A Review of Literature Pertaining to Factors that Contribute

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While anecdotal information on how to improve a string program is available via the testimonials of string teachers who lead recognized programs, how those same string programs actually started has not been systematically researched. At some point in every school orchestra program’s history, a local school board, for some reason, appointed the first string teacher. This review of literature explores factors that lead a school district from having no string program and no string teacher to having the first string teacher under contract through a study of advocacy, new string program development and model building. Findings reveal that the process is complex and political.

The American String Teachers Association WITH The National School Orchestra Association’s (ASTA WITH NSOA’s) recent advocacy brochure, “Why Strings,” concludes with the comment, “ASTA WITH NSOA has information and resources that can help your school district and community start or grow a string and orchestra program” (n. d.). While anecdotal information on how to “grow” or develop a string program is available via the testimonials of string teachers who lead recognized programs, how those same string programs actually started has not been systematically researched. The first step in such research might be a review of literature. A review of the factors that lead a school district from having no string program and no string teacher to having the first string teacher under contract are the topic of this paper.

This review of literature is divided into three sections. The first, Philosophy and Advocacy, offers a philosophical basis for making string study more accessible and explores the purpose and role of advocacy and lobbying in arts education as well as selected string advocacy statements and reasons why students join orchestra. The second section considers articles and resources that relate to New String Program Development while the third, Model Building, offers benefits of model building in research design and describes two string-specific models.
Philosophy

Philosophy gives justification to question established practices, move beyond traditions and begin the process of change. Philosophical inquiry related to starting a string program can provide the basis to question the status quo of not having a school string program. Previous studies by Leonard (1991), Horvath (1993), Abel (1994), Bergonzi (1995), Smith (1997, 2000), Gillespie and Hamann (1998) and Moss (2002) demonstrate that most students do not have curricular access to string instruction. These studies also show that the students who do have access to curricular string instruction predominantly attend large schools within property-wealthy suburban school districts. Rural or urban children frequently do not have similar access to string instruction.

One contributing factor to the lack of curricular string programs may be the notion that learning string music should be reserved only for the most talented children. Duane H. Haskell, the first president of the American String Teachers Association, identifies this string music talent problem in a 1954 AST article, “the [school] orchestra was looked upon as the musical organization which should be restricted to only those students who possessed unusual musical talent.” (cited in Turner, 2001, p. 78) In a broader context, Reimer (1989) exposes the dangers of an exclusive educational philosophy as it relates to the school music curriculum:

“Some values are claimed for music education on the basis that they are unique to music but are not necessary for all people. These values have to do primarily with the development of musical talent. . . . Most nations in the world train their talented young people outside of the general education system, in special schools devoted to such purposes. That is the most cost-efficient way to do it. . . . And is it not also reasonable to regard the special subjects, and the teachers of them, as frills rather than basics in education, so that support of them is contingent on generosity rather than necessity? (pp. 8-9).”

Elliott (1995) similarly opines, “The unexamined association between music and talent causes parents, administrators, and the general public to assume, wrongly, that music is inaccessible, unachievable, and, therefore, an inappropriate or unnecessary subject for the majority of school children” (p. 235). He further elaborates on the concepts of universal accessibility and universal application:
“Central to the idea of universal schooling is the principle of universal accessibility. . . . The Old-World assumption that only upper-class and “talented” children should benefit from education was eventually replaced in this century with a belief that every child deserves equal access to future success through a menu of subjects that are inherently learnable. . . . Once a society grants that all children should and can achieve an education, it becomes imperative that everything deemed a school subject meet a standard of universal application to all children (or be viewed as applicable to all children). Today, whatever curricular offerings are perceived to lack universal application are either eliminated or moved to the periphery of the school menu. (p. 302)”

For string instruction to become a curricular subject in a majority of school districts, it will be important to establish that all children can benefit from string study. Highlighting successful string programs that break the large-sized, suburban, school norm for string study might be a useful step in moving beyond traditional music-as-talent beliefs. A review of string programs in nontraditional settings may facilitate this process.

**Nontraditional String Class Settings**

Arts partnerships and outreach programs are a common way to reach underserved populations. Undercofler (1997) offers an overview of his experiences with a nontraditional university urban outreach program. Though not specific to string instruction, his insights provide a foundation from which to view nontraditional string programs. “Good [music] programs - comprehensive in scope with universal learning opportunities - exist,” states Undercofler, but, “Sadly, they are normally only located in property-wealthy school districts” (p. 17). He describes newer partnerships between professional music organizations, multi-million dollar foundation grants and school arts programs:

“One can understand the motivation behind these programs; well-intentioned music professionals are concerned about the lack of music education in city schools and want to share their ‘wealth’ with impoverished students. . . . Unfortunately, the motives are not the problem - the quality and breadth of the programs are. Although these partnerships claim to support a sequential curriculum based on skill development, they often do not provide it; instead, the programs encourage experiential learning - valuable to be sure, but no substitute for serious music study. In addition, the programs are temporary in nature, reliant on external funds. (p. 17)”
According to Undercofler, “Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the new partnerships is that they represent a surrender by city school districts; they admit openly that students in cities must get a poorer music education than those in nearby suburbs” (p. 18). Undercofler’s action plan calls for universities to initiate outreach programs which do not lower the level of music education for property-poor districts. Advocacy should be an integral part of the plan: “If parents are exposed to the district’s model programs, they will demand additional music programming at each of their children’s schools” (p. 19). Undercofler recommends that external funds be used on a limited basis for start-up, enrichment and evaluation until the school district can find sufficient funds to assume full financial responsibility for the program. He also cautions against setting time limits for implementation saying, “plans and programs that are funded for three to five years have rarely been sustained past their designated time period. I would suggest that in districts where music programs have all but disappeared, it will take ten years for significant change to be evident. (p. 19)”.

Once we recognize that every child deserves equal access to quality music instruction, we can then apply Elliott’s test of universal application to determine whether the study of string instruments is suitable for all children. Following are several examples of successful nontraditional string classes.

Van Camp (1989) investigated the feasibility of string classes for mildly mentally handicapped middle school students and also studied which class setting was more appropriate, homogenous or heterogeneous. Twenty-four mildly mentally handicapped middle school students were divided into four classes of six each. The classes were randomly assigned to a homogenous or heterogeneous grouping. Following twelve weeks of instruction, an expert string panel evaluated the students. Van Camp designed the performance evaluation form and an attitude inventory. Results indicated that mildly handicapped middle school students were able to learn string instrument performance skills in a class setting. The researcher-designed string music curriculum was found to be appropriate and both homogenous and heterogeneous groupings were deemed suitable for use with this population.

In “Successful Impossible String Programs” Atwood (1991) compiled five articles that exemplify the best string teaching in the most nontraditional situations. The featured programs are: (1) a study of successful string programs involving Hispanic students in Los Angeles
summarized from a doctoral dissertation (Ensley, 1988), (2) a Suzuki violin school and youth orchestra for children in one of Boston’s toughest neighborhoods, reprinted from The Boston Globe, (3) the Chicago Housing Authority Youth Orchestra, reprinted from the Chicago Tribune, (4) the “Estudiantina” of East Los Angeles, an elementary school Hispanic orchestra ensemble performing mariachi-style music, (5) an East Harlem, New York City violin program featured in The New York Times and on national television network news shows (and later, following the printing Atwood’s article, the subject of the 1996 documentary “Small Wonders” that led to the highly acclaimed Hollywood film, “Music of the Heart” starring Meryl Streep). Following a concert of the East Harlem violin program, eminent violinist Itzhak Perlman remarked:

“There are two ways to look at an evening such as tonight. A shortsighted thinker might say, ‘Gosh the music is so wonderful, but we simply do not have the money to fund such a luxury. Sorry, kids.’ I would tell that thinker that hard work and discipline are no luxury - that a program such as this gives our children the very skills necessary to cope with the problems of the future . . . It produces not just violinists. Such skills produce doctors and lawyers as well. It teaches that the foundation of excellence is perseverance. (p. 61) It is clear from these nontraditional string programs that string music instrument study is applicable and beneficial to a broad and diverse student population. Delivering this instruction in an authentic and lasting way will be challenging. Expanding curricular string instruction to underserved populations will certainly require leadership to advocate the benefits to school policy and decision makers.”

**Arts Advocacy**

A review of arts advocacy statements may add to our understanding of how to structure arguments to more effectively lobby string instruction into the school curriculum. The following text contrasts advocacy with philosophy, reviews arts advocacy as it relates to decision maker attitudes and beliefs toward the arts, identifies string-specific advocacy statements and explores the reasons students join orchestra.

A discussion of advocacy inevitably interweaves philosophical and political issues. In defining the role of advocacy, Reimer (1989) states, “The business of policy or advocacy is to translate a philosophy into terms understandable to and convincing for a great variety of influential publics” (p. 9). Arguments to these special interest groups must be “tailor made” (p. 10) to take into account the varied biases and lenses through which each group views a particular issue.
Bowman (1992) argues, “Philosophy is a poor substitute for political savvy: political skills offer better protection for vulnerable music programs than philosophy ever will. Advocacy, although undeniably important, is tangential to philosophical inquiry” (p. 3). Elliott (1995) presents how philosophy and advocacy can overlap. According to Elliott, "Philosophy seeks to explain the nature and the significance of music education through critically reasoned arguments. Advocacy seeks to build political and financial support for music education through calculated methods of persuasion (p. 11). The advocates look to the philosophers for their reasoned arguments but, “winning political and financial support for school and community music programs often depends more on political savvy and marketing expertise than on a cogent philosophy” (p. 11). Ultimately, the path to curricular inclusion may be turbulent. Jorgensen (1992) gives this caveat to philosophers in music education: “To challenge the myths and assumptions that have been held as ‘received wisdom’ is to invite criticism from those for whom a different way of seeing things is provocative and unsettling” (p.98).

While decision makers generally have positive attitudes toward arts instruction, attitudes alone will not ensure the inclusion of an arts program. McNealy (1982) applied marketing concepts and research in an attempt to bolster arts advocacy and enhance the role of art in the curriculum. He tested the Fishbein Behavioral Intentions Model in an art education context, using the inclusion of art in the curriculum as the behavior at issue and 162 Columbus, Ohio area school principals as subjects in the survey. Eighty-one of the questionnaires (50%) were used in the statistical analysis. The lack of a research basis for current advocacy efforts was cited as a primary justification for the study. Fishbein’s model “makes use of the attitude towards performing a specific act (behavior) rather than a general attitude towards an object” (p. 20). The assumption that the attitude towards engaging in a particular act is a better predictor of behavior than the attitude towards the targeted object of the action was tested and strongly supported by the data. Specifically, although the school principals had a positive attitude toward arts education (the mean response was 5.88 on a scale of 7 to 1) they were much more ambivalent toward including art in the curriculum under crisis conditions (mean .67 or in a second, separate, measure the mean response was 58 in 100 chances). McNealy concludes that, "decision-makers do not make decisions which impact art education on the basis of their attitudes towards art education, but rather on the basis of their primary beliefs which mediate that behavior, and that it is on the basis of those primary normative and behavioral beliefs the strategy of arts advocacy
Jensen (1982/1983) analyzed the attitudes of 1,547 decision and policy makers, including, among others, school board trustees, superintendents and principals towards the place of fine arts education in Nevada’s public schools. Two separate questionnaires were constructed. The responses to the first questionnaire provided the basis for the items selected to be included within the second instrument. The final questionnaire had two sections. First, 40 statements were assembled into a Likert rating scale. A second section asked the respondents to rate four different placements of electives in public school curricula in the order of individual preference to the person answering the questionnaire. The findings from this study revealed that the degree of support for arts education among these key persons was generally high and that arts education could and should be considered basic to the general public school curriculum.

Understanding different lobbying techniques may help structure arguments so the correct lobbying technique is used at the right time directed toward the most effective audience. McWhirt (1988/1989) compared the lobbying techniques of for-profit and nonprofit art interests to determine differences in arts advocacy. McWhirt compiled, through personal interviews, a comparison of practical lobbying methods by for-profit interests and nonprofit arts groups. Among the standard lobbying techniques were coalition organizing, direct contact, grass roots lobbying and campaign contributions. Regardless of the specific techniques or strategies employed, a lobbyist must have “an in depth understanding of the technicalities of the legislative process, a deep appreciation of human relations, and a keen sense of when to make the right moves” (p. 43).

In coalition organizing, small groups with little influence attach themselves to larger, more influential, groups with more clout so that they are perceived as being a part of the majority. Collaborations between divergent groups can be more impressive than among those groups who always collaborate. Often these mutual interests are short-lived and allies on one issue might be opponents on the next. “These coalitions form their own committees, . . . work . . . privately . . . and participants from the various interests contribute time, help and money according to their own resources and stake in the battle” (p. 37). The parties must be firm in their compromises and map out their strategy ahead of time. It is easier for coalitions to block legislation than enact it.
Direct lobbying, or one-on-one contact, requires strong communication skills and a reputation of “trustworthiness and integrity” (p. 38). The lobbyist should know the facts and present both sides of the issue to not put the decision-maker on the defensive. Insider credentials or a prestigious position can help a lobbyist gain access to decision-makers.

Grassroots lobbying, or rallying constituent support, is similar to coalition building in that it “seeks to create an appearance of broad public support for its aims” (p. 40). Grassroots strategies include letters/mail-outs, faxes, phone calls, and newspaper, radio or television advertisements. It is imperative that lobbyists maintain good relations with the news media.

The lack of funds for arts advocates forces these lobbyists to seek other routes of access and influence than significant campaign contributions. Compounding the problem is the perception that if an arts organization sponsors special advocacy events or provides perks it could “deflect from the philosophy that the arts are contributing charitably to society, and give the impression that the arts are out to gain profits” (p. 69). Arts lobbyists must instead rely on their “endless energy and deep devotion to the arts and its place in society” (p. 70).

The business community supports and may provide funding for arts programs that service underserved populations. The American Council for the Arts published eight advocacy speeches from varied leaders under the title, “Why We Need the Arts” (1989). Of most interest to the present study were remarks by John Brademas and James Burke. Brademas was president of New York University and a former congressman from Indiana. Brademas points out that, “We must work to ensure funding for traditionally neglected arts groups - innovative and experimental organizations that serve neighborhood, minority and rural audiences” (p. 47).

Burke was chairman and CEO of Johnson and Johnson, the world’s most diversified health care company. States Burke, “We believe that contact with, and participation in, the arts adds a dimension to life that cannot be satisfied in any other way. We think this is true for us, for our employees and for the communities where we are situated” (p. 51). He urges others to follow suit saying, “I would like to advance the premise that public service is not a thing apart, but is implicit in the character of every American corporation. Public service is, in truth, the corporation’s very reason for being” (p. 53). Burke had his staff research the business performance of socially responsible corporations and concludes, “in seeking corporate support for your [arts] organizations you might want to suggest that socially responsible
corporations outperform their competitors over the long term, and developing mutually beneficial partnerships with the arts is an excellent way to serve the public interest (p.57)”.

Maybe the most researched arts advocacy statements are found in McLaughlin’s (1990) monograph. The first section describes research trends and major issues in arts education including major arts advocacy pieces, current policy and practices, current research trends, and building an eleven-item case statement based on research. The second section lists the research citations that support each advocacy statement and the final section annotates these sources. The eleven advocacy statements, in summarized form, state that the arts:

1. Enhance students’ creativity and increase creative thinking and problem solving ability. 2. Are an integral part of human development in dimensions such as use of both hemispheres of the brain; development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills; and learning styles. 3. Increase communication skills. 4. Enhance basic literacy including cultural and non-verbal literacy. 5. Enable students to acquire aesthetic judgment. 6. Develop self-esteem and a more positive self-concept. 7. Provide better cross-cultural understanding through knowledge of civilizations and cultures past and present. 8. Improve the school atmosphere and aid in improving student attendance while decreasing the dropout rate. 9. Provide numerous career opportunities. 10. Improve student performance in other areas. 11. Are a valuable teaching tool in working with special needs populations. (pp. 21-22)

These advocacy statements were supported by 88 sources including qualitative and quantitative research, journal compilations of research, writings by well-known education experts and formal assessments of arts projects and programs. Sources are arranged by discipline (multidisciplinary, dance, music, theater, and visual art).

McLaughlin’s document also identifies ten “basic issues [that] must be addressed” (p. 19). The issues are philosophical in nature and include the relevant questions: (1) who should teach the arts, (2) what should the arts curriculum include, and (3) how can arts programs be funded? While these important questions are asked, no attempt is made to answer them.

Arts advocacy statements frequently refer to “the arts” or “arts education” as if they were a single field of study instead of varied and divergent disciplines with potentially differing benefits. Colwell (1998) reviewed interests and issues related to music education research, as
well as critiquing arts advocacy research and identifying priorities for arts education research. Related to arts advocacy, Colwell warned that, “much advocacy ‘research’ presently cited in support of required arts education is specious because there are few ‘arts’ teachers” (p. 24). In other words, fine arts teachers usually teach one subject: music, visual art, dance or drama and benefits from any one program may not be transferable to each of the others. Further, some of these arts classes are group activities, such as a music ensemble class, while others are individual activities, such as painting or photography. While federal funding, according to Colwell, may result in lower ticket prices, it has not made a significant difference in the availability of arts events. As for music in the schools, Colwell states, “Governmental agencies beyond the local school board have had little impact on the presence or absence of music programs in the schools” (p. 24). Colwell agrees with Elliot Eisner that there is a lack of supportive evidence for arts education and that the evidence that is cited is, at best, thin. Asserts Colwell, “a research effort should be mounted to establish the validity of arts and music education experiences and the benefits of competency in music” (p. 26).

An actively engaged community can influence a school district’s arts curriculum. Gaining the Arts Advantage (1999) documents some of the best practices in school districts across the country in promoting competence and literacy in the arts as a fundamental purpose of schooling. Over 500 school districts were nominated and over 300 responded by sending documentation for review. From those 300, this report profiles 91 school districts that met the standard and were willing to commit the time and energy during the two-year study. The study identified the following “critical success factors” (p. 11) for achieving district-wide arts education. They are summarized:

1. The community is actively engaged in the district’s arts politics and instruction. Board of education provides supportive arts environment. Superintendents articulate a vision for arts education. Continuity in the school and community leadership. District arts coordinators facilitate program implementation. School principals support arts education for all students. Effective arts teachers are allowed to flourish. School leaders seize opportunities to showcase their arts programs. Strong elementary school arts programs are the foundation. School leaders provide specialized arts programs (e.g., magnet, Advanced Placement, summer enrichment, etc.). Many districts employ state or national arts policies and programs. School leaders advise a comprehensive vision with incremental implementation. School districts promote reflective practices to
advance the arts (assessment).

During the individual school district profiles, several references to string programs were made. Most frequently, these referred to the starting grade of string instruction. In two instances, references were made to cuts or near cuts in the string programs in times of budget crisis. States one former superintendent:

“I never thought of art and music as any less vital than any other part of the total program. One time [because of budget problems] we moved to cut the fourth-grade strings program. The community came down on our heads. (p. 36)”

The previously cited studies have implications for starting a string program pertaining to shaping decision maker attitudes, securing funding, engaging in outreach programs, lobbying and mobilizing community support. The local school board can impact the presence or absence of music programs in the schools. No arts advocacy statements found made specific references to string instrument instruction and some statements did not agree as to which areas were included within “the arts.”

**String Advocacy**

Standing out among the early string advocacy articles, Chenoweth (1940) provides a particularly intriguing glimpse into history from his vantage point as the instrumental music supervisor for Elkhart, Indiana County Schools. The perceptive insights offered in the following passage seem particularly relevant:

“Most small, so-called ‘Class C’ schools find it virtually impossible to support an orchestra as well as a band. The problems encountered here are too detailed to be enumerated, and the only logical solution to offering an orchestral experience of any magnitude to rural children would seem to be in consolidation. (p. 63)”

He also criticizes the “‘split’ department organization which exists in some schools, where there is strong rivalry between the band director and the orchestra director” (p. 63). He calls educators “shortsighted” (p.64) for believing that a band experience could substitute for an orchestral experience saying, “The attitude of those who believe that an orchestral experience is not necessary nor particularly desirable as long as the child is getting some musical experience in the band is not only silly but shows a definite lack of musical background (p.64)”.

Holmes (1957) wrote his string advocacy document, “The Importance of Strings in Music Education,” with the assistance of an MENC Subcommittee on Publications on String Instruction Advancement, which included such music education pioneers as Elizabeth Green and Joseph Maddy. Holmes’ based his arguments for string instruction on common-knowledge experience. Holmes notes that many school orchestra conductors who are not principally string players lead strong string departments. He cites how skilled these conductors are in utilizing other, more knowledgeable, string players and teachers as resources until the conductor’s own playing skills and teaching techniques improve. He cautions, however, that this method of string teacher preparation is “hit-and-miss” and “far from ideal” (p. 3). He chides universities to develop better teacher training programs, saying: “Unfortunately many music majors have been graduated from colleges and universities with such scant knowledge of stringed instrument pedagogy that they will start an orchestra . . . only under severe pressure” (p. 3). He continues, “It would be unwise to insist that the band director do the teaching of strings if he is disinterested or not completely prepared for it. Many music directors, although certified to conduct an orchestra project, really should not be allowed to do so (p. 3)”. Furthermore, he calls on school administrators to “demand that applicants be thoroughly trained in all phases of instrumental music” (p. 4). It is interesting to note that this MENC task force helped develop a suggested curriculum for collegiate music education majors to prepare graduates to lead orchestras as well as bands or choruses.

Gillespie (1994) authored an advocacy article articulating the value of school orchestra programs. His claims are primarily based on common-knowledge experience and can be summarized as:

Strings promote hands-on learning. String repertoire is rich and rewarding. Having a string program showcases a school district’s commitment to quality education. String study affords children the opportunity to develop: unique talents, character, respect, teamwork, and quality of life. Future benefits of string study may include: college scholarships, career options and life-long music playing opportunities. Research indicates that string students are academically successful in school. (p. 79-81)

According to Gillespie, “If a string teacher does not understand the true values of strings in the schools, the orchestra program will not be around for long . . . ” (p. 82).
Klotman (2000) draws from a lifetime of experiences as a performing violinist and educator to address the question, “Why Strings?” The longevity of his career and stature of his reputation afford him the opportunity to make advocacy statements that might not otherwise be published in the Music Educators Journal. “Opportunities to produce a variety of expressive sounds on a stringed instrument exceed that of any other family of instruments,” (p. 45) asserts Klotman. He briefly recounts how he started the string program in Detroit:

“In 1964, as director of music for the Detroit Public Schools, I submitted a proposal for the cultural enrichment in the inner city of Detroit under the Elementary-Secondary Education Act. This proposal included a plan for teaching strings using the Suzuki method. (p. 44)”

Klotman concludes that strings should be studied, “because humanity benefits” (p. 45).

A recent ASTA WITH NSOA brochure shares the name: “Why Strings?” The brochure begins with the statement, “A string and orchestral music education adds a unique dimension to a child’s life that cannot be fulfilled by any other type of musical instruction” (n. d.). The brochure continues by making the following claims, here summarized:

All students are capable of playing a string instrument, not just the “talented.” Unlike other musical instruments, each string instrument comes in smaller sizes. Orchestral repertoire requires strings. String music is multi-cultural. Contemporary music genres increasingly rely on string instruments. String music can be played alone or by small or large ensembles. There are lifelong opportunities for string playing. Colleges may award scholarships to qualified string players. Businesses and families relocate according to cultural opportunities, including string instruction. A string/orchestra education is a hallmark of a fine school system. Without a string program, band and choir students cannot perform original orchestral masterworks. School orchestras provide string instruction to all interested students. In every school there are students who are inherently attracted to the sound of string instruments.

Few of the previously reviewed string advocacy claims are research based and fewer are unique to string instruction. In some cases, the word band or choral or even a favorite sport, say tennis, could be inserted in place of the word string and the statements would be just as true (Reimer, 1959). Further research, for example, could lend support to the assertions that curricular string instruction is a characteristic of the finest school districts or that in every school there
are students inherently attracted to the sound of string instruments. Such new studies could bolster our confidence in string advocacy statements by providing data to support the claims.

**Reasons Students Join Orchestra**

A look at why students join orchestra could help advance the claim that in every school there are students inherently attracted to the sound of string instruments. Hurley (1992/1993) performed a preliminary investigation of student motivations for beginning and continuing or discontinuing string music instruction. The author identified twenty-one interviewees from four population categories: (1) six fourth grade beginners, (2) six sixth grade students who were continuing string instruction, and (3) two groups of sixth grade students (total of nine) who had discontinued string instruction. Student responses (n = 21) were analyzed through an author developed model based on a review of cognitive theories of achievement motivation. The focus of Hurley’s study was on the perspectives of the students’ motivations for beginning and continuing string instruction. Previous studies focused on adult perceptions of these motivations or music aptitude or academic achievement tests as indicators of success.

Specific factors common to all six beginning string students could not be discerned, although five of the six students in the sample had family who played a musical instrument and the remaining student reported that his father sings around the house. Although friends, siblings and teachers were deemed important cultural influences, students seemed to join the string class because they perceived it would be a fun activity.

Perkins (1998/1999) study explored factors relating to participation in public school orchestra programs and the relationship and predictability of such factors in accordance with Maehr’s theory of personal investment. According to Maehr, people choose to participate in activities that give meaning to their lives. This theory is a comprehensive model of motivation that accounts for choices, values and intentions within the school environment.

The main study involved a volunteer population (n = 1315) of orchestra students in Grades 6 - 12 from three school districts. The measurement device was a self-report instrument through which subjects indicated their personal incentives regarding four areas of participation in orchestra: reasons to join, membership in orchestra, perceived available options and the organizational culture.
The strongest motivators for students to join orchestra appeared to be the desire to make music followed by the influence of the teacher. The findings of this study were consistent with other studies that stressed the importance of vigorous recruiting for attracting and retaining students.

“Practical applications would include a ‘hands-on’ demonstration, with an orchestra that looks and sounds good” (p. 125). The strong showing of the influence of the teacher demonstrates the importance of the teacher’s influence on students’ decisions to join orchestra. “For the students in this sample, the interaction with the perspective [sic] teacher was almost as important as the music” (p. 125). The third influencing factor was extrinsic activities. These activities include opportunities for recognition and fun and suggest that students have preconceived ideas about the orchestra program and what they will get to do before they join it.

It appears that students make their decisions to join orchestra based on reasons over which most teachers have control. The importance of the sound and appearance of the recruiting demonstration group, the influence of the teacher, and the perception of fun were the primary reasons why many students chose to participate in orchestra.

**New String Program Development**

Several articles have highlighted new string programs for the purpose of providing examples and incentives for other communities to start new programs. An article in The American School Board Journal (Kinneavy, 1980), outlined how Jacquelyn Dillon developed the school district orchestra program in Norman, Oklahoma. Though titled, “How to Start an Orchestra Program,” only one sentence is truly devoted to the program’s inception: “Parents who moved into town to work at the university persuaded the school board to start the orchestra program” (p. 40). The remainder of the article describes recruiting practices and common experience string advocacy statements. Kinneavy observes:

“In spite of this argument [for strings], as many as 75 percent of all school systems don’t offer stringed instrument education in addition to their established curriculums of band and chorus. There are many reasons why. One is the fear that adding strings will detract from an already successful band program. A second is the belief that there’s no interest in strings. Still another is the belief that starting the program is complicated and costly. (p. 40) Dillon recruited relentlessly, using her personality to persuade students to study strings, “You have to sell yourself to students before you can sell them on music” (p. 41).
suggestion is made that school districts can save money by having the band director double as orchestra director. One music curriculum specialist is quoted regarding his practice of hiring instrumental teachers who can teach both winds and strings, “It saves money, and I doubt that we could have an orchestra without requiring it” (p. 42).”

Though not referring to string programs, parallels can be drawn to Remer’s (1990) text describing how Arts in General Education (AGE) programs have been implemented in numerous school districts. AGE is a conceptual process that offers school and community-based teaching and learning experiences in all arts for all children. Over the years, the AGE program has been supported by several foundations not the least of which being the John D. Rockefeller 3rd Fund. With respect to the process of change, Remer quotes from a collaboratively authored document “Design for Change” which states: “Change is never comfortable and therefore is rarely welcomed. Quite the contrary. Usually it is resisted either overtly or covertly. Consequently, change will not occur unless it is deliberately planned” (p. 18). Networking has played an integral part in the change process by drawing together like minds toward the common goal of “all the arts for all the children” (p. 89).

Culver (1993-1998) wrote several feasibility studies for school districts that were considering implementing a string program. These broad sweeping studies typically begin by listing the decision-makers who initiated and support the study. Culver demonstrates a base of local support for a new string program that includes the superintendent, school board members, school principals, music teachers, and other leadership, both musical and non-musical from within the various communities. The studies then address issues relating to teaching and storage space for the string classes, the organization of the total string program, staffing and scheduling, recruiting with a design toward balanced instrumentation (band and orchestra), community attitude development (toward string instruction), and budget considerations, including personnel, equipment and music. Each string program feasibility study follows a similar pattern and relies upon the models that Culver developed and subsequently published in the American String Teachers Journal (1999).

Culver (1999) reported on the process of string program development. His findings were the result of a 1990 sabbatical project, where he gathered data from 113 instrumental music teachers representing 50 school districts and 27 states. The focus of the research project was to identify factors contributing to quality instrumental music programs in
various communities. The information inspired him to design a community-arts pyramid model for how to develop community-wide support for string study. The main principles were: (1) community structure and conceptual roles are widely understood; (2) a model of excellence is agreed upon — goal; (3) a Change Agent emerges to lead; (4) progress proceeds from the grass roots up without administrative top-down repression; (5) models of success can be adopted without penalty of ownership — without inspiring political jealousy.

The key to Culver’s model is the emergence of a Change Agent. According to Culver, a Change Agent is someone who:

“has a grand design; makes others look good; is a problem solver as opposed to a problem finder; is very efficient at communication forms, meeting function, paper communications, data gathering and use, and speaking; understands that confrontation is inevitable and can manage the various levels of confrontation without feeling personally at risk. (p. 49)”

It is important to recognize that these attributes are political rather than artistic and that in many circumstances, artistic success is dependent on the political process. Culver observes that Change Agents frequently come from institutions of higher learning because the nature of the position allows opportunity for observation, travel, research, and leadership in staff development.

Culver has observed several ways to initiate a new string program including: internal school district initiatives resulting from new, increased, funding; existing music positions — including band directors and general music teachers; collaborations between arts organizations and public schools; parental lobbying; university initiatives or studies; string projects; and independent community schools or arts centers. Culver suggests that the first step is to develop a feasibility study written by an outside consultant. An outsider has more freedom to suggest change without “attacking or causing political jealousy” (p. 53). A feasibility study would include:

“a listing of resources available, a sampling and development of widespread support, a projection of program implementation over a five-year period, a cost analysis, an analysis of implementation problems considering space, schedule and bussing issues, and an incremental sequence of decisions leading toward a model program. (p. 53)”
Wendell (1999) highlighted eighteen new string programs or initiatives in an American String Teacher article, published as a follow-up to Culver’s (1999) journal article on developing community support for string study. Three commonalities of the new programs were identified: (1) a determined teacher who was willing to work extra hours to make the new program successful, (2) an emphasis on recruiting and building parent and community support for string study, and (3) a school board that eventually placed the string program in the curriculum and assumed responsibility for funding. Many of Culver’s factors and elements that go into creating a string program are visible in the featured programs. Wendell’s article provides the illustrations for Culver’s model.

A full-page text box within Wendell’s article offers “Words of Wisdom” from Jacquelyn Dillon-Krass:

“Any new program needs to be tailored to fit the school system and community where it will exist. Various plans can work well, so a step-by-step approach can only be recommended when information of the existing environment is available. (p. 66)”

Dillon-Krass lists eleven common characteristics of new programs: (1) Preliminary “seeds” (p. 66) are planted within the community, (2) Existing school music teachers are supportive, (3) A competent string teacher must is identified to lead the program, (4) The existing band and choral programs are strong and of high quality, (5) String instruments are available from a local music store, (6) First year students are started at multiple grade levels to increase the initial enrollment, (7) Beginning students are not mixed beyond two consecutive grade levels in one class, (8) Avoid starting the beginning class at “too low” (p. 66) of a grade level so that students do not lose interest before they reach the secondary orchestra, (9) Model the string program after the existing band and choral programs, (10) Present a five-year funding plan to administrators, (11) Maintain high visibility and excellent performance quality.

Experience based articles, not formal research studies, provide the bulk of what we know about new string program development. While the advice from these veteran string teachers may be helpful, in the words of Colwell (1998), “The research agenda for music educators is overflowing” (p. 28).
Model Building

A model, like a map, can help illustrate how to get from here to there and do so in an efficient manner. Models can help to communicate information in a more convenient form. Edwards (1992) explains that there is no substitute for the researcher’s unique understanding of the process: “The major source of many inspired models is a unique, personal insight into some process, based on extensive thought, observation, or participation” (p. 45). The model communicates a theory as well as a framework. Edwards concludes, “In this way, research becomes more than stabs in the dark; it becomes part of an evolutionary process” (p. 46).

Two string-specific models were found to have relevance to the topic of starting a string program. Bergonzi (1995) proposes “A Conceptual Model Predicting String Enrollment” (p. 40). His model is shaped like an arrowhead. The base of the arrowhead includes two broad categories: School Factors and Student Factors. The middle of the arrowhead includes Music Department Organization and Nonmusical School Behaviors which both may flow through String Opportunity. The Nonmusical School Behaviors include track placement, academic coursework, activity level and outside employment. Bergonzi boxes Music Department Organization, Nonmusical School Behaviors and String Opportunity as those most directly related to “Access.” Each broad category of the model has several sub-areas and all categories lead directly or indirectly to the point of the arrow: String Enrollment. According to Bergonzi:

“Looking at the model, string enrollment is a function of school and student factors, as well as string opportunity, music department organization, and student nonmusical school behaviors. In addition to the direct impact each of these may have on string participation, each in turn may be affected by those that precede it. Thus, each also affects string participation indirectly. (p. 40)”

Culver’s (1999) “Community ARTS Model” (p. 48) purports to show a conceptual understanding and construct within which “an artistic endeavor will flourish” (p. 48). The model is designed like a pyramid and has Community Traditions and Expectations as its base. Ascending upward from this base are the following layers: Students, Parents, Schools, Private Lessons, Youth Organizations, Special Summer Opportunities, University or Conservatories, Community Orchestras, Chamber Music and Professional Musicians. Culver clarifies:
“This model functions when each level supports the neighboring levels. [Each level] . . . cannot function without the support of every other level and must purposely develop opportunities for dialogue while acting as resources for each other. When interaction between the levels from students up through professional musicians is perceived as valuable, community support, traditions, and expectations will result. (p. 48)”

In effect, Bergonzi’s model offers a cutaway view of the inner workings within the lower half of Culver’s pyramid: Community Traditions and Expectations, Students, Parents and Schools. Further related research is needed to examine other concepts of string participation including the impact of the setting (urban, suburban or rural) and the population demographics as depicted within the models. The models differ in scope in that Bergonzi’s model ends with student string enrollment while Culver’s model continues through various performance opportunities that lead toward adult amateur or professional music making.

The process of building a theoretical model specifically for “How to Start a String Program” might be a helpful way to streamline the many factors involved in the process into one manageable diagram. While each specific school district will have its own idiosyncrasies, a model could provide the conceptual framework from which to set a course and base decisions.

**Discussion**

A review of the literature pertaining to the factors involved in starting a new string program reveals a complex political process involving many variables. Research relating to actually starting a new string program, that is, what to do before there is a school board appointed string teacher, is skimpy and empirical in nature. There appears to be a fundamental lack of sustained inquiry to adequately address the “Why Strings” question, more specifically asked, “Why should a school district include string instrument instruction within the curriculum?” To date, there is only one string program development model to follow (Culver, 1999).

To further the discussion, this author has begun to think of the process of starting a curricular string program in terms of an Hourglass Model. The basic concept is that as the sands of an hourglass flow downward due to gravity, so flow the factors that work toward starting a new string program. With starting curricular string programs, I see this timetable expanding into years or even decades. In other words, some
school districts are on the verge of having a curricular string program and may need only minimal intervention, while others may be years away from that point.

This paper has summarized what we know from philosophy and advocacy, new string program development and model building related to starting a curricular string program. The notion of an Hourglass Model is a preliminary attempt to form a new theory and generate additional inquiry into the process. It is the author’s hope that this synthesis can lead to further discoveries and eventually additional research-based theories for how to include strings within the school curriculum.

References


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