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In the article titled “How They Decide: A Case Study Examining the Decision-Making Process for Keeping or Cutting Music in a K-12 Public School” by Marci L. Major, she examined the fight against “shrinking budgets in a tough economy” (Major, 2013, p.5). It remains no secret to how the majority of public schools choose to cut the arts to save funding. Most schools value the CORE programs more so than the arts. Major states that “The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 shifted educational priorities toward subjects assessed on standardized achievement tests. These subjects included math, science, english, and history but did not include music or the other arts” (2013, p.6). This act requires that school districts must measure students’ progress yearly and ensure that they prepare students to achieve higher test scores each year. Due to this, schools allocated more time spent on test subjects which resulted in less time for other subjects. It has been found that “National statistics on music education support these findings and show that schools nationwide have decreased the total minutes given to music education during the school day and also have been declining enrollment in music classes” (Major, 2013, pg.6). Marci L. Major conducted a research study to examine the decision-making process regarding music education. She examined 3 research questions: the first one, “What influenced Lekbery School District decision makers to keep music in the curriculum?”. The second, “What criteria did Lekbery’s school board members and administrators use in deciding the value of music education?”. The final question was, “What obstacles did Lekbery School District

overcome to keep its music program?”. In order to conduct this in depth, specifically, Major interviewed music teachers, upper administrators, and parents, as well as examined documents and participant observation. It was apparent that the school district's goal was to have a great quality education that has a broad range of programs. Major’s findings concluded that the community had a large say in what was sought as important inside the schools. As Major interviewed many parents and board members, as well as administrators, she discovered music education was highly supported in the Lekbery School District due to the positive personal experiences that each interviewee had in regards to music. An interviewee who was a current upper administrator stated that he “would not interview in a school district that did not have an orchestra program” (Major, 2013, p.13). Through her research, it is evident that the music programs in their district help them further their enrollment due to the positive image it creates. One other finding in her research was the district's outlook on spending and receiving. One former upper administrator said that “reducing is better than eliminating.” To avoid eliminating a program, Lekbery’s administrators looked for ways to make it more efficient at the periphery” (Major, 2013, p.15). She concludes her research by mentioning that in order to gain more perspective and knowledge on this decision-making system, future studies will be the most beneficial specifically, research that examines each individual element that may affect administrators’ decisions.

Marci L. Majors article about examining the decision-making process demonstrates many factors that could hinder the decision-making process among other school districts. The Lekbery School District had a tremendous amount of support for music education from all different types of people. From upper administrators, to parents, all of them supported music and even went as far as to say “Change anything you want in the curriculum, but don’t mess around with the music

program” (Major, 2013, p.13). Other school districts around the world might not have this same opinion about music education. One thing that Major mentioned in her article was how successful and high quality the music programs were in the district. Without this excellence that Lekbery already previously had built, the opinions would have been different. An upper administrator stated that “If our music programs weren’t very good I think it would be easier to cut them because there wouldn’t be that value” (Major, 2013, p.11). The Lekbery School District mission statement reflects greatly on her research as well. The mission statement states that “student achievement and success are at the center of all we do. Our mission is to guide, encourage, and support each and every learner in the quest to realize his or her full potential” (Major, 2013, p.10). This proves the importance of mission statements among school districts and to carefully look at them when looking for a job to use in the future for interviews. Relating to my own future as an educator, Marci Major’s article has proven the importance of the relationship you have with administrators, including upper administrators within every school district. They have all the power and building a positive relationship with them is vital to building your own program and asking for help or funds for new instruments. If they value you as a teacher, they will be more likely to advocate the community to look into your program as well as see music education as an importance inside their own district.

Kevin Shorner-Johnson wrote an article titled “Building Evidence for Music Education Advocacy” in which he uses Aristotle's structure of ethos, pathos, and logos to explain how early music education was persuaded by advocates to support music education in public schools. The article starts with an introduction about how most newspapers and websites contain information emphasizing STEM programs in schools and how much of a challenging time the arts are in. By this he claims that “This is the landscape where music educators will again engage in persuasive

dialogue and advocacy to protect music in the school curriculum” (Shorner-Johnson, 2013, p.51). The author then goes into explaining and defining the word “persuasion” and ties into Aristotle's rhetoric: ethos, pathos, and logos. He explains that “When the audience believes that the speaker is an expert on the topic and appears trustworthy, independent, and objective, that person carries weight with his or her arguments” (Shorner-Johnson, 2013, p.52). One thing that he says challenges music education advocacy is “honing and refining” (Shorner-Johnson, 2013, p.52) the message that advocates are clearly trying to communicate by looking at what audience they will be talking to. Pathos is about emotion and you not only need to be able to bring the emotional side of the message to the audience but also have great evidence, which is logos. The only problem that arises with this, Shorner-Johnson says, is the lack of evidence and resources supporting music education. Therefore he states that “It is in the economically challenging times of today that we need to revisit the successful persuasive methods of nineteenth-century Boston to further inform our own persuasive actions” (Shorner-Johnson, 2013, p.52). The author then begins to talk about two people named Mason and Woodbridge who built The Boston Academy of Music in 1833. He claims that The Boston Academy of Music “was a critical step in the process of building a platform for advocacy because it brought to reality the theoretical ideas of music instruction” (Shorner-Johnson, 2013, p.52). The author says that one great way to show evidence is performance evidence. He also mentions that advocates do not have to be people inside the school. “Music education might have never been incorporated into the public schools has it not been for the vision of persuasive individuals who began an organization outside the school system” (Shorner-Johnson, 2013, p.53). Lastly, he said that Aristotle would remind us all to never underestimate the large powerful effect that evidence has when paired with a moving “aesthetic experience” (Shorner-Johnson, 2013, p.54).

In Kevin Shorner-Johnson's article, he talks a great deal about the use of Aristotle's persuasive rhetoric. From learning this in high school, I never thought too hard about using it to help in my future as an educator. There are many schools around America that do not fully support music education and rather see it as an extracurricular class that is enjoyable to the kids, but also negatively takes up students' time for more STEM and CORE classes. For far too long the mindset has been shifted to raising test scores from helping each student discover their own strengths, desires, as well as likes and dislikes. From reading this article I now understand the benefit of using such rhetoric and how to apply it for if possible situations arise in the future of my career. Knowing and understanding who built the foundation for new educators to face these challenges with strong evidence, emotion, and credibility guides our way into the future of music education. One quote from the article that really spoke to me was, "In the rush of competitive economic words such as *productivity* and *efficiency*, that which separates humans from machines becomes all the more important" (Shorner-Johnson, 2013, p.55). The importance of advocating for music education stems from wanting to continue to help students reach their full potential and guide their own path to find their own interests. Too often are schools reliant on test scores and improvement to beat the next school. Rather, we should strive to improve but with student minded goals in our own goals as school districts.

An article titled "Conditions That Facilitate Music Learning Among Students with Special Needs: A Mixed-Methods Inquiry" written by Kevin W. Gerrity, Ryan M. Hourigan and Patrick W. Horton speaks about how to effectively teach students with special needs. The authors start by explaining the Disabilities Education Act by stating that "the development of inclusive teaching models has provided positive steps forward toward uncovering the environment and conditions that facilitate learning among children with special needs" (Gerrity, Hourigan, and

Horton, 2013, p.145). They mention that it is important for all educators to be prepared to teach different experiences and academic needs of each and every student. To accomplish this, teachers can by “presenting information in multiple ways, engaging students in a variety of learning activities, and allowing students to decide how best to express their understanding of content” (Gerrity, Hourigan, and Horton, 2013, p.145). The authors then talk about multiple researchers who studied the effects of music on students with special needs. One study was on a student with down syndrome where he participated in two 40 minute music sessions per week for three months. The student was successful by the teacher pacing the lesson, maintaining enthusiasm, and “respecting the musician within” (Gerrity, Hourigan, and Horton, 2013, p.145). Another study was on how many educators would be willing to teach students with special needs. The “researchers speculated that participants’ decrease in willingness to teach students with special needs was indicative of a more realistic understanding of both the rewards and challenges in providing appropriate music education services for these students” (Gerrity, Hourigan, and Horton, 2013, p.146). When a study was done among college undergraduate students in music education, the results were positive and the students engaged and wanted to learn and gain experience on how to teach students with special needs. The authors conducted their own research and the questions they put forth were: “What is the musical ability of the students with special needs? What are the conditions that facilitate music learning among students with special needs? Do conditions that facilitate music learning have an effect on the musical ability of students with special needs?” (Gerrity, Hourigan, and Horton, 2013, p.147). The research was done with 16 students and alongside them was a parent, a university student, a licensed music therapist, and a music educator. The results concluded that repetition, student

choice, and response time with clear instruction, as well as a positive atmosphere were the main effective teaching strategies that were used and commented on by parents.

Teaching students with special needs has always been a strong interest of mine when choosing the path of an educator. Throughout my life I have been surrounded by people with special needs and have always been one to help them and not treat them differently. In elementary school, I grew spending my free time after school in the special education room helping the teacher and hanging out with my fellow classmates who were great friends. As well, my two uncles have disabilities that they were born with. Reflecting on this, being around people with special needs has been reoccurring in my life and I have a strong interest in teaching in that area. The article titled “Conditions That Facilitate Music Learning Among Students with Special Needs: A Mixed-Methods Inquiry” written by Kevin W. Gerrity, Ryan M. Hourigan and Patrick W. Horton was very eye opening not only to teaching students with special needs, but teaching in general. One thing that the authors mentioned about their research results was that “many would argue that these strategies represent good teaching and should not be reserved for use with students with special needs” (Gerrity, Hourigan, and Horton, 2013, p.156). Therefore not only will I apply these findings of effective teaching strategies when teaching students with special needs but in teaching as a whole overall.

Works Cited

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