Theme 1: Support and Advocacy

The analysis showed that support and advocacy contributed to DEIB music lesson implementation in a district without a music administrator. The goal of CoPs is learning and mutual engagement in advocating for critical support for conducive environments for teacher development and innovation, especially in music education (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Luebke, 2013; Wenger et al., 2002). This study's theme of support and advocacy included the subthemes of *collaborative feedback* and *administrative support of teachers*. For this study, collaborative feedback consisted of suggestions to enhance DEIB implementation in the music classroom provided by critical friends and nonmusic district-level administration.

Integrating Collaborative Feedback

Collaborative feedback was pivotal in shaping support and advocacy initiatives. Table 6 presents the excerpts, sources, and lessons from the data analysis.

Table 6*Integrating Collaborative Feedback Data*

Excerpt	Source	Lesson
The conversation will continue with similar questions, hopefully with the class agreeing that gender stereotypes and generalizations should not discourage anyone from pursuing their desires.	Lesson plan	02
Students will be given 10 minutes to discuss differences in their lives... and receive feedback from both the teacher and peers in other groups.	Lesson Plan	03
My critical friends recommended that I use the concept of the ethics of care to teach students about teamwork and supporting each other in overcoming challenges.	Journal 05	03
My critical friends suggested I consider providing the students with input towards selecting cultural connections.	Journal 01	01
It's a great way to introduce the students and explain that it's okay to step out of the box.	Principal interview	02

I defined collaborative feedback as suggestions from the CoP to enhance DEBI implementation in the music classroom. In addition to receiving collaborative feedback from critical friends and administrators, students could assess their work critically through self-reflection and peer feedback. I encouraged the students to provide constructive feedback to one another to promote a culture of mutual learning and improvement.

The lesson plans included conversations about questioning gender stereotypes and generalizations. Through collaborative dialogue, the students engaged with one another and me to express their feedback and perspectives. The following excerpt from the second lesson plan addressed the procedure:

The conversation will pivot to gender stereotypes within the roles of the skit as I ask the following questions: Who or what comes to mind when you think of Santa Claus? Who or what comes to mind when you think of a criminal? The conversation will continue with similar questions, hopefully with the class agreeing that gender stereotypes and

generalizations should not discourage anyone from pursuing their desires. (Lesson 02, 11/08/2023)

The students responded positively to the procedure and actively participated in a stimulating discussion. I sensed genuine comfort among them as they discussed gender roles and stereotypes.

Like in the second lesson, students could express themselves and receive feedback from their peers and me in the third lesson on abilities and disabilities. The excerpt from the third lesson plan presents the procedure in practice:

Students will be grouped according to their acting roles. They will then be given 10 minutes to discuss differences in their lives and how they utilized them. They will then share examples with the class and receive feedback from the teacher and peers in other groups. (Lesson 03, 12/13/2023)

Journal entries showed the role of critical friends in enhancing instructional practices.

Throughout the study, I sought feedback from administrators and critical friends, who offered valuable suggestions for refining lesson plans and instructional approaches. I journaled about the feedback provided by my critical friends before the third lesson:

After conversing with my critical friends, they recommended that I use the concept of the ethics of care to teach students about teamwork and supporting each other in overcoming challenges, like being down one person in the play. My critical friends also discussed personal experiences that inspired their passion for music and inclusivity, as one shared a story about a trumpeter with disabilities as a source of musical inspiration. (Journal 05, 12/05/2023)

The principal and I engaged in a fruitful collaboration, and the critical friends offered valuable feedback regarding my approach to crafting the lesson on gender stereotypes. The

critical friends reaffirmed the correlation I established between gender stereotypes and the casting process for the play. The following is an exchange with the principal during a debrief:

Principal: That is always a great thing to do to make them feel comfortable. You may have preconceived notions about certain things, even as a teacher. When the event occurs, and you have people try out, others may step up and fall into roles you did not even consider.

Webb: Yes. In general, for that lesson, did you see the point I was trying to make regarding implementing DEIB in that way? Did you understand it?

Principal: Yes, that was important. It is a great way to introduce the students, explaining that stepping out of the box is okay. Even as far as gender roles, kids think that is the way it is supposed to go, and that is just it. Any diversion from that may seem weird to them. However, when you put it in certain aspects, it is like, “Okay, why can’t I be a nurse? Why can’t I do certain things?” It was important for the students to see this lesson as it provided comfort where they could express themselves in a certain way. (Principal Interview, 11/16/2023)

The principal reassured me I was following the correct course with implementing DEIB and offered valuable administrative support.

Administrative Support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Implementation

The data provided insight into the support I received from all three administrators when implementing DEIB in the music classroom. Table 7 presents the excerpts, sources, and lessons from the data analysis.

Table 7*Administrative Support Data*

Excerpt	Source	Lesson
CNI highlighted the district's efforts to revise the curriculum to align with New Jersey Student Learning Standards, ensuring diversity and inclusion across all content areas.	Journal 06	03
Upon consulting with Principal, I was advised to alter the approach due to the disapproval received.	Journal 03	02
If the board supports you, then it is easy. So, if the building principal supports you in what you are doing and you run it by them, it is okay. You have got the support.	DSE interview	01
This is where the conversation arises about needing content specialists because I can help you with structure and pedagogy. I cannot help you with the specifics of your content.	DSE interview	01
The culture of the building has changed drastically in the last six months. And it could be just me being around, but I felt like there was a level of hostility here last year that doesn't exist right now.	DSE interview	01
Standards are in the curriculum, but it is up to the administration to ensure the teachers apply them.	Principal interview	02

In the sixth journal entry, I discussed the CNI's emphasis on the importance of district efforts to revise the curriculum:

CNI suggested infusing all cultures into music education to create a more diverse learning environment and emphasized the need for sustainable DEIB education beyond temporary learning. They supported challenging stereotypes and gender roles in classroom activities and advocated for administrative support for teachers implementing DEIB initiatives. Lastly, CNI highlighted the district's efforts to revise the curriculum to align with New Jersey Student Learning Standards, ensuring diversity and inclusion across all content areas. (Journal 06, 12/20/2023)

As discussed earlier in this chapter, DSE offered insightful feedback during the lesson on race and ethnicity, particularly regarding incorporating diversity through song selection and student grouping (see Tables 2 and 3). The collaborative feedback provided me a range of perspectives on implementing DEIB in the music classroom, particularly without a district-level music administrator.

Administrative support was not always positive. In the following journal entry, I discussed a situation when I sought counsel from the building principal regarding the implementation of the mandate's gender and sexual orientation component:

In last year's preparation for our Black History Month performance, I sought to incorporate themes of gender roles and sexual orientation by including a skit depicting the achievements of William Dorsey Swann, considered by some as the first known drag queen in American history. Born into slavery during the mid-19th century, Swann was recognized as a civil activist. Students discovered Swann while researching influential black figures for Black History Month. Some students expressed interest in including Swann in the performance, with one even volunteering to portray him as a drag queen. While I was informed that I received parental approval for this portrayal, it faced opposition from several stakeholders within the district community. Upon consulting with the Principal, I was advised to alter the approach due to the disapproval received. Despite the diversity and inclusion mandate from the New Jersey State Legislature advocating for lessons on sexual orientation, disagreement persisted among stakeholders regarding its implementation in our performance. (Journal 03, 11/02/2023)

Although I did not initially receive the support or answers I sought, I appreciated the principal's guidance and assistance. I later learned I was misled by the parent's consent regarding the child;

thus, I potentially avoided a disastrous outcome for the entire production. During the study, I shared this incident with the DSE:

Let us take a step back from that. Every school play is board-approved. Every script is supposed to be read by the principal to look for issues. However, if the board supports you, then it is easy. So, if the building principal supports you in what you are doing and you run it by them, it is okay. You have got the support. That is the easy part. The other part is a long, slow process. It is all about conversations, relationships, and awareness of where people are right now. (DSE Interview, 10/25/2023)

The DSE acknowledged the importance of content specialists in supporting teachers with the structural and curriculum aspects of instruction. DSE supported the need for a district-level music administrator:

I need help speaking to you about the content. If you knew how tone-deaf I was or how much I did not know about music, I would not have been able to pick up a single differentiation if you had not explained all the parts of the songs. This is where the conversation arises about needing content specialists because I can help you with structure and pedagogy. I cannot help you with the specifics of your content. I must lean on you as the expert in that field because I do not know the content. I could not make this one up. (DSE Interview, 10/25/2023)

Moreover, the DSE highlighted the impact of administrative support on the school's culture. The DSE partly attributed a significant positive shift in the building's culture over the past six months to the support provided to teachers. In an interview, the DSE said,

The culture of the building has changed drastically in the last six months. It could be just me being around, but I felt like there was a level of hostility here last year that does not

exist right now. It is partly because of some of the things we are trying to do and be present more. And that matters. (DSE Interview, 10/25/2023)

The transformation within the building was a transition toward a more nurturing and inclusive atmosphere. Therefore, the support provided conducive conditions for effective teaching and learning.

The building principal also supported DEIB implementation by ensuring effective standards integration into the curriculum and teacher application. The principal discussed administrative support of DEIB implementation:

Standards are in the curriculum, but it is up to the administration to ensure the teachers apply them. We must support them through observations, walkthroughs, and PDs on diversity and inclusion, you know, to make them feel more comfortable and teach them how they can incorporate it into their day-to-day activities. (Principal Interview, 11/16/2023)

The data indicated that administrative support provided invaluable guidance for walkthroughs, observations, and professional development opportunities.

Theme 2: Fostering Communication

Open dialogue and safe spaces are ways to foster communication in a CoP for music teachers without music administration. Open dialogue involves cultivating environments where individuals feel empowered to express their thoughts, concerns, and perspectives without fear of judgment or reprisal (Saplan & Holmes, 2023). Further, Kelly-McHale (2013) indicated the significance of creating safe spaces within educational contexts where students and educators can engage in authentic and vulnerable communication and foster trust and mutual respect.

Open Dialogue

The subtheme of open dialogue included understanding, collaboration, and growth through communication among educators, students, and stakeholders. Data analysis found multiple instances of open dialogue. Table 8 presents the excerpts, sources, and lessons from the data analysis.

Table 8

Open Dialogue Data

Excerpt	Source	Lesson
Constructive dialogue and collaborative planning are essential in pursuing educational advancement and dismantling societal biases, stereotypes, and inequities. This study emphasized the importance of being receptive to feedback in professional growth.	Journal 04	02
It is all about conversations and relationships and being aware of where people are right now.	CNI interview	03
Being open-minded, having conversations, listening to others' points of view, and agreeing to disagree sometimes brings people together.	CNI interview	03
You want to talk to the parents and give them examples. ... You can always get through to them once you have that honest conversation.	Principal interview	02

The lesson plans included endeavors to spark discussions on “ability vs. disability and advantage vs. disadvantage.” The students reflected on how they navigated differences to accentuate the positive while eliminating the negative (Lesson 03, 12/13/2023). This reflective practice enabled open dialogue in the classroom as the students shared their experiences and perspectives on complex issues.

I journaled about the role of open dialogue in shaping instructional practices. In my journal, I discussed the importance of incorporating input from critical friends, nonmusic administrators, and students:

Talking and planning together is essential for moving education forward and breaking down all those biased ideas and stereotypes. This study showed me how crucial it is to be open to feedback to grow professionally. It can be tough sometimes, especially when you think your teaching game is already solid. So far, this study clarified that we must work together, especially since we do not have a music supervisor. We can all learn and grow together by keeping the conversation flowing and being open to new ideas. (Journal 04, 11/22/2023)

Feedback from the DSE and CNI indicated that open dialogue is vital for promoting DEIB in educational settings. The DSE emphasized the importance of conversations and relationships where individuals advocate for awareness of others' perspectives and beliefs: "It is all about conversations and relationships and being aware of where people are right now" (DSE Interview, 10/25/2023). Similarly, the CNI indicated the need to be open-minded and receptive to diverse viewpoints. Open dialogue enables people to come together in a supportive educational community, thereby supporting collaboration and inclusivity. The CNI said, "Being open-minded, having conversations, listening to others' points of view, and agreeing to disagree sometimes brings people together" (CNI Interview, 12/18/2023).

Finally, the principal recognized the importance of honest communication with parents and stakeholders, suggesting that open dialogue can contribute to a greater understanding and collaboration in addressing educational challenges. The principal said, "You want to talk to the parents and give them examples. You can always get through to them once you have that honest conversation" (Principal Interview, 11/16/2023).

Creating a Safe Space

Data analysis showed that the educators and administrators prioritized establishing safe and supportive learning environments where students felt accepted, valued, and empowered to express themselves authentically. Table 9 presents the excerpts, sources, and lessons from the data analysis.

Table 9*Creating a Safe Space Data*

Excerpt	Source	Lesson
For approximately 10 minutes, I will allow the students to speak or write in their Chromebooks regarding a difference in their lives and how they used it to their advantage.	Lesson plans	03
Principal and CNI emphasized that DEIB implementation begins with a safe learning environment.	Journal 06	03
Safety is above all else ... when you feel safe, comfortable, and accepted in your environment.	CNI interview	03
For a kid to learn in your class, they must feel safe. ... Once you provide a safe environment, then the kid can learn anything.	Principal interview	02

The lesson plans provided opportunities for students to share their experiences and perspectives in a safe and nonjudgmental setting. For example, the third lesson plan included a designated time for students to speak or write about a difference in their lives and how they used it to their advantage. This reflective exercise was a means of fostering open dialogue and creating a safe space for students to explore their identities and experiences. An excerpt from my journal regarding the third lesson plan reads, “For approximately 10 minutes, I will allow the students to speak or write in their Chromebooks regarding a difference in their lives and how they used it to their advantage” (Lesson 03, 12/13/2023).

Reflective journal entries throughout the study showed the profound impact of creating a safe learning environment when implementing DEIB in the music classroom. I noted that the

principal and CNI prioritized a safe learning environment for DEIB implementation: “Principal and CNI emphasized that DEIB implementation begins with a safe learning environment” (Journal 06, 12/20/2023). The CNI and principal reinforced the importance of creating a safe space for student learning and expression. The CNI commended how I fostered an environment where students felt comfortable and empowered to take risks, saying, “Safety is above all else when you feel safe, comfortable, and accepted in your environment” (CNI Interview, 12/18/2023). The principal emphasized that students should have a safe environment for student learning, noting that comfort and safety are prerequisites for effective education: “For a kid to learn in your class, they must feel safe. Once you provide a safe environment, then the kid can learn anything” (Principal Interview, 11/16/2023).

Conclusion

CRT implementation in music education found two main themes. The first theme, cultural exploration and representation through various means, had three subthemes: immersing in different cultures through music selection, using diverse curriculum elements and techniques, and integrating multimedia resources to enhance cultural understanding. The second theme was the promotion of inclusivity and belonging within DEIB music lessons. The subthemes were celebrating diversity, recognizing individual differences and abilities, and confronting entrenched social norms and stereotypes. The results indicate the importance of advocating for inclusivity and challenging systemic barriers within music education.

The findings about the pivotal role of a CoP in supporting a music teacher’s ability to implement DEIB music lessons without district-level music administrative support produced two key themes: integrating collaborative feedback within the CoP was essential for support and advocacy and the critical role of communication within the CoP. Open dialogue enabled me and

the students to foster understanding, share experiences, and collectively address issues related to DEIB. The study also showed that creating a safe space within the CoP allowed the students to engage in meaningful discussions, express concerns, and seek support without fear of judgment.

Chapter 5 will present the conclusions from the findings.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this self-study was to explore DEIB implementation in the music classroom without a district-level music administrator. The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: How does a music teacher incorporate CRT practices when implementing lessons on DEIB?

RQ2: How does a CoP support a music teacher's ability to implement DEIB music lessons without the support of a district-level music administrator?

The findings discussed in the previous chapter resulted in the following three conclusions:

- Exploration of various cultures could affect how music teachers incorporate and implement DEIB in their lessons.
- Reflective practices in DEIB music lessons could affect students' comprehension of race and ethnicity, sexual and gender orientation, and disability and ability.
- Support or advocacy from nonmusic administrators could impact music teachers' ability to teach DEIB lessons, despite the absence of district-level music administrator.

After the conclusions and discussion, I provide a social justice statement related to this study. This chapter includes the limitations, recommendations for further research and suggestions for music educators without district-level music administration and district superintendents, board members, administrators, and stakeholders who influence district personnel decisions. The chapter also contains a brief study conclusion.

Conclusion 1

Exploring various cultures could affect how music teachers incorporate and implement DEIB in their lessons.

In alignment with Campbell (2020), who studied fusing ethnomusicology into music education, my findings showed the importance of cultural exploration in educational settings. Drawing on Banks (1993) and Banks and Banks (2019), I found that delving into diverse cultures was foundational for fostering inclusivity and critical thinking skills for multicultural education. With this foundation, my analysis of race and ethnicity indicates the significance of cultural immersion. For instance, the Hispanic Heritage concert enabled the participants to deeply engage with Hispanic culture in an authentic cultural immersion experience. This example suggests the practical application of DEIB principles and the transformative potential of cultural exploration in educational contexts.

Similar to McKoy (2012) on experiential learning, I concluded that several factors influence music teachers' ability to navigate diverse cultural contexts. The findings showed a curricular approach beyond performing. The students immersed themselves in the essence of Latin culture through experiential learning. In addition, the students delved into the lives of influential figures emblematic of the culture, gaining insights into diverse artists' adversities and triumphs. Moreover, the students gained a firsthand understanding of the cultural significance of clave and conga drum rhythms and recognized foundational elements as integral components of the featured musical genres. The experiential learning opportunity contributed to the students' musical proficiency, cultural awareness, and sensitivity. CRT involves incorporating students' cultural backgrounds and experiences into the learning process (Gay, 2000). Educators can create a learning environment conducive to validating and celebrating diverse cultural perspectives by

engaging students in meaningful cultural experiences. In this study, an example of such a learning environment was exploring the significance of clave and conga drum rhythms in Latin music.

Boon (2014) explored Black violin students' experiences and the significance of aligning pedagogical practices with students' identities in music education. The author found that students responded positively to culturally diverse content. Therefore, diverse content can provide enriching educational experiences and support inclusivity in the learning environment. Based on Boon (2014), I diversified instructional content and sought to understand students' backgrounds. Educators who contextualize teaching based on student perspectives and accommodate their preferences when appropriate can tailor instruction to promote inclusivity and broaden curricular horizons.

The CoP framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and CRME (Bond, 2017) served as the foundation for cultural exploration in this study. By engaging in a CoP, this study's participants shared insights and strategies for integrating cultural diversity into music instruction, thus gaining a deeper understanding of cultural heritage and representation in music. The second foundation, CRME, involved acknowledging and celebrating students' diverse cultural identities in music education. CRME was a comprehensive framework for creating inclusive learning environments while valuing and representing students' cultural backgrounds in music instruction. I incorporated CRME principles into this study and engaged in teaching practice sensitive to the students' cultural needs and preferences to promote a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Conclusion 2

Reflective practices in DEIB lessons could affect students' comprehension of race and ethnicity, sexual and gender orientation, and disability and ability.

Through reflective inquiry, I crafted lessons that aligned with DEIB principles and catered to the demands of a performance-oriented music program. Ladson-Billings (1995b) found that seasoned educators predominantly serving Black students honed their teaching expertise by reflecting on their daily classroom experiences. Based on Ladson-Billings and the self-study method (Samaras, 2011), I integrated reflective journaling into the lessons to foster continuous self-reflection and improvement.

I designed the three lessons by incorporating feedback from my critical friends into my journaling. The first lesson involved exposing students to diverse cultures and heritages. In this lesson, I explored cross-cultural competence among music teachers and incorporated McKoy (2012), who emphasized the importance of practical teaching experiences in various settings. Reflective journaling enabled me to discover the benefits of using a multicultural curriculum. My critical friends suggested I incorporate student preferences. Like Davis and Culp (2023), I learned that incorporating students' musical preferences contributed to the student's motivation and engagement.

Reflective practices were also part of the decision to discuss gender roles and stereotypes. The lesson objective was to illustrate a phenomenon during the casting process for a holiday skit. Through dialogue, students considered generalizations about gender roles. Notably, one student associated criminality with being a Black male. Although the response was disheartening, I did not find it surprising. Historical analyses of Black teachers' contributions to empowering school cultures have shown that culturally congruent pedagogy supports student success (Cole, 1986;

Ladson-Billings, 1995a; Siddle-Walker, 1996; Ware, 2006). As a Black male educator, I reflected on the significance of challenging stereotypes without resorting to blame and recognized my role as a significant influence in my students' development. Ultimately, there was rich and meaningful discussion in the music classroom.

My reflection after this lesson contributed to the framework to the lesson on ability and disability. My critical friends suggested using the ethics of care to teach students about supporting each other in overcoming challenges, such as being down one person in the play. The critical friends also shared personal experiences contributing to their passion for music and inclusivity. One critical friend mentioned a trumpeter with disabilities as a source of musical inspiration. Thus, reflection and collaboration enabled a clean transition between the lessons of gender roles and ability and disability.

Like the lesson on gender roles and stereotypes, the students reflected and shared their thoughts in the third lesson. In addition to me showcasing the talents of the blind pianist Matthew Whitaker in a multimedia experience, students dialogued about disability and ability. In the lesson, I encouraged students to reflect on instances when they felt disadvantaged and how they persevered to succeed. The students realized they could turn the perceived disadvantage into an opportunity by focusing on the positive and eliminating the negative.

Conclusion 3

Support or advocacy from nonmusic administrators could impact music teachers' ability to teach DEIB lessons, even in the absence of district-level music administration.

This study's findings showed the role of administrative support in fostering cultural responsiveness and implementing DEIB in the music classroom. Scholars such as Gay (2000) and Paris (2012) indicated that administrators establish DEIB priorities through policies and

frameworks, thus setting a tone of commitment to DEIB implementation. This study's three administrative figures—the DSE, the building principal, and the district CNI—aligned with the extant research.

I did not always receive straightforward administrative support, as indicated by my experience explaining diversity in my lesson to the DSE. Also, when I sought the principal's guidance on incorporating the mandate's gender and sexual orientation component, the initial response lacked clarity and direct support. Despite this initial challenge, the principal provided instrumental guidance and assistance in averting a significant issue about misinterpreted parental consent.

The DSE emphasized the importance of educators integrating innovative and diverse course offerings into their curricula. This finding aligned with a growing emphasis on inclusivity. Further, the DSE presented content specialists as crucial in assisting teachers with the structural and pedagogical aspects of their instruction. The DSE also acknowledged the need for content-specific specialists due to a lack of knowledge of what occurred musically in the classroom.

Administrative support may include professional development opportunities (Bernard & Talbot, 2023) and innovative methodologies (Davis & Culp, 2023) to enhance teachers' cultural competence and facilitate effective DEIB classroom practices. These insights from the literature aligned with the discussions with the DSE, who stated educators should integrate innovative and diverse course offerings into their curricula. Moreover, administrators should advocate for DEIB initiatives by leveraging their influence to promote institutional change (Khalifa, 2020). In this study, the administrators contributed their time, offered valuable feedback and suggestions, and provided insights into administrative perspectives on supporting and implementing DEIB

initiatives. Administrators can foster community engagement and partnerships by collaborating with external stakeholders to enrich students' learning experiences with diverse perspectives and cultures (Banks & Banks, 2019). Community engagement and partnerships may enable administrators to advance DEIB goals and create inclusive educational environments.

The extant literature has not focused on the influence of nonmusic administrators on music teachers' ability to implement DEIB lessons in their classrooms. This study involved collaboration with key administrative figures, including the building principal, the district DSE, and the district CNI. The administrators generously contributed their time, valuable feedback and suggestions, and insights into administrative perspectives on supporting and implementing DEIB initiatives. The absence of a district-level music administrator was noteworthy, but the nonmusic administrators in this study provided invaluable support. The administrators facilitated DEIB integration within the music curriculum through their unwavering support and advocacy.

Reflective Introspection

This self-study research was a transformative journey for me as a music educator and budding supervisor. I found taking on the role of an emergent leader and integrating DEIB principles into my established educational system rewarding and enlightening. Ongoing communication enabled me to gradually develop my emergent leadership role (Northouse, 2021). Accordingly, I entered my emergent leadership role with the support and acceptance of my initiatives by others within a CoP.

This self-study focused on my perspective as a music educator striving to transition into a supervisory role. Many administrators or midlevel professionals specialize in areas such as arts or humanities supervision. Although I could have approached the study's title and focus in various ways, I centered the research around music, which aligns with my subject expertise.

However, the essence of this study was an exploration of leadership with two primary motivations.

First, the study could have findings relevant for any administrator seeking to facilitate DEIB integration within the music classroom. As indicated in the introductory chapter, some music teachers and districts do not fully adhere to the mandate. I embodied the scholarly role by establishing a framework adaptable to any classroom setting, addressing the need for comprehensive and practical implementation strategies. Second, leadership was a focal point in this study because of my role as an emergent leader throughout this research. Throughout the study, I collaborated with three administrators and two fellow teachers, including an English language arts teacher.

I initiated discussions, demonstrated activities, and welcomed feedback from these administrators and teachers. This dynamic exchange involved affirming and challenging perspectives, contributing to my growth as a prospective administrator. This study provided invaluable insights and opportunities for professional development. Unlike typical professional development sessions with specific prompts or standards, this study provided me with a sense of autonomy and true curricular freedom. The critical friends allowed me to explore my teaching practice uniquely. In return, I presented my interpretation of the DEIB mandate and received insightful feedback and perspectives.

Considering their busy schedules and responsibilities, I am deeply humbled by the three administrators' participation in this study. Despite not being experts in music education, the administrators provided valuable insights and suggestions. Thus, the findings indicate the need for dedicated support for music teachers at the administrative level. Further, the findings and the principal addressed the importance of a safe and inclusive learning environment within schools.

The administrators' insight enabled me to understand the significance of safety and comfort in fostering student expression.

While sustaining this method throughout an entire school year could be challenging due to administrative and scheduling constraints, the study motivated me to further integrate DEIB principles into my teaching practice. I consider starting from scratch unnecessary when formulating DEIB lessons. Therefore, I plan to continue incorporating diverse perspectives and cultural representations throughout the curriculum. The study's alignment with performance schedules, such as the Hispanic Heritage concert and holiday show, suggests the feasibility of integrating DEIB principles into educational activities. The finding that I could seamlessly implement DEIB indicates that educators can achieve artistic excellence and DEIB goals within the music classroom.

Ultimately, this study suggests music educators can effectively incorporate and implement DEIB principles while maintaining the integrity of their performance commitments. I identified the potential for meaningful change within music education. Fellow educators could use the findings to embrace DEIB principles as integral to their teaching practice. Even after the study, I continue to navigate the journey and remain committed to understanding DEIB implementation. I plan to embrace cultural diversity by studying unfamiliar cultures, deciphering lyrical dialects, or crafting ethnic instruments to foster inclusive and culturally responsive practices as a music educator and aspiring administrator.

Social Justice Statement

In this study, I aimed to promote social justice by implementing DEIB in my music classroom to confront systemic prejudices. I incorporated Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2017), who argued that social justice involves recognizing, investigating, and rectifying biases

and disparities through collective endeavors. Embracing CRP by Ladson-Billings (1995a), I supported critical consciousness to heighten students' awareness of injustices disproportionately impacting historically marginalized groups.

By cultivating an inclusive CoP and celebrating DEIB, I contributed to the broader mission of promoting social justice in education; addressing systemic inequities; and fostering fairness, inclusivity, and belonging in music education. The findings indicate that critical reflections and collaborative dialogue could enable leaders, including administrators and educators, to identify and challenge biases and systemic injustices, such as gender and sexual orientation stereotypes and implicit racial biases. Pragmatically, I incorporated the mandated curriculum into the study. However, my commitment to the ethical imperative of integrating sustainability practices into lessons extends beyond compliance.

I seek to fulfill the longstanding call of critical theory and contribute to contemporary discourse. Social justice resonates with me and has been shaped by my personal experiences as one of four Black graduates in a class of 250 students in rural Kansas. Music, particularly jazz, was a source of belonging and affirmation instilled by an educator who embraced the genre's cultural significance. Through my experiences, I realize the transformative power of inclusivity in the curriculum. Students who see themselves represented and valued can enhance their academic performance. Rooted in CRME, this study was a means of amplifying students' voices in an environment where every child feels seen, heard, and empowered. DEIB principles in the music classroom can provide a framework for educators to create affirming learning environments and honor students' identities and experiences. With DEIB principles, educators could promote belonging and empowerment with social justice goals in education.

Limitations

Self-study was the research approach used to explore DEIB implementation in the music classroom. Self-study designs could provide unique insights into individual teaching practices and include in-depth reflection. However, this study had several limitations. Self-study involves subjectivity. I was the investigator and participant in the study; therefore, the *I* perspective is a limitation. However, as a researcher engaging in self-study methodology, I do not consider objectivity a limitation to the validity of self-study. I argue that overtly and expressly discussing my subjectivity and positionality provided a unique perspective on my DEIB implementation.

The omission of direct data from students was a limitation for several reasons. First, the study does not include students' unique perspectives, experiences, and contributions to DEIB implementation. The absence of student data could have resulted in biases or inaccuracies, as data solely from educators or administrators may not have fully addressed the intricacies of student experiences. This study provided insights into teachers' perspectives with supportive administrators and critical friends. However, this study did not include midlevel administrators or managers. The absence of midlevel administrators is a limitation, as such administrators, whether from a music or nonmusic background, may work with music teachers across various buildings to implement DEIB requirements.

A final limitation was the study's regional context. The research occurred in the U.S. Northeast, a region known for a relatively higher acceptance and support for DEIB initiatives than other parts of the country. Regional bias could have influenced my experiences and perceptions regarding DEIB implementation in the music classroom.

Recommendations for Further Research

Future scholars could expand the scope of this study by including music teachers from across the district. Researchers could investigate music teachers' roles in a district without district-level music administration to explore the effectiveness of DEIB implementation in the music classroom. Future scholars could also research the strategies used by multiple music educators to understand the significance of DEIB in their teaching practices. Such research could involve evaluating music teachers' approaches, resources, and professional development initiatives toward collaborating or seeking external guidance.

Subsequent research could also focus on the support mechanisms accessible to music teachers. Researchers could study the administrative assistance provided, the extent of cross-disciplinary collaboration with colleagues, and engagement with broader educational frameworks to ensure the effective integration of DEIB principles. Further studies could also address the effects of the lack of district-level music administration from teachers' perspectives, generally and specifically regarding DEIB implementation.

Future research could focus on DEIB implementation in music education within the broader education discipline. The New Jersey mandate requires incorporating DEIB across all K–12 classrooms. Therefore, future scholars could extend the scope of the study, including all subject areas, to analyze DEIB practices across various academic domains. The research could include support for teachers, the amount of DEIB in the curriculum, and teachers' comfort with implementing DEIB. Further, a more comprehensive inquiry across various fields of study could provide significant insight into the difficulties and achievements of implementing DEIB in the broader educational spectrum. This interdisciplinary approach could enable scholars to recognize

effective teaching practices and offer guidance for policymaking to promote a more inclusive and equitable learning atmosphere across the state.

Another suggestion for further study is capturing the impact of DEIB initiatives on students' experiences and perceptions in the music classroom. Journal entries or simple surveys could provide insight into how students perceive DEIB practices before and after implementation. For instance, students could reflect on their sense of belonging, inclusion experiences, and awareness of diverse perspectives in music education through journaling activities. Surveys may be useful instruments for gauging students' attitudes toward DEIB in the music curriculum and their learning environment. Researchers could collect data from students to better understand the effectiveness of DEIB efforts from the perspectives of those directly affected by them.

Recommendations for Music Educators Without District-Level Music Administration

For music educators teaching without the support of district-level music administration, I recommend establishing collaborative relationships with nonmusic administrators and engaging in team-based idea-sharing with fellow teachers. In my study, partnerships with colleagues and administrators were instrumental in navigating the complexities of implementing DEIB principles in the music classroom without a music administrator. Collaborative relationships with nonmusic administrators may provide invaluable support and resources not readily available within the music department. Though not directly involved in music education, the nonmusic administrators often possessed useful insights and perspectives for enriching DEIB implementation. Nonmusic administrators may not fully grasp or understand the content; therefore, music educators should be leaders when taking on the DEIB initiative. By fostering connections with nonmusic administrators, music educators can use their expertise and advocacy

to receive support for DEIB implementation in the music classroom. Further, engaging in team-based idea-sharing with fellow teachers across various disciplines could provide a platform for innovative approaches to DEIB integration. Collaborative dialogue among educators could include the exchange of diverse perspectives, curricular strategies, and resources for a culture of mutual learning and support.

Also, starting from scratch when implementing DEIB in the classroom is not always necessary. My findings indicate the effectiveness of incorporating DEIB principles into existing lesson structures. The study suggests that the unique dynamics and contexts in educational environments could result in a more natural and effective implementation of DEIB practices.

Recommendations for District Superintendents, Board Members, and Administrators

In this study, nonmusic administrators and critical friends formed a CoP. The purpose of the CoP was to substitute for the district-level music administrator for effective DEIB implementation. However, sustaining a CoP in real-life educational settings can be challenging. Administrators and teachers often juggle an abundance of responsibilities. Although CoP members can use collective expertise and resources, relying solely on this model may not be feasible because all stakeholders must commit to sustaining such an effort. Therefore, I recommend employing a dedicated music administrator in every school district with music educators.

Conclusion

This self-study provided insights into implementing DEIB in the music classroom, particularly in the absence of district-level music administration. Through the frameworks of CRME and CoPs, this study produced significant conclusions about incorporating DEIB in music education. First, the findings suggest that exploring various cultures could impact how

music teachers integrate DEIB lessons. Thus, DEIB implementation in music education requires hands-on learning, exposure to musical components, and instructional support. Second, reflective practices within the educational environment are instrumental in developing DEIB lessons and influencing students' comprehension of race, ethnicity, sexual and gender orientation, and disability and ability. Last, the study showed the crucial role of nonmusic administrators in supporting music teachers in implementing DEIB, indicating the importance of advocacy and collaboration across administrative levels. Future scholars could expand the scope of the study to include entire districts, involve interdisciplinary approaches, and advocate for the appointment of dedicated music administrators to sustain DEIB integration. These recommendations could be a way to foster inclusive and equitable music education practices from curricular and administrative perspectives to create culturally responsive learning environments and promote educational social justice.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CHECKLIST

During the lesson observations, three administrators will use the instructional materials checklist provided by the New Jersey Department of Education (2023).

	Indicators	Comments
Standards-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance students to achieve proficiency at grade-level standards. • Instructional activities are designed in a way that integrates content-area practices. • Opportunities are available for integrating 21st Century Skills and Themes, Career Readiness, Life Literacies & Key Skills, and Social and Emotional Learning Competencies. 	
Student-centered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages students to participate in hands-on explorations and/or real-world challenges for their learning. • Fosters an environment in the classroom that encourages students to engage in discussions, exchange thoughts, offer evaluations, and/or come to agreements. • Empowers students by allowing them to express their opinions and make decisions. • Integrates student ideas and contributions that utilize student strengths to enhance learning. 	
Action-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackles a real-world problem inspired by an intriguing question that is relevant to the students' lives. • Motivates students to act in addressing a real-world problem. 	
Culturally responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customizes learning experiences to the homes and communities of the students. 	

	Indicators	Comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers the educator’s viewpoint, lens, and personal biases when communicating with students and families of diverse backgrounds. • Uses materials that are socially responsible and reflect diverse cultures. 	
Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers the viewpoints of individuals from various backgrounds, including those with different abilities, economic statuses, ethnicities, genders, identities, and races. • Includes primary and secondary sources that accurately reflect the perspectives of the individuals and societies they represent. • Ensure that the sources provided are correct, up-to-date, reliable, and provide different viewpoints. • Analyzes multiple sources to enhance the ability to identify any potential biases. 	

APPENDIX B**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Three administrators will observe the subject teaching DEIB in the music classroom. Subsequently, the subject will follow up with qualitative interviews with the administrators. These interviews will follow questions that will steer the conversation for roughly 30 minutes.

Administrator Interview Questions

1. Based on the instructional materials checklist provided by the New Jersey Department of Education, what are your general thoughts about the lesson you observed?
2. How would you define diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) in an educational setting?
3. How does your DEIB definition apply to the music classroom?
4. How do you support the teachers within this community of practice in implementing the DEIB mandate?
5. What strategies can you use to address pushback or resistance from staff or parents when implementing DEIB initiatives?
6. The New Jersey Student Learning Standards were recently updated to ensure DEIB instruction. How has the district implemented the new standards into the curriculum?
7. How do you perceive the role of shared and contrasting values, norms, and beliefs in shaping your sense of belonging and identity within this district or community of practice?

APPENDIX C**ACTIVE INFORMED CONSENT FOR ADMINISTRATORS**

Project Title: Implementing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the Music Classroom
Without a District-Level Music Administrator: A Self-Study

Principal Investigator: Nathan Webb

Faculty Sponsor: Geraldine Mongillo

Department: Educational Leadership and Professional Studies

I have been invited to participate in a research study about a music educator who aims to incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) into his music classroom. The study will examine how DEIB is implemented in the music classroom where no district-level music administrator exists. I agreed to participate by observing Nathan Webb and having a follow-up interview. My involvement in this study is optional, and I can withdraw at any point.

I acknowledge the risks associated with completing this interview, but they are no greater than those encountered daily. I willingly accept these risks. On the other hand, I also acknowledge that there are benefits to my participation in this study. By sharing my experience of integrating DEIB into the music classroom, I will be part of a pioneering group of educators and administrators. I willingly accept these benefits.

I understand that any data collected in this study will be stored in a safe and secure location and anonymized for long-term storage or use when this research is completed. I understand that the follow-up interview will be video recorded.

I understand that my identity will be protected and that my name will not be used without my permission. I know that the results of this study will not be reported in a way that would identify individual participants.

I understand that by providing consent for this study, I am also supporting my anonymized responses to be included in datasets that the investigator or other investigators may use for research related to this purpose research study.

If I have questions about this study, I may call the investigator, Nathan Webb, or the other individuals listed in the heading of this document. Suppose I have any questions or concerns about this research, my participation, the investigators' conduct, or my rights as a research subject. In that case, I may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 973-720-2852 or IRBAdministrator@wpunj.edu.

I agree to participate in this research study by signing this consent form and affirming that I am over 18.

Name of Participant _____ Signature of Participant

Date: _____

Name of Investigator _____ Signature of Investigator _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX D**ACTIVE INFORMED CONSENT FOR CRITICAL FRIENDS**

Project Title: Implementing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the Music Classroom
Without a District-Level Music Administrator: A Self-Study

Principal Investigator: Nathan Webb

Faculty Sponsor: Geraldine Mongillo

Department: Educational Leadership and Professional Studies

I have been invited to participate in a research study about a music educator who aims to incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) into his music classroom. The study will examine how DEIB is implemented in the music classroom where no district-level music administrator exists. I agreed to participate by engaging with Nathan Webb as a critical friend. As defined by Samaras (2011), “critical friends are trusted colleagues who seek support and validation of their research to gain new perspectives in understanding and reframing of their interpretations” (p. 5). My involvement in this study is optional, and I can withdraw at any point.

I acknowledge the risks associated with completing this interview, but they are no greater than those encountered daily. I willingly accept these risks. On the other hand, I also acknowledge that there are benefits to my participation in this study. By collaborating with Nathan Webb as a critical friend, I will be part of a pioneering group of educators and administrators. I willingly accept these benefits.

I understand that any data collected in this study will be stored in a safe and secure location and anonymized for long-term storage or use when this research is completed. I understand that I will be video recorded.

I understand that my identity will be protected and that my name will not be used without my permission. I know that the results of this study will not be reported in a way that would identify individual participants.

I understand that by providing consent for this study, I am also supporting my anonymized responses to be included in datasets that the investigator or other investigators may use for research related to this purpose research study.

If I have questions about this study, I may call the investigator, Nathan Webb, or the other individuals listed in the heading of this document. Suppose I have any questions or concerns about this research, my participation, the conduct of the investigators, or my rights as a research subject. In that case, I may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 973-720-2852 or IRBAdministrator@wpunj.edu.

I agree to participate in this research study by signing this consent form and affirming that I am over 18.

Name of Participant _____ Signature of Participant

Date: _____

Name of Investigator _____ Signature of Investigator _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E**SUBJECT RECRUITMENT LETTER**

Hello (name of potential participant),

I am Nathan Webb, a doctoral candidate from William Paterson University's Educational Leadership and Professional Studies department. I am conducting a study titled *Implementing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging in the Music Classroom Without a District-Level Music Administrator*, and I would like to invite you to participate. Your participation in the study is voluntary, and you can stop at any time if you wish. If you decide to participate, kindly sign the enclosed consent form.

Thank you,

Nathan Webb

APPENDIX F
LESSON PLANS

Lesson #01

Lesson Date: October 20, 2023

I. Subject Area: Music

II. Topic and NJSLs:

Race and Ethnicity- Dive into Hispanic Culture through Music, Song, and Media

1.3.C.12nov.Cr1a:

Compose and improvise ideas and motives for melodies and rhythmic passages based on characteristic(s) of music or text(s) studied in rehearsal.

1.3C.12nov.Pr4a:

Select varied repertoire to study based on interest, music reading skills (where appropriate), an understanding of the music's structure and context, and the technical skills of the individual or ensemble.

1.3C.12nov.Pr4b:

Demonstrate, using music reading skills (where appropriate), how knowledge of formal aspects in musical works informs prepared or improvised performances.

1.3C.12nov.Pr4c:

Identify expressive qualities in a varied repertoire of music that can be demonstrated through prepared and improvised performances.

1.3C.12nov.Pr5a:

Use self-reflection and peer feedback to refine individual and ensemble performances of a varied repertoire of music.

1.3C.12nov.Pr6a:

Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music.

1.3C.12nov.Pr6b:

Demonstrate an awareness of the context of the music through prepared and improvised performances

1.3C.12nov.Re7a:

Identify reasons for selecting music based on characteristics found in the music, such as connection to interest and purpose or context.

III. Objective:

Students Will Be Able To prepare for the upcoming Hispanic Heritage concert by practicing the songs “Que Sabor,” “Stand by Me,” and “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom.”

Students Will Be Able To understand the struggles and triumphs that Camila Cabello went through regarding performance anxiety and the success she has achieved since she overcame it.

Students Will Be Able To understand music theory notation regarding whole notes, half notes, and quarter notes.

Students Will Be Able To approach the centers and autonomously rotate through them.

IV. Materials Used

- Google Slides Presentation
- Chromebooks
- Schoology for Assignments and Grades

- Percussion Instruments: Congas

V. Procedure:

1. The class will begin with the students checking their grades while I take attendance.
2. The students will proceed to the choir risers after explaining the upcoming Hispanic Heritage concert procedures.
3. For approximately 15 minutes, I will lead the students in the choral selections for our upcoming Hispanic Heritage from the concert.
4. The students will return to their seats.
5. The students will be split into three centers.
6. The students will spend approximately 15 minutes in their assigned center, and then the students will rotate. This process is repeated twice.
7. Once all students complete all three centers, they will return to their seats and prepare for dismissal.

VI. Assignment

1. For the Congo Drum Center, the students will learn the “heel-toe - slap - toe - heel - toe - slap - open – open” pattern.
2. The students will complete the “Camila Cabello” assignment for the Music Media Center.
3. For the Music Theory center, the students will complete the Music “Theory Lesson Five” assignment.

Lesson #02

Lesson Date: November 08, 2023

I. Subject Area: Music

II. Topic and NJSLs:

Gender Roles and Sexual Orientation- Busting the Myth of Gender Roles

1.3C.12nov.Pr5a:

Use self-reflection and peer feedback to refine individual and ensemble performances of a varied repertoire of music.

1.3C.12nov.Pr6a:

Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire.

III. Objective:

Students Will Be Able To prepare for the upcoming Holiday concert through acting.

Students Will Be Able To understand that gender stereotypes and generalizations should not discourage anyone from pursuing their desires.

Students Will Be Able To engage in discourse regarding the importance of breaking the myth of gender roles.

Students Will Be Able To work on their SoundTrap projects on the song “Jingle Bells.”

IV. Materials Used

- Chromebooks-SoundTrap
- Skit Scripts
- Skit Props
- Microphones

V. Procedure:

1. The class will begin with the students checking their grades while I take attendance.
2. Mr. Webb will begin a discussion regarding the results of the skit auditions.

3. The conversation will pivot to gender stereotypes within the roles of the skit as I ask the following questions:
 - a. Who or what comes to mind when you think of Santa Claus?
 - b. Who or what comes to mind when you think of a criminal?
4. The conversation will continue with similar questions, hopefully with the class agreeing that gender stereotypes and generalizations should not discourage anyone from pursuing their desires.
5. The students will transition to acting.
6. The students will be encouraged to look at the differences between the people in the skit.
7. The students will rehearse the skit with microphones and props.
8. Once all students are finished, they will return to their seats and prepare for dismissal.

VII. Assignment

9. As you go throughout your day, identify stereotypical gender roles that still occur today. Also, identify people breaking the stereotypes (i.e., women officials in the NFL and NBA).

Lesson #03

Lesson Date: December 13, 2023

I. Subject Area: Music

II. Topic and NJSL:

Ability vs. Disability, Advantage vs. Disadvantage, Accentuating the Positive While Eliminating the Negative

1.3C.12nov.Pr5a:

Use self-reflection and peer feedback to refine individual and ensemble performances of a varied repertoire of music.

1.3C.12nov.Pr6a:

Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire.

III. Objective:

Students Will Be Able To prepare for the upcoming Holiday concert through acting.

Students Will Be Able To understand the struggles and triumphs that Matthew Whitaker went through regarding overcoming a disability and the success he has achieved through his gift of music.

Students Will Be Able To understand that it is important to highlight our differences.

IV. Materials Used

- Google Slides Presentation
- Chromebooks
- Skit

V. Procedure:

1. The class will begin with the students checking their grades while the teacher takes attendance.
2. The teacher will begin a discussion of Ability/Disability, Advantage/Disadvantage, and Accentuating Differences.
3. The teacher will show a video highlighting the trials and triumphs of Matthew Whitaker.

4. The students will be separated into groups according to their acting roles (e.g., Santa is grouped with Rudolph and the elves, and the father is grouped with Policeman Bob and the criminal).
5. For approximately 10 minutes, the teacher will allow the students to speak and seek feedback from their peers regarding a difference in their lives and how they used it to their advantage.
6. Afterward, the class will reconvene, and each group will share their examples.
7. The teacher and students from other groups will provide feedback.
8. The students will transition to acting.
9. The students will be encouraged to look at the differences between the people in the skit.
10. The students will rehearse the skit with microphones and props.
11. Once all students are finished, they will return to their seats and prepare for dismissal.

VIII. Assignment (In-class)

Watch the video on Matthew Whitaker and explain his disadvantage and how he used it to his advantage.

APPENDIX G**JOURNALS****Journal Entry 1: Before the lesson on Race and Ethnicity**

I am excited to begin documenting the implementation of DEIB in the music classroom. My teaching practice has, in one way or another, always involved DEIB implementation. However, I want to understand the sentiments of the administrators, colleagues, and myself in implementing these lessons. I will document my planning in this reflective journal entry, specifically implementing race and ethnicity in preparation for our Hispanic Heritage performance. An integral aspect of my instructional strategy involves organizing the class into centers, a practice that has successfully created an immersive and engaging learning environment.

My focus spans various musical elements, including drumming, vocal harmonies, and exploring diverse cultures within Latin America. The class structure will begin with a dedicated 15-minute segment for music rehearsal. During this time, students will participate in singing “Que Sabor,” a Spanish-language song with simple yet vibrant lyrics in 3-part harmony. Additionally, we undertook a bilingual rendition of “Stand By Me,” with students taking on solo verses and a collective chorus, blending English with a touch of Hispanic flair. In addition, we will continue to rehearse the Star-Spangled Banner.

Our instrumental exploration for this lesson will include percussion, emphasizing clave patterns, and the utilization of congas. The students will learn the “heel-toe-slap-toe-heel-toe-open-open” technique on the congas. This approach will create a genuine Latin percussion experience, enriching our musical repertoire.

In the realm of music media, I will introduce students to the work of Camila Cabello, particularly her hit song “Havana.” In addition, Ms. Cabello’s interview will delve into her journey, highlighting her struggles and triumphs away from music—an exploration to foster a deeper understanding of the artist and her cultural context.

Integrating these diverse elements aligns with my intention to initiate cultural awareness in familiar territory and broaden perspectives. Recognizing that most of my students are Latino, incorporating stylistic music unfamiliar with the Western norm adds a layer of cultural diversity to my curriculum. Simultaneously, the students will engage with traditional American pieces such as the Star-Spangled Banner, reinforcing a comprehensive music education that includes Western notation and music theory.

My goal is to gauge students’ interest in Latin American music and expand their musical horizons beyond the confines of their immediate environment. With over 23 Spanish-speaking countries identified as Latino or Hispanic, this lesson will delve into various facets of Hispanic culture, emphasizing diversity. In doing so, I aim to underscore the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within music education.

When I shared my lesson plans and ideas with my critical friends, they suggested I consider giving the students input into selecting cultural connections. The critical friend team also supported including diverse musical practices in the curriculum. My critical friends suggested that I expand my teaching by inviting other professionals or including more videos to teach about cultural practices beyond my expertise.

After hearing the suggestions from my critical friends, I looked at the introduction assignment that the students filled out at the beginning of the year. One of my questions concerned the musical artists my students preferred. So, I filtered out the artists that would fit

under the Hispanic heritage category, and Camila Cabello was one of them. Hence, the collaboration from the critical friends allowed me to see the importance of incorporating some input from the students' preferences. Given the time frame of this lesson, especially regarding the data collection period of this study, I could not bring in other professionals to help demonstrate Latin America to the students. However, in the past, I brought in Latino musicians who showcased their skill set in a way that I could not.

The Director of Secondary Education (DSE), whose role in the district has been heightened due to their implementation of the recent transition from 40-minute-per-day classes to alternating block schedules, in addition to many building renovation initiatives, will observe the lesson. DSE believes that students should be free to choose electives and encourages teachers to submit requests for courses they would like to teach. Furthermore, DSE has urged teachers to think outside the box regarding course offerings. As a result, I had over 130 seventh and eighth-grade students sign up for the chorus. I also had approximately 20 students sign up for my music technologies and application course.

Journal Entry 2: After the lesson on Race and Ethnicity

I will begin this journal entry by expressing my profound gratitude to all the students who participated in this lesson. This observation occurred during my largest class, which consisted of 36 students. The Director of Secondary Education (DSE) had several suggestions. My greatest takeaway from this experience is understanding the different interpretations of implementing DEIB. I approached the lesson on implementing DEIB within the content being presented. I did not consider the grouping of the students as a consideration for DEIB. DSE recommended that I place the students in heterogeneous groupings based on ability, participation, and academic success within the course. DSE initially needed to see more diversity regarding the grouping of

the students. I take pride in managing a class of over 30 students, and the students can thrive without having assigned seating. The students have used this freedom and privilege, knowing it is earned. The grouping was homogeneous. I distributed the class of 36 into three groups of 12 students. After hearing their suggestion, I understand the importance of heterogeneous groupings. This can add a layer of differentiation and encourage students to help and learn from each other in ways the homogeneous grouping did not offer. DSE also reminded me that this 7th-grade class could merely be grouping themselves into friends, and my ability to distribute or disrupt this grouping can ultimately allow the students to meet other people.

DSE also commented that they felt that a lesson on Latino heritage missed the mark on the DEIB requirement, considering that Latino heritage is only one culture. I expressed to DSE that although we were focusing on Latino heritage, this particular lesson touched upon the different cultures of Latin America. The salsa “Que Sabor” represented the cultures of Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Latinos in New York, who created and popularized the music known as Salsa. The clave rhythms on the Congo drums represented Cuba and the different drumming patterns that emerged from that country. We also worked on the song “Bidi Bidi Bom Bom” in the chorus.

Moreover, that represents the Mexican Cumbia/Tejano music Selena Quintanilla was known to perform. The chorus also rehearsed the bilingual rendition of “Stand By Me,” featuring the Dominican Republic’s Bachata genre. The music media lesson focused on Camila Cabello. Even though she is of Cuban American heritage, the struggles she depicted in the interview could be felt and recognized worldwide, no matter what culture or heritage one may have.

After explaining this to DSE, they were thoroughly impressed by the diversity within Latin America. Moreover, I learned how the students were exposed to such diversity. We then

explored equity, inclusion, and belonging. They were impressed with the implementation of belonging and inclusion. Although some students did not actively participate in the chorus or complete their music theory assignment, everyone felt they belonged in the class. DSE suggested that I improve the equity component. The groupings of the students could help render the concern of equity as students with lower abilities and students with high skills will have more support from their peers.

My interview with DSE was insightful as they provided helpful information regarding some of the nuts and bolts of the district's plan regarding academic achievement. I was assured that the efforts of this study contribute significantly towards the overall big picture of the district's vision. How much more impactful would having a district-level music administrator facilitate this district-wide implementation be? I am proud of music education for music education. When I say that, I do not discourage STEAM, where music is a component of other disciplines; however, I also champion and advocate for music education as a standalone subject and the students' benefits through a quality music education program.

Journal Entry 3: Before the Lesson on Gender Roles

It has come to the time to prepare for the winter concert. I teach four sections of Chorus and one section of a course titled Music Technology and Applications. The students in this course contribute to the music concerts by creating and performing short skits and plays. Through a collaborative process, the students wrote a holiday script that included the characters Santa Claus, Rudolph, elves, policeman Bob, and a criminal. When it came time to begin casting the roles for this play, I had preconceived notions of the students and the parts they should receive. However, I entered the audition with an open mind. To my surprise, the student with the

best audition for Santa Claus was a female. Also, the student with the best audition for the criminal was female.

Around the same time, the building principal announced their availability to observe my lesson the next day. Despite my initial thoughts of scrambling to create an elaborate lesson on gender roles and sexual orientation, I embraced what happened during the play's audition process. I immediately contacted my critical friends to set up a meeting. My critical friends encouraged me to realize the importance of discussing generalized gender roles within society.

Upon receiving valuable feedback from the critical friends, I recognized the significance of engaging in a thoughtful conversation with the students about reevaluating and reversing roles in our upcoming skit, particularly in the context of their awareness of gender-specific roles. To enhance our approach, I devised a plan to address the importance of challenging and breaking away from the conventional notions of gender-specific roles before delving into the rehearsal process.

I structured my lesson to include the following questions: What comes to mind when you think of Santa Claus? What comes to mind when you think of a criminal? I hope these questions will reveal certain implicit biases and show that the students for this play bust the myth of gender roles entirely. I also wish the students could apply this information to other areas of their lives.

The gender roles and sexual orientation component of my study consists of questioning the students on these preconceived gender roles that, as a society, have been instilled in us. Last year, in preparation for our Black History Month performance, I attempted to implement gender roles and sexual orientation by casting and creating a skit that depicted the achievements of William Dorsey Swann. Some suggest that Mr. Swann was the first known drag queen in American history. He was born into slavery during the mid-19th century. Mr. Swann was also

known as a civil activist. The students found this individual by exploring influential black figures during black history. I was approached by some students who wanted to include William Dorsey Swann in this skit. I even had a student who wanted to play him as the drag queen. I approached the matter to the building principal, who recommended that I pivot in a different direction. Despite the diversity and inclusion mandate from the New Jersey State Legislature requiring lessons on sexual orientation, several stakeholders within my district community would not agree on this implementation.

As I am working on this study, I feel conflicted that I did not pursue this matter further; however, I understand that I am a middle school teacher, and several parents have reservations about the topic for that age group. So, as a result, my adaptation of sexual orientation focuses on gender roles and defeating generalizations.

Journal Entry 4: After the Lesson on Gender Roles

Today's lesson on gender roles and my discussion with the school principal left me grappling with the realization that societal norms can exert a significant influence. In my previous journal entry, I shared an experience from last year where my skit, which I believed was appropriate, faced opposition from several individuals. Today's conversation with the students under my leadership aimed to explore their capacity to apply independent thoughts to complex issues.

The principal supported the implementation of discussions around gender roles, extending beyond the skit to encompass various occupational roles. They emphasized the importance of safety, cleanliness, and protection within a learning environment. Reflecting on today's lesson, it became evident that the students' candid responses were made possible by the sense of security they felt in our learning environment.

During an exercise where I asked about the first thoughts associated with the words “Santa Claus” and “criminal,” typical responses emerged, such as the image of a big man in a red suit for Santa Claus. However, when it came to the word “criminal,” a student’s immediate association was with a male, specifically, a Black male. While I felt concerned at this response, I recognized the importance of honoring their perspective, as they felt safe enough to express what had been ingrained in him. This interaction illuminated the need for challenging preconceived notions and broadening perspectives.

It is crucial to acknowledge that society has, over time, branded, brainwashed, and normalized specific images of individuals, perpetuating stereotypes and generalizations. Today’s lesson took a crucial step in debunking these myths, challenging the ingrained generalizations, and disrupting the stereotypes that have become ingrained in our societal fabric.

Constructive dialogue and collaborative planning are essential in pursuing educational advancement and dismantling societal biases, stereotypes, and inequities. This study emphasized the importance of being receptive to feedback in professional growth. Despite the challenges in maintaining an open-minded approach and embracing constructive criticism, especially when one believes their educational offerings are of high quality, this research highlighted the necessity of collective effort in advocacy, particularly in the absence of a district-level music administrator, by fostering partnerships with critical colleagues, administrators, and students and cultivating open dialogue, enriching discourse and fostering knowledge among all participants.

Journal Entry Five: Before the lesson on Ability and Disability

Up to this point, my implementation of DEIB has focused on race and ethnicity, as well as gender and sexual orientation. One of the New Jersey legislative mandate’s criteria included ability and disability within the curriculum. In music education, there are so many different areas

where we could take ability and disability. I think of musicians such as Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, George Shearing, José Feliciano, and the Blind Boys of Alabama, who have risen to use their heightened sense of hearing and gift in music to outshine what most will consider a disability in their inability to see. Preparing for this lesson is challenging because the following week is the holiday show. I want to figure out a way to incorporate ability and disability while still preparing the kids to get ready for the upcoming performance. Today, I will be observed by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction (CNI). The lesson will incorporate the students working on the holiday skit, the same students I used for the gender and sexual orientation lesson. I was informed earlier this week that one of the leading role actors for the skit could not make the performance during the morning or the evening. I am thankful that they decided to contact me. However, I am slightly disappointed because we have spent so much time preparing for this role. When CNI informed me that they would observe my lesson, I realized that the cast has a disability: the sudden loss of a main character. I met with my critical friend team to discuss incorporating this into the lesson.

After conversing with my critical friends, they recommended that I use the concept of the ethics of care to teach students about teamwork and supporting each other in overcoming challenges, like being down one person in the play. I plan to discuss with the class our scenario of a student unable to participate in the play due to unforeseen circumstances. I also want to include a video that was just aired on the news about Matthew Whitaker, a blind pianist who is in his early 20s and is making an impact through his triumph in music. The critical friend team also discussed personal experiences that inspired their passion for music and inclusivity, as one shared a story about a trumpeter with disabilities as a source of musical inspiration.

I look forward to having the discourse with the students regarding our opportunity to overcome our setbacks. I know everyone will have to step up as the script will have to be adjusted to overcompensate the missing role, and knowing that this play is next week, everyone must stick through it together. I also look forward to hearing the students' thoughts on the video of Matthew Whitaker, as he is just a few years older than they are. I also look forward to hearing comments from the Director of Curriculum and Instruction (CNI).

Journal Entry 6: After the Lesson on Ability and Disability

Today's lesson taught me the importance of meaningful discourse with these middle school minds. A simple conversation certainly goes a long way with my students. I am proud to hear they understand the importance of coming together, especially when things get complicated. The lessons focus on disability and ability prove true to our situation of overcoming the sudden loss of a cast member. The ABC News special on Matthew Whitaker also showed the importance of not seeing someone's disability as a charity case or to feel sorry for them. Instead, looking at people for who they are and what they can offer to the world is essential. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction (CNI) thoroughly enjoyed the lesson.

In the interview with CNI, they advocated for incorporating diverse perspectives in lessons, citing examples like blind pianist Matthew Whitaker to illustrate overcoming obstacles and showcasing talent regardless of perceived disadvantages. CNI stressed the importance of creating a safe and inclusive environment in the classroom, particularly for ELLs, and encouraged providing inclusive opportunities for all students, including those with disabilities, in school events. This safe environment that has been established allows the students to converse freely. The principal and CNI emphasized that diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging begin with a safe learning environment. CNI also defined DEIB in educational settings as ensuring

everyone feels accepted and valued, facilitating learning. CNI suggested infusing all cultures into music education to create a more diverse learning environment and emphasized the need for sustainable DEIB education beyond temporary learning. They supported challenging stereotypes and gender roles in classroom activities and advocated for administrative support for teachers implementing DEIB initiatives. Lastly, they highlighted the district's efforts to revise the curriculum to align with New Jersey Student Learning Standards, ensuring diversity and inclusion across all content areas.

Reflecting on the recent lessons I have taught and the subsequent observations and interviews, my most significant realization is that integrating DEIB into the music classroom does not necessitate reinventing the wheel. Instead, it is about seamlessly incorporating DEIB practices into the existing framework of our lessons. I am eager to extend this exploration over the entire school year, observing how much DEIB implementation can evolve organically and what aspects require deliberate planning. The discussions, lessons, and reflections we have engaged in have undoubtedly enriched the lives of all participants, underscoring the value of embracing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in every aspect of education.

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