



# An Exploration of General Music Curricula Throughout Our Region

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## Introduction

The purpose of this poster is to define the curricula differences throughout rural, urban, and suburban general music classes in the state of Wisconsin. According to Miksza and Gault, "White suburban students of high SES (socioeconomic status) tended to receive significantly more music experiences than students of color from urban and rural settings of low SES." This means that those who have access to the resources needed will receive a better music education experience than those who do not have access. This poster will provide evidence as to how easily accessible resources for music education are in rural, suburban, and urban communities in order to define a curriculum that represents students of all races and socioeconomic statuses.

## Methodology

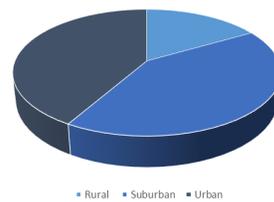
I created a survey with seven questions. I shared the survey with various music teachers throughout the state of Wisconsin. These teachers anonymously filled the survey out. Surveyors were asked to briefly outline their curricula. Specifically, I asked if the curriculum was mandated by the district and what activities they use are most useful to their students.

## Results

The top graph is a representation of those who took the survey. The graph in the middle shows how many teachers have mandated and non-mandated district curricula, broken up by region. When asked if they follow their district mandated curriculum all of the five teachers with mandated curricula stated that they follow it. However, one noted that it was up to the teacher as to how they implement the curriculum. The last graph is discussed in further detail below.

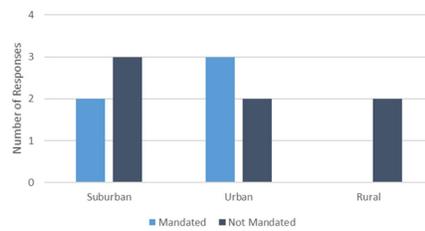
There were several similarities among the curricula used throughout the different regions. For example, First Steps in Music and Conversational Solfege was used within some suburban and rural districts. On the other hand, Share the Music and General Music K-12 curricula are mostly used in urban districts. The graph provided at the bottom shows a list of activities commonly used in the music classroom. Those that selected "other" provided me with a list of activities they use that were not included on the original list, such as: computer music, music around the world (learning about music from other cultures), solfege, basketballs for beat keeping, batons for conducting, manipulatives for rhythm and composition, and music production. Lastly, I asked which of these activities they found most useful to their students. Four of the twelve respondents said a combination of multiple activities were most useful to their students' needs in music education. Overall, teachers found that activities that were engaging, fun, and met the needs of their students were the most useful to their students.

Distribution of Respondents Across Rural, Suburban, and Urban School Districts



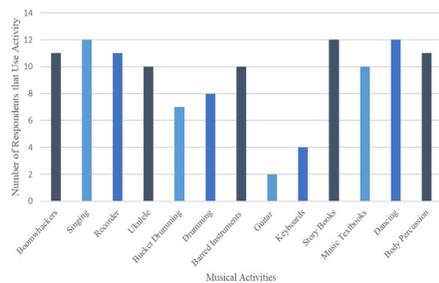
■ Rural ■ Suburban ■ Urban

District Mandated Curricula



■ Mandated ■ Not Mandated

Activities Used in the General Music Classroom



## Discussion

Bates argues that "Rather than freeing students from "cycles of poverty," music education efforts aimed at cultural refinement can have the opposite effect of leveraging distinctions between classes to further the reproduction of inequality." While this pilot study does not entirely represent the whole population of Wisconsin music teachers, it does provide an important first step towards questioning whether students of all backgrounds are receiving high-quality music instruction. The implications of the results of this pilot study leads to a necessary discussion about the curricula that are currently used, and what we as music educators need to address to ensure that students of lower socioeconomic status (SES) have access to the same materials as those with higher SES.

The results of this study pose a concern that teachers without a curriculum are guessing about what they should be teaching. Are teachers able to give students what they need in terms of scope and sequence of music learning? McAnally states, "We must pay attention to the harsh reality of poverty and how children are affected by it. We must levy the incredible power of general music programs in ensuring the success of students living in poverty. And we must look at the influence that can be wielded by our organization in building quality general music programs in high-poverty districts" (p. 6). This provides us with an idea of what we must do to make sure students who experience higher levels of poverty are receiving a quality music experience.

## Future Research

1. I plan to expand this topic to gain insight on instrumental ensemble curricula across urban, suburban, and rural school districts to identify differences.
2. Define a curriculum that represents all regions.
3. Determine methods to improve accessibility of resources available.
3. Expand into my thesis

## References

- Bates. (2021). Reflections on Music Education, Cultural Capital, and Diamonds in the Rough. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 29(2), 212–229. <https://doi.org/10.2979/philmusiceducrevi.29.2.06>
- Miksza, & Gault, B. M. (2014). Classroom Music Experiences of U.S. Elementary School Children: An Analysis of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study of 1998-1999. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62(1), 4–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429413519822>
- McAnally. (2013). General Music and Children Living in Poverty. *General Music Today*, 26(3), 25–31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371313478611>