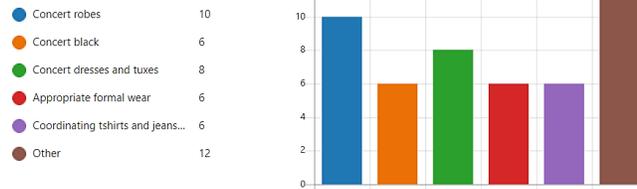




# Wear to Make Change: Inclusivity in Concert Attire

What is the required concert attire for your students?



Do your students get to choose what they feel most comfortable wearing for concert attire? ex. choice between a dress or tux



Do you feel your concert attire policy is inclusive to individuals of all identities and backgrounds? Orange: "I am working towards amending my policy to be more inclusive"



To view the results of all the survey questions, please scan the QR codes below.



Microsoft Form



Excel Document

## Solutions

- o Choosing gender-flexible uniforms, such as choir robes
  - o This can take away any gender differences among the choir and reduce body image issues. Choir robes all have the same fit, apart from length. Students can wear clothing that they feel comfortable in underneath, without fear of judgment.
- o Establishing a gender-flexible uniform with specific parameters
  - o This is slightly more restrictive as to what students wear; however, it does not take away allowing students to express themselves or wear what they feel most comfortable in. The goal of this solution is to create a professional, unified visual image, that does not distract the audience from the excellent work students are presenting. This solution may present challenges with students who may struggle to afford professional attire. This is when donations and having a supply on hand is necessary.
- o Creating a gender-flexible shirt
  - o This is a good way to create uniformity, while remaining gender-neutral. Directors may choose polos, button down shirts, or unisex T-shirts. The attire could display the school's logo and would be a gender-neutral color or a color of the ensembles choosing. Directors may also choose to allow student to choose which shirt they feel most comfortable in, resulting in a semi-unified mix of attire. Directors may set guidelines for bottoms and shoes, while keeping the option less restrictive.
- o Concert Black
  - o This is the most common concert attire used in ensembles. As presented in the survey results, this can pose the risk of excluding students of color. When choosing concert black, adjust the policy to black and white. This creates more options, while reducing isolation. Directors may also choose to incorporate a color. For example, a colored scarf, tie, jacket, etc.
- o Getting students involved
  - o Ask student what they feel comfortable with. Limit the discussion to appropriate attire but allow for students to have a say in what they wear. Understanding what our students need is important to consider when developing a concert attire policy

Blaisdell, Gayla. (2018)

Inclusivity is a topic that should frequently be reviewed and reflected upon. Our diverse population is represented by individuals of all identities. It is important to make an effort to create and apply policies that do not exclude individuals. In efforts to make a change, starting small can help educators successfully amend, create, and apply inclusivity in their classroom. Music is a diverse subject area that at times can discriminate and exclude against individuals' identities. Concert attire is an area of music where individuals most often feel excluded. Traditional concert attire should be reconsidered and amended to best fit ensemble members' needs. Many individuals often migrate to music ensembles to find a sense of belonging (Dziuk, 2018). If a policy discriminates and excludes individuals, that music ensemble is no longer a safe, enjoyable, and desirable place.

## Methodology

To collect data, you must create a plan to reach the largest population of your targeted audience. The method of data collection chosen was an anonymous survey comprised of 13 short answer and multiple-choice answers. Some of the multiple-choice questions allowed the participant to select more than one answer to best describe their policy. Each participant had the opportunity to describe their current policies and share their experiences. The survey was distributed via email, posted to social media, and posted to an education platform that current music educators have access to. The survey received a total of 31 responses and took each participant no more than 10 minutes to complete.

## Results

On the left, the results of 3 of the multiple-choice questions can be seen as pie charts and bar graphs. In the bar graph, there was a choice to select other, where participants could describe more in depth about what they require. Responses tended to skew towards an inclusive policy, however there were a few short answer responses that described experiences and scenarios that excluded students. Many short answer responses described how funding played a role in why policies are not as inclusive as directors would like them to be. Participants also explained accommodations they have made, such as providing extra shoes or clothes, offering financial assistance, and receiving donations from the community. The final question on the survey was "If there is anything else you wish to share about your concert attire policy, please feel free to share below." Many responses described more in-depth of what their policy requires of students or described a situation where their policy excluded students and presented a policy that was not inclusive. One participant responded with an extremely informative and eye-opening experience. Often, educators make conscious choices to make their policies inclusive but can exclude students unintentionally. This respondent described how a student of color felt invisible on stage, while wearing concert black. The concert policy was to wear concert black to create uniformity and allow student to have some autonomy when choosing the clothes they wear. However, this led to the student of color feeling invisible due to blending in with their surroundings.

## Discussion

It is many individuals' goal to create a more inclusive society. Research within this area is minimal and increasing the research on this subject can improve the quality of music education for a large sum of people. Meeting the needs of students has been a priority for educators in all subject areas. However, meeting the need for a sense of belonging, representation, and freedom to choose is often neglected. Creating a concert policy that all students are included in can create a safe place to be who they desire to be. There are a variety of reasons why policies cannot be amended, however, educators can make small changes and accommodations to meet the students' needs to the best of their ability.

## Future Research

1. How can school music ensemble policies be amended to create a more inclusive environment for students of all identities?
2. Do outdated school music ensemble policies result in the exclusion of a large population of students who participate?
3. How can the amendment of school music ensemble policies help foster inclusivity in society at large?

## References

Blaisdell, Gayla. (2018). Rehearsal Break: Fostering Inclusion: Unpacking Choral Dress Codes. *The Choral Journal*, 59(1), 59-66.

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