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Student Leaders as Change Agents: Benefits Emerging from a Curricular Change

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Abstract

I explored the use of student leaders as change agents in a successful high school band program during one academic year with qualitative case study techniques. Participants included three high school band directors and 12 senior band members. Data analysis revealed that student leaders contributed to the successful implementation of a significant curricular change while increasing performance quality and addressing attrition issues. Four themes emerged: (a) student leaders as role models, (b) student leaders as instructors, (c) student leaders as social mentors, and (d) student leaders as effective change agents. Suggestions for music instructors include developing, implementing, and supporting students as leaders who can effectively create positive, proactive changes, as well as aid in rehearsal efficiency and instruction.

Keywords: curricular change, change agent, student leader, band programs

Change is the only constant. It is in changing that we find purpose.

–Translation from Heraclitus (ca. 535-475 BC)

Music education in the United States is in a state of transformation. Political agendas, socio-economic differences of each school district's population, and specific educational agendas within each school district require music educators to develop instructional programs to engage students as well as promote progress and quality. While some innovative music education classes (e.g. music video/recording electives) create outlets for expanding music education through the varying interests of students, the traditional band class remains the most common course offering in secondary schools (Abril & Gault, 2008).

Band, a performance-focused medium, possesses its own set of advantages and disadvantages. Because band is grounded in the tradition of public performance and creating school spirit, band programs depend on student involvement, public support, and administrative priorities. Balancing these three components while maintaining an educational purpose within secondary band programs can be challenging in the current state of educational prioritization. Subsequently, music programs can be negatively affected by societal and educational trends if music instructors are not proactive.

Educational Change in Secondary Music Programs

Causes and effects of educational change in secondary, performance-focused education research typically focused on imposed and endorsed changes (Baressi & Olson, 1992) rather than instructor-initiated change. The most common causes of imposed and endorsed changes involved the 2001 alterations to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), school- or district-wide scheduling innovations (e.g., block scheduling), and budgetary deficiencies. Research

focusing on the ESEA presented only negative effects on music education (Gerrity, 2007; Heffner, 2007; Johnson, 2008); whereas, block scheduling research resulted in a mix of positive and negative effects on music curricula and teaching (Ball, 1997; Carpenter, 2001; Connors, 1997; Goodrich, 2007; Kalabza, 2007; Lowther, 1998; Norrington, 2006). These mixed effects depended on the degree to which the music instructors involved themselves within the decision-making process; music instructors who actively helped to restructure the schedule to support their programs reported more positive effects (Blocher & Miles, 1999; Miles & Blocher, 1996).

In contrast to research involving imposed change, limited research exists on instructor-initiated changes in music programs. Studies that addressed instructor-initiated program changes (Hammond, 1973; Iida, 1991; Norcross, 1994), most commonly found in case studies, explored the separate components of a successful band program that involved a single individual, the director of the program. While effective instructors had a strong impact on students (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004), directors who engaged all stakeholders—students, parents, administrators, and community members—while developing and implementing a significant change within a music program created a proactive and collaborative environment that shaped accountability, quality, and progress within individuals as well as the ensemble (Fullan, 2010).

Typically, adults responsible for student education—administrators, instructors, and sometimes parents—collaborate during the creation of any kind of educational change; whereas, students are rarely involved or influence an educational program change (Ellsworth, 2000; Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991; Fullan, 2001). However, students have the most at stake (Ellsworth, 2000). This study assists in the development of research concentrating on the student as change agent.

According to Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991), every stakeholder in an educational program is a potential change agent. Educators should encourage and empower students to participate as active partners in shaping their learning experiences (Ellsworth, 2000). For the purposes of this study, a change agent is an individual who alters human capability or organizational systems to achieve a higher degree of output or self-actualization.

Method

Using qualitative case study techniques, I explored the process of an instructor-initiated curricular change in a larger Midwest high school band program from impetus through the second year of implementation. During that study, the importance of student leaders serving as change agents became evident to implementing and sustaining a curricular change, a phenomenon that evolved into the focus of this investigation. I assigned pseudonyms to any identifying features of the site and participants in the presentation of this study. Guiding questions included:

- (a) How did the student leader program operate in the marching band?
- (b) How did the role of student leaders as change agents contribute to the implementation of the curricular change?
- (c) What affects emerged in the band program through the evolving role of student leaders as change agents?

Site of Study

Allen High School, a Midwest public school, served a community of approximately 34,000 residents that reflected a predominately white, middle- to upper-middle class population. The student population included 1,783 teenagers during the 2010-2011 academic year (Annual Report to the Community, 2010-2011).

The Allen High School band program attracted 321 music students in Grades 9-12 during the 2010-2011 academic year. The program offered one Grade 9-12 marching band, one freshman concert band, three Grade 10-12 concert bands, one freshman jazz band, one freshman jazz combo, three Grade 10-12 jazz bands, and one Grade 10-12 jazz combo. One half-time and two full-time high school band instructors guided these ensembles and taught individual lessons to Grade 9-11 band students who did not study privately. In addition, the directors offered solo/ensemble opportunities to all band students (approximately 115 entries per year). This exemplary band program boasted numerous awards and honors for large ensembles, small ensembles, and individuals.

Data Selection Methods: Sampling

I utilized two purposeful sampling methods—unique-case selection and criterion-based selection methods (Merriam, 2009). Because the program participants restructured the content and emphasis of ensembles, the Allen High School band program was atypical. During a two-year preparation period, the band directors initiated, collaborated, and implemented a curricular change that separated marching band from concert band rehearsals. The restructuring resulted in a volunteer marching band with significantly reduced rehearsal time (90 to 45 minutes of rehearsal time daily). The implementation of this change impacted the concert band rehearsals by allowing 45-minute rehearsals every day from the beginning of the year, compared to the original schedule of no concert band rehearsals during marching season (see Table 1.)

The restructuring of ensembles within this band program offered a number of advantages. Concert band content focused on music education fundamentals the first quarter, which allowed students to become more proficient in sight reading music, creating an ensemble sound,

Table 1

The Restructuring of the Allen High School Band Program

Before (Prior to 2009-2010 academic year)	After (Beginning 2009-2010 academic year)
<p><u>Marching Band</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90-minute rehearsal every day beginning at 8:15 a.m. • Same credit as concert band • Mandatory participation (Grades 10-12); freshmen not allowed to participate • Rehearsal time interfered with “early bird” academic help sessions 	<p><u>Marching Band</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45-minute rehearsal every day beginning at 7:15 a.m. • 2.5 credits for first quarter participation • Voluntary participation (Grades 10-12); freshmen accepted by audition • No interference with “early bird” academic help sessions
<p><u>Concert Band</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No rehearsals first quarter • 5 credits per semester • Three bands rehearsed in three different venues when marching band finished 	<p><u>Concert Band</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45-minute rehearsal every day • 5 credits per semester • One ensemble moved to third period resulting in opening the schedule for more participation

increasing technical abilities, and developing a joy in making music without added performance pressure. Students who registered for conflicting classes or had athletic or job-related conflicts with marching band now had the option to continue in the music program without choosing between music and other responsibilities. The restructuring allowed students to receive credit for marching band during the first quarter, which validated the time and commitment needed for the class and the educational opportunities offered in marching band. The restructured program addressed educational learning through musical experiences, attrition issues, and recognition for student commitment.

While advantages emerged from this restructuring, the challenges of attrition and quality in the volunteer marching band concerned all major stakeholders—students, parents, instructors, and administrators. I used a criterion-based selection strategy to analyze these challenges. This

strategy established a set of criteria for the setting and participants, which provided important information that could not be attained from other sources (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 2009).

Individuals selected for this study adhered to one or more of the following criteria: (a) either a band director or student who participated during the process of creating and implementing the restructuring, (b) a current student in the band program, and (c) a student who had been active in the marching band, even if not actively participating during the collection of data.

Data Collection: Types

Data collection began after the IRB approval in August, 2010 and continued through the 2010-2011 academic year, the second year of implementation. Data consisted of interviews, observations, and the collection of artifacts. I interviewed the primary informants—three high school band directors and 12 senior students—using an Olympus digital voice recorder.

Interview questions explored the processes by which the restructuring occurred, the perspectives and actions of the participants during and after the restructuring, as well as the personal and program benefits that emerged from this restructuring.

I generated and transcribed field notes after observing a one-week marching band camp, 24 fall marching band rehearsals, 4 sectional rehearsals, 3 student leader meetings, and 11 concert ensemble rehearsals. Informal conversations during student-leader led activities and breaks generated clarifications as well as insights into the function, expectation, and implementation of student leaders as change agents within this program.

Public documents (i.e., program enrollment, curriculum, band handbook, marching programs, band Facebook page) and personal documents (i.e., written communication to and/or from band instructors, festival comment sheets and ratings, student leader workshop video) offered program expectations as well as performance and membership results since 2008. A

researcher-designed survey explored priorities of student musical experiences and expected issues related to the restructuring of the program. Data collection concluded at the end of May 2011; however, I remained in contact with the directors to clarify interpretations during the data analysis process.

Data Analysis and Synthesis

Data analysis and synthesis occurred simultaneously with the data collection process (Merriam, 1998). Using the constant comparative method of analysis (Merriam, 1998), I compared a specific event from an interview, field notes, or document with another event within the same data set or in another data set. Recurring patterns emerged that evolved into categories. These categories yielded four types of information: (a) processes utilized while developing and implementing this restructuring, (b) rehearsal and sectional activities, (c) student leader expectations and performance, and (d) interactions among students as well as students and directors.

The categories received a two- to four-letter code notated in the margin of the transcripts from observations and interviews. I grouped coded data under separate thematic headings (e.g. “SLEP” for Student Leader Expectations and Performance); continued analysis revealed more specific subcategories (i.e., Student Leaders as Role Models, Student Leaders as Instructors, Student Leaders as Social Mentors, Student Leaders as Effective Change Agents). Further analysis unveiled yet another layer that classified instructional levels of student leaders. Through the coding process, theoretical concepts emerged, grounded in the data, and developed interactively with the themes being analyzed and related research literature. I continued to triangulate data continued among interviews, observations, and documents throughout the writing process.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthy interpretation of a setting and its activities can be confounded if researchers impose their own perspectives and beliefs (Maxwell, 1996). As a secondary band director with 15 years of experience, my personal biases included my history of working in the research setting and my working relationship with the head band director. This director was aware of my past teaching experiences and educational beliefs based on my bands' past performances and his adjudication of my students. At the time of this study, I worked as a teaching assistant at a major university where I supervised student teachers at the site of this study. This school did not host any student teachers from my university during the data collection process of this study. During the course of data collection, a number of informal conversations occurred to clarify and redirect my biased perceptions of particular activities and events (Patton, 2002).

Multiple observations, interviews, documents, and background research added rigor, breadth, and depth (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, 2005) to my research and ensured a rich data set that allowed for thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagement in the field during the three-month observation period established a sufficient investment of time to achieve the purposes of observing how the students interacted and progressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, the band directors had the opportunity to review transcripts in order to check for accuracy of interpretation as well as intention of the participants (Stake, 1995).

Findings

Student leaders were a staple of the Allen High School band program; however, expectations and responsibilities of these student leaders changed to not only maintain, but guide the quality and membership within the band program. Because the restructuring of the band program drastically decreased the amount of rehearsal time for marching band, student leaders

accepted more responsibility to become effective instructors and mentors. The following section addresses the emergent themes of the research: (a) student leaders as role models, (b) student leaders as instructors, (c) student leaders as social mentors, and (d) student leaders as effective change agents.

Student Leaders as Role Models

According to Kurt Wrobel, head director of the Allen High School band program, student leaders drove the marching band. Director-selected leaders outlined expected behaviors, effective instructional engagement, and appropriate social interaction with non-leaders in the marching program. The directors instilled and monitored these characteristics from the moment a student chose to apply for a student leader position.

Director-guided framework of student leadership. The band directors invited any marching band junior- or senior-status participant. Students applied through a written application that probed student intent and beliefs of good leadership. Examples of application questions included:

- Why do you want to be a section/squad leader?
- What qualities do you think should be important when choosing a section leader?
- Why do you feel you are one of the best qualified persons in your section?
- Describe how you can be a strong leader while earning and maintaining the respect of your peers?

Any students who applied and completed the written expectation to the best of their abilities became student leaders within this marching band.

We want as many students to be involved in leadership positions as possible... We generally have both junior and senior leaders in each section. Students who are not ready to take all the responsibilities of leadership not only have another person to help but also have a role model for when the senior graduates. (C. Sailer, personal communication, September 27, 2010)

By pairing experienced student leaders with inexperienced or less mature student leaders, the experienced leaders guided and modeled effective leadership characteristics. These pairings

offered an opportunity for many students to develop effective leadership skills even if those students had not reached their full potentials at the time of service.

Servant-leadership guided this band program. According to Greenleaf (1970), a servant-leader is a servant first. During the pre-band camp student leader workshop, students explored the meaning of servant-leadership.

When Mr. Wrobel asked the students, “What does servant-leadership mean?” a stocky young man immediately jumped in to explain, “A servant leader leads by example, not words.”

A slight young lady perked up and said, “stay positive.”

A list is started on the white board and a firestorm of ideas emerged—

- “be fair”
- “be consistent”
- “be confident”
- “be knowledgeable about music, drill, cleaning on the field”
- “get to know everyone in your section”
- “be a good listener”
- “be flexible”
- “be a good communicator”
- “be proactive about hardships”
- “rehearse at performance level”

(personal observation, August 9, 2010)

The students’ list encompassed multiple behaviors but clearly prioritized the service to peers’ needs within the context of being efficient and helpful during the learning process.

Students’ perspectives of role model traits. Students repeatedly stated the trait, “being a good role model,” as a necessity. Two significant categories—rehearsal etiquette and personality traits—materialized.

Rehearsal etiquette. As role models, these student leaders emulated the behaviors they expected of their section members. The focus of these behaviors encompassed preparation for rehearsal, appropriate warm-ups prior to rehearsal, memorization and performance of the music, correct execution of the drill.

All marching band students were expected to arrive at rehearsal with their personal drill books, sheet music marked with movement notation, their own instruments in playing condition, their own lyres, and a pencil. In addition to this preparation, many student leaders arrived early,

took their appropriate places in formation on the field, and began playing warm-up routines. While individuals initiated personal warm-up routines, more students began to participate as the season continued.

Student leaders memorized and performed their music first in their sections. Because the leaders freed themselves from notation earlier than other students, they better guided students who needed musical assistance. Additionally, the student leaders quickly learned the formations and how to correctly execute the maneuvers in order to guide individuals within their sections.

Personality traits. The five personality traits these seniors declared as most important included punctuality, positive attitude, high standards, patience, and flexibility. Of these five traits, every interviewed senior student leader verbalized punctuality, positive attitude, and high standards as defining traits of a good student leader.

Student leaders prioritized punctuality as a primary focus. “With so little rehearsal time, we need to make sure we get our show on the field and cleaned,” urged Stacy (personal communication, September 22, 2010). Student leaders shared stories from the mandatory marching band years when disinterested or apathetic marching band students would consistently arrive late and disrupt rehearsal. These leaders addressed this issue by always arriving early for rehearsal. Effective leaders consistently exhibited positive attitudes. While wrinkling her nose when talking about the early morning rehearsals, Kendra expressed:

While it is difficult when it is raining or later in the season when it gets cold and there is frost on the ground, I always try to come out with a positive attitude...even if I don't feel like it. (personal communication, September 24, 2010)

These leaders believed that rehearsals would be more enjoyable, they would learn more quickly, and they would accomplish their goals for that day by displaying a positive attitude.

High standards for learning and achieving motivated these student leaders to maintain and potentially exceed the previous year's results. “It may be just our class, but all of the seniors

have a drive to be excellent. We want to be the best at what we do, and many of us receive high academic honors,” asserted Stacy (personal communication, December 14, 2010). High standards, if challenging yet attainable, outlined part of their formula for effective leadership.

Student leaders approached patience and flexibility from similar viewpoints—working with inexperienced marchers and recreating rehearsal strategies in the event of bad weather. The most repeated example entailed teaching beginning marchers. Andy stated:

I have to keep reminding myself that they [inexperienced marchers] have never marched before. Sometimes I feel like they won't get it, then I realize that it just takes time and I try to think of another way to explain what we are doing. (personal communication, September 22, 2010)

Working with struggling students required patience as well as different levels of learning intervention.

Student Leaders as Instructors

Student leaders actively engaged in teaching their classmates during daily rehearsals. Pending the objective of each rehearsal and the need for more specific instruction, student leaders interacted with their sections on differing levels throughout the marching season. These differing levels can be categorized into low-level instruction, mid-level instruction, and high-level instruction.

Low-level instruction. Low-level instruction involved quick answers or directions to basic questions from section members. Fingerings, slide positions, drum stickings, direction for move, and appropriate footing exemplified low-level instruction.

A freshman trumpet student struggled to learn exactly where and how to move between two formations on the field. As the directors continued to repeat the same section several times in order for the students to learn the drill, a tall, sandy-blond trumpet student leader visually guided the young novice while executing the move by pointing, with his index finger, a curved path along with the appropriate direction to march. No words exchanged, but the student learned the drill quickly and effectively. (personal observation, September 7, 2010)

This level of instruction did not generally interrupt rehearsal but strongly impacted a basic and initial step in the learning process.

Mid-level instruction. A more intentional form of micro-teaching moments depicted mid-level instruction. Typically, student leaders stepped out of formation and taught their sections more complex information (e.g. breath support, phrasing, three-point turn).

New drill was learned the previous evening, but some individuals were absent due to other school commitments. “If you were not here last night, put your horn on the sideline. You have some catching up to do,” stated the young director.

As students reviewed their previous night’s work, the director requested a 30-second teaching moment from student leaders to demonstrate how to move from position-to-position at the end of each set. The leaders jumped out of formation and guided individual students to learn the drill at an accelerated rate. Student leaders quickly checked the absentees’ drill sheets and found the specific coordinates. The absentee marchers either shadowed the student leader or were gently guided with hands on their shoulders by the student leaders. (personal observation, September 15, 2010)

Mid-level instruction skills required that student leaders be proficient in basic knowledge as well as quick to analyze information in order to teach others in a short amount of time.

High-level instruction. High-level instruction required student leaders to not only teach their sections but also plan content for extended periods of student-led rehearsal time. This form of instruction occurred at two primary times during the marching season, band camp prior to the start of school and student-coordinated sectionals outside of daily rehearsal time.

Sectionals during band camp primarily focused on marching fundamentals. Student leaders organized and taught their section participants for one entire day with the directors available for assistance and guidance on the sidelines. Periodically, directors walked among the students to encourage them and note potential issues to the student leaders.

By engaging their sections in differing ways, students accomplished the intended goals that they had discussed and practiced during their student leader workshop. Because most sections employed 2-4 student leaders, students divided responsibilities during the teaching process.

Initially, the four clarinet student leaders divided their large section into two groups. Each pair of leaders guided the students through the first steps of forward march—stand at attention, kick your left heel out, place heel on the ground, toes to the sky, roll through the step, while on the toe of the left foot kick right heel out, place on the ground, toes to the sky...As students performed these

tasks, senior student leaders noted struggling individuals. The section then divided into smaller groups with the senior student leader guiding the struggling students and the less experienced student leader drilling marching fundamentals. (personal observation, August 11, 2010)

Each section in the band functioned similarly. At times, the entire section practiced drill; other times, the section divided into smaller groups of 3-5 students, or leaders taught individuals needing extra assistance. Student leaders analyzed the needs of their sections, formulated ways to teach the intended content, and prioritized timelines in order for all students to succeed.

Similar teaching instances occurred in sectional rehearsals during the academic year. Because the band directors continued their duties off the field, student leaders became fully responsible for interactive learning. Each section created a 20-minute block of time after rehearsal that allowed sections to work music, technique, marching fundamentals, and drill. The primary intent of the sectionals addressed performance issues; however, sectionals also offered the opportunity for students to bond.

Student Leaders as Social Mentors

I remember my sophomore year. I just had a great experience. For drumline, we practice before actual marching band camp starts. It's where you kinda' mold [the section]...A lot of my friends are in the drumline because of it [being a part of the drumline]...practicing and bonding at lunchtime...going out to lunch...loud music in the car. It's a fun experience...definitely!
(Brendan, personal communication, September 22, 2010)

Student leaders built section pride and cohesiveness that led to a comfortable work environment.

Student leaders approached bonding in a number of different ways—designing section t-shirts, developing special musical and verbal cheers for their sections as well as creative activities on breaks.

As the marching band students took their second break in the sweltering 103-degree heat index, trombone/marching baritone section leaders gathered their sections on the sidelines. After arranging their instruments into a picture on the grass, they called the directors over.

“Do you know what it is?” asked one student leader. Two directors tilted their heads a number of different ways to try to figure out the students’ design.

Chris, one director, finally made his way to the front of the field, looked down, and immediately proclaimed, “It’s a marching lion!” The instrument formation depicted an image of a marching trombone player based on the school mascot.

The other two directors quickly jumped to the opposite side of the design. Triggering comprehension, they expressed, “OHHHHHHHHHHHHH!” (personal observation, August 11, 2010)

Informal, student-created bonding moments offered respites from rehearsal while developing relationships that could cross between informal and formal settings.

Student Leaders as Effective Change Agents

The moment students decided to apply to be student leaders, they enrolled themselves into a program that created change agents. The final questions on the application process addressed goals for the following year and approaches to accomplish those goals. These questions set their journeys of change in motion. While student leaders created their own paths of leadership for effective changes, the directors consistently modeled strategies for guiding students.

As the clock struck 8:15 a.m., Kurt [the head director] attracted the student leaders' attention asking, “Are there any questions or concerns?” Long pause...no answer. During the rehearsal that morning, two students fell. Kurt reminded the students, “If you have good posture and good marching fundamentals, you won't fall. Please work these in your morning sectionals.”

The directors pulled individual student leaders aside after the meeting to discuss issues seen/heard from the director(s) followed by potential strategies for fixing these issues. (personal observation, September 15, 2010)

The directors held student leaders to their expectations during these meetings but never abandoned the students while they learned to become effective leaders. If a student leader had any issue (e.g. instruction techniques or student-student interaction issues), the directors made themselves available to these students to discuss and problem-solve. These directors demonstrated the leadership qualities they expected from their students.

State festival results (i.e., ratings/scores discerned by set criteria not rankings) demonstrated the effectiveness of the student leaders role in developing positive change within their sections and the band (see Table 2.) Because adjudicators could change from year to year at these festivals, judges possessed differing levels of subjectivity. The 2007 and 2008 results

occurred prior to the restructuring; and the 2009 and 2010 results occurred the year of and the year following implementation.

Table 2

State Festival Results Before and After Restructuring

	Music General Effect	Music Execution	Marching & Maneuvering General Effect	Marching & Maneuvering Execution	TOTAL
2007	252/300	166/200	258/300	164/200	84.0
2008	238/300	180/200	209/300	189/200	81.6
2009	278/300	174/200	261/300	177/200	89.0
2010	270/300	180/200	291/300	171/200	91.2

The most prominent increase in general effect scores suggested that the teaching-learning strategies employed by student leaders impacted the overall effect of the performance. According to the “total” scores in Table 2, the roles student leaders played during and after the restructuring process positively impacted the quality of the performances.

A primary concern of attrition existed prior to implementation. Because students had a choice to participate in marching band as opposed to being mandated, the fear of a significantly smaller marching band persisted. Table 3 displays the results of attrition. The academic year, 2008-2009, occurred prior to implementation; and the 2009-2010, 2010-2011, and projected 2011-2012 years occurred the year of and the years after restructuring.

Table 3

Membership/Attrition Results Before and After Restructuring

Total Program Participation	Marching Band Participation	Participation in Concert Band but not	Dropped Band Program from
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		Marching Band		Previous Year
2008-2009	281	190 (Grades 10-12)	N/A	Information Unavailable
2009-2010	319	212 (added 24 auditioned 9th graders)	29 (Grades10-12) 78 (Grade 9)	3
2010-2011	321	215 (added 36 auditioned 9th graders)	49 (Grades 10-12) 40 (Grade 9)	5
2011-2012 (projected)	335	211 (added 41 auditioned 9 th graders)	57 (Grades 10-12) 67 (Grade 9)	Information Unavailable

An initial spike in the number of student participants in the marching band occurred the year of implementation. Freshmen auditioned to participate in the marching band for the first time in 2009. While the total number of participants stabilized after the initial year of implementation, the data indicated a trend of increasing numbers of freshmen auditioning and being accepted to participate in the marching band. Uniquely, a steady increase in students who chose not to be involved in the marching band balanced a stable growth in the number of students who remained involved within the entire band program. According to these data, student leaders accepted and executed the role of change agent to successfully implement the program restructuring in both areas of quality and quantity.

Discussion

The restructuring of this band program created a significant reduction of rehearsal time in the marching band without a decrease of performance expectations, which ignited a need for students to step into roles they had not previously encountered. Because the student leaders of

this marching band enjoyed and dedicated themselves to keeping the traditions of pride, excellence, and involvement within the organization, these students created a niche of effectiveness that allowed the program to flourish beyond the initial expectation of directors. The techniques and interactions used to restructure this music program can be adapted to create proactive and effective changes in other music programs.

A common occurrence during the implementation of a significant restructuring or curricular change is an “implementation dip” (Fullan, 2010; Herold & Fedor, 2008). The band directors considered this possibility and set parameters before implementing the restructured program.

The primary concern of the administration and many of the students and parents was that the marching band would become small once students were given the choice to not participate. We were prepared to take a hit. We were willing to go as low as 120-130 members (C. Sailer, personal communication, September 27, 2010).

Expecting an “implementation dip” and being proactive within that expectation was key to the successful implementation of the restructuring. Over two years, the directors spent many hours informing, collaborating, and encouraging all major stakeholders of the potential benefits of restructuring. However, it was the directors’ commitment, interpretation, and realization of their own philosophy of music education that allowed students to be the focus and the effective change agents within the program.

Philosophy of Music Education: To create an environment through our band curriculum that will foster, challenge, and motivate students to become responsible and mature young adults; to help them reach their musical and personal potential; and to be life-long creators, appreciators, and consumers of music (K. Wrobel, personal communication, May 20, 2011).

The band directors cultivated a respectful and open atmosphere that manifested in their preparation of their student leaders as well as in how the student leaders interacted with their peers.

From a student's initial interest in becoming a leader, directors supported the student by encouraging and including as many leaders as possible in the final selection (Goodrich, 2007; Stader, 2001). Consistent with situated cognition theory (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1988; Lave & Wenger, 1990), pairing experienced student leaders to guide new, inexperienced leaders offered an authentic context in which students learned knowledge and practices through social interactions and collaboration. Review of knowledge and practices occurred during the student leader workshop prior to band camp. In order for the students to guide the members of their sections better, the leaders needed specific instruction on strategies to teach fundamentals. By utilizing a "well-defined, brief instruction period" (Goodrich, 2007, p. 110), the student leaders incorporated the expected knowledge and skills to better instruct and lead their sections (Sheldon, 2001).

While the band directors encouraged autonomy within the student leaders, they observed these leaders throughout the season to ensure the individual practices of each leader aligned with expectations. Group discussions during weekly student leader meetings as well as individual dialogues provided a framework for the student leaders to succeed. These discussions informed the process of guiding individuals in their sections in order for all students to have a positive and quality experience (Sheldon, 2001).

In this program, effective student leader traditions evolved into self-sustaining habits that required less time from the directors after implementation (Goodrich, 2007). One of the directors commented, "Two years ago, we could not have turned over an entire day's rehearsal to the student leaders without having major issues of wasting time and dinking around on the field" (K. Wrobel, personal communication, August 10, 2010). While issues continued to occur during rehearsals (e.g. weariness, stresses, weather changes, general inattentiveness), these student

leaders' proactive engagements—modeling, differing levels of instruction, and social mentoring—with their peers reduced the number of disruptive activities.

The Allen High School band program engaged in a “community of practice” (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1990), where acquired beliefs and behaviors occurred in the marching band setting. As new members of the marching band learned the traditions and expectations of the program, they transitioned from the periphery of the organization to the center. Each student became more actively engaged within the band and eventually assumed the role of the student leader (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1990).

These band directors' strategies in this setting presented a potential design to empower students and create proactive change within music programs. While the directors remained responsible for the content of the learning and guided the student leaders, the responsibility of implementing the content shifted from the director to student leaders. Student leaders—who set challenging, yet attainable standards—created effective processes to engage, innovate, and advance the quality of the program during a critical juncture of change.

Limited existing research focuses on students during a curricular change process. There is a need for continued exploration into how students engage in programs that create or experience significant changes effectively. Additionally, little research incorporates or spotlights the student perspective. Because students are predominantly affected by any kind of educational change, their viewpoints, actions, and interactions are highly relevant. It is through the experiences of the student that long-term, positive changes thrive.

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