A qualitative study of music teachers' beliefs about the teaching of composition

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Dissertation

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MUSIC TEACHERS’ BELIEFS ABOUT THE TEACHING OF COMPOSITION

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my greatest teacher -

my children;

Ian, Emily, and Amelia.

My parents, John and Ruth Leonard, who brought the joy
of music into our house and taught me to think before I spoke

And my husband David,
a consummate musician with endless compassion,
supporting me no matter what I chose to do.

He allowed me read to him and think out
louder as I worked through ideas

– and he loved me anyway.
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ABSTRACT

While research has touted the educational benefits of music composition in the classroom, studies have also revealed the numerous difficulties teachers encounter in its inclusion. From lack of time and materials to lack of training and confidence, teachers have struggled to incorporate composition in their lessons. At the same time, a body of research also has suggested that what teachers believe about a subject can have significant bearing on what they teach and how they teach it. This multi-case study looked at three teachers to investigate what they believed about music composition, where those beliefs originated and how those beliefs may be expressed in their classrooms and use of composition.

The results revealed the significance of early music influences with family and church music directors, a strong connection to identity through music, and the importance of the sharing and peer teaching of music. There was a distinct bias for European forms and standard notation that eclipsed other ways of knowing, understanding, and expressing music. Other than jazz, forms of improvisation were often viewed as childish or primitive. The teachers most likely to find success in the use of composition in the classroom were flexible, and able to align their beliefs about music education, the
efficacy of their students and themselves, with their beliefs about composition and what it can offer.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Research supports the use of composition in the classroom as contributing to students’ musical achievement and attitude, creative self-expression and empowerment, higher order thinking and musical problem-solving, creativity, and increased student engagement (Blom, 2003; Hargreaves, 1996; Hogg, 1994; Kaschub, 1997; van Ernst, 1993). While some music teachers may perceive these reported benefits, others often report feeling unprepared and identify a lack of time, methods, equipment, materials, and other resources as obstacles to teaching composition (Blom, 2003; Byo, 1999; Phelps, 2008; Riley, 2006). In spite of the widely acknowledged positive attributes associated with composition in the classroom, the actual inclusion of classroom composition is, according to Strand (2006), frequently avoided by teachers.

This avoidance of composition in the music classroom might be related, in part, to music teachers’ beliefs (Cusano, 2005; Pajares, 1992). Teachers’ beliefs are developed through experiences and individual interpretations of life events. Music teachers’ beliefs about composition are reflections and interpretations of experiences, possibly based on university music education, experience in K-12 music programs, and life experiences influenced by family, culture, and society that act together to form the basis for their beliefs (Baron, 2010; Gudmundsdottir, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). Understanding teachers’ beliefs is important because they are powerful influences on instructional practices (Nespor, 1987) and left unexplored, “teachers’ beliefs can be a barrier to
pedagogical growth” (Baron, 2010, p.6).

It is clear from the research that teachers have varying beliefs about composition, its uses, benefits, and challenges (Blom, 2003; Burnard, 1995; Byo, 1999; Hogg, 1994; Miller, 2004; Phelps, 2008; Riley, 2006; Strand, 2006). One of the most prominent shared experiences among music teachers that may contribute to teachers’ beliefs is their university music education programs. In the United States the standard European canon and its accompanying theoretical and historical framework are most often found to be the foundation for music education programs (Wang and Humphreys, 2009; Sands, 2007). Its theoretical structures are grounded in standard notation, vocabulary, and voice leading principals that are imbedded in specific cultural and historical norms. In contrast, the creative music perspective is rooted in an open, organic perception of music and composition and grew from the creative music movement and experimental approaches to composition developed by composers of the 20th century. What part might these educational, historical, and political influences continue to play in teachers’ beliefs about composition and their pedagogical decisions?

While teachers often identify a lack of time, materials, and resources for not including composition in the classroom, questions exist as to whether these factors are actually the basis for many music teachers’ reluctance to teach composition in their classrooms (Byo, 1999; Phelps, 2008; Strand, 2006). For example, studies have found that teachers’ perceptions of time and its use in the classroom are distorted (See, for example, Orman 2002; Schmidt, Baker, Hayes & Kwan, 2006; Wang and Sargin, 1997). Perceptions of time and its use can alter the nature of individual reality. Wang and Sargin
compared teachers’ self-reported use of time with objective evaluations through the use of videotaped classes and found that teachers greatly over-estimated the amount of time spent on tasks, especially creative activities, of which composition and improvisation were considered a part. While 67 teachers reported spending 5% to 35% of their class time on creative activities, video-recorded observations attributed only 1.33% of class time was actually spent in those activities. This would suggest that the low frequency of compositional activities reported in research by Strand (2006) and Phelps (2008), which was based on calculations rooted in teachers’ self-reports, may be even lower. Might teachers’ have similar misconceptions about composition rooted in their beliefs about composition?

When considering teachers’ expressed concerns over availability of limited compositional materials or music teachers’ knowledge of compositional methods, Bosch (2008) believed that since composition has historically been viewed as an advanced approach to the study of music most often reserved for university music students and especially composition majors, this has resulted in a lack of composition teaching methods for young or novice students. This, however, cannot on its own account for the level of unease with composition expressed by music teachers. Even with the availability of appropriate materials, teachers’ insecurities with subject matter might result in a core reluctance to teach or utilize materials (Green, 1997; Kagan, 1992). Beliefs, including those about self-efficacy, may make those other obstacles of time, resources, and materials appear even more problematic and make the likelihood of inclusion of music composition in the classroom more remote. Thus, in-depth investigation addressing
questions regarding teachers’ beliefs about their own efficacy and the role it may play in pedagogical decision-making can be valuable.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine music teachers’ beliefs about composition as well as how and to what extent these music teachers’ beliefs are revealed in pedagogical decisions pertaining to composition in the classroom. This work will investigate music teachers’ core beliefs about the teaching of music composition, how those core beliefs were formed, and how they have influenced teachers’ perceptions regarding composition and its use in the classroom.

**Research Questions**

1. How do music teachers define composition?
2. What do music teachers believe about composition?
3. What prior experiences, including educational, social, and cultural, underlie teachers’ beliefs about composition?
4. How do music teachers present composition in the music classroom?
5. How are music teachers’ beliefs about music education related to their beliefs about composition and how are those beliefs expressed in compositional activities in the classroom?
6. What relationship may exist between teachers’ beliefs about composition and their feelings of success or frustration in teaching composition?
7. How do teachers’ beliefs about composition relate to their core world view beliefs?
8. What part do historical influences related to politics and gender play in teachers’ beliefs about composition and its role in the classroom?

9. What role does efficacy play in teachers’ perceptions of their ability to teach composition, their beliefs about composition, pedagogical decision-making, and perceptions of success or frustration in the teaching of composition?

**Rationale**

This study is about music teachers – their attitudes about and experiences with the teaching of music composition. This study is also about music teachers’ reported successes and frustrations in teaching composition including issues of composition instructional methods, materials, and beliefs. This research is grounded in the view that composition is a creative act with the potential to empower those who undertake it. Such an act has significant implications for music learning.

With the potential to engage and empower students as they develop creative and higher-order thinking skills, composition can inject music programs with new energy (See, for example, Blom, 2003; Hogg, 1994; Kaschub, 1997). This, however, has not always been an obvious vision for composition. Music teachers’ experiences form the foundation for their beliefs, which in turn inform their perspectives of education and composition. How many of these beliefs have been informed through the historical and political perceptions of composition? Some possible influences may be gleaned from the history of composition in music education and the historical foundations of music education.

While this study did not specifically take a feminist or critical viewpoint, issues of
power and influence cannot be ignored. Koza (1991) explained the historical perspective of composition within traditional European art music where “Composition was considered a rational act” (p.121) and was therefore perceived as more suitable for men. Advanced music students were traditionally those who studied music composition. However, it has been the general practice to teach students the gender-imbued associations of sonata form along with the accompanying terminology with strong implications of strength and weakness. For example, principal themes are referred to as masculine and traditionally possess “active and assertive” (McClary, 1994, p. 367) qualities that determine the key. Other musical themes encountered along the way are referred to as feminine and tend to be more “passive and lyrical.” (McClary, 1994, p. 367). Understanding if or how these themes have affected teachers’ perceptions of composition or the self-efficacy or perceptions of success may have implications for those who teach music.

Music education has a history of being a political tool in the enculturation of the population. Music education in the United States served a significant role in the goal of raising up the immigrant masses and promoting the ‘melting pot’ perspective. While classroom teachers were frequently charged with teaching music, Mark (2002), in exploring the history of music education in the United States remarked that “Until the 1960’s, music teachers attempted to ‘teach up’ to what was considered a “cultured” level (p. 222). Western classical music was viewed as the best music and teachers thought it proper to encourage students to aspire to it” (p. 222). The challenges of repertoire grounded in such theoretical complexity were met through performance for those capable
enough, and through music appreciation and listening for others. By the 1960’s, 70’s, and 80’s the “social movements, legislation, and court decisions” (p. 223) encouraged a broader vision for the inclusion of other perspectives in music education. While music teacher education programs began to see some broadening of musical styles, heritage, and approaches, music programs on the whole retained their Euro-centric perspectives. To what extent do teachers’ beliefs still retain some element of this ‘teaching up’ perspective? And how do these Euro-centric perspectives influence music teachers’ pedagogical decision-making in compositional activities, including the assessment of students’ compositional works?

On the other hand, the musical styles and compositional techniques of the 20th century created waves of controversy that also had significant implications for music education. The robust discussion around conceptions and definitions of music, and by association composition, took a variety of twists and turns during the twentieth century. Ross (2007) described the destruction of tonal center by Schoenberg through the development of serialism, the driving ‘primitivism’ of Stravinsky, and the anarchy of sound exhibited by John Cage, and the confusion it brought to many in the world of music. While such approaches could not shake the stronghold of the European canon in universities, they promoted discussions that questioned the nature and role of music. As a result, jazz ensembles, gamelan, a’capella groups, and new music ensembles gradually appeared on college campuses, and multi-cultural music became the buzz-word of many school music programs. Along with these non-Western European traditions were varied beliefs about the nature of music and composition. Consequently, questions arise as to
how and to what extent these other types of music have influenced teacher beliefs about composition.

Dewey warned against envisioning literature, which is interpreted here as the literature of the musical canon, as possessing inherent worth simply because it is called literature (Westerlund, 2008). Väkevä (2003) agreed and suggested that the focus for musical material needed to be more present and that “the most popular as well as the most obscure should be considered on equal terms” (p. 150). Contrary to the vision of aesthetic education bound to the canon of “dead white men” (Nelson, 1998, p. 1), the aesthetic contributions and quality of listening during the compositional process is ‘in the present’, acknowledging the student and the world in which he or she lives. Dewey described this type of aesthetic experience as taking place “through the ears of a whole tradition, practice, and culture” (Westerlund, 2003, p. 9). Composition is about the “here-and-now” (Westerlund, 2003, p. 9), learning from the past and other traditions and re-contextualizing it in the present.

Allsup (2006), in writing about the evolutionary concepts of pragmatism in relation to Darwin also encouraged music education to go “beyond cultivation and preservation, beyond testing and standards, to venture into “the woods.” It is in the woods—outside our conservatories, our market-driven experiments, and tests of fundamental competencies—that diversity and creativity of a different kind flourish, without the help of curators, fanciers, or professors” (p. 11). Composition can be that path that leads into the woods. Such creativity grows from diversity rather than commonality and inclusiveness of such “diversity of taste, habit, and structure strengthen our genetic
Composition nurtures just such creativity and diversity, and encourages music educators to move past the ‘literature’ by encouraging students to imagine and create a musical path forward.

Composition also has the potential to reconcile ‘school music’ and real world music, as well as aesthetic and paraxial perspectives. The world outside the classroom cannot be cordoned off from the world inside the classroom. They possess a symbiotic relationship that is both useful and important to acknowledge. When students compose they bring their world, their perspectives, and their beliefs to their work, which in turn empowers them. Likewise, teachers bring their world into the class through their pedagogical decisions, which are imbued with their beliefs. Such overlap between the classroom and the political and social world creates an opportunity for a Critical Pedagogical perspective where students can examine and express political, social, and cultural power struggles. The act of composing also integrates praxial and aesthetic approaches. The act of composing, rather than being tightly bound to the re-creation perspective of performance, is an authentic approach to praxis. It also brings an intensified definition to the act of listening. Far from the “passive” listener (Barrett, 2002, p. 73) of aesthetic education or the “disinterested” listening (p. 33) described by Elliott (1995), the listening involved in composition requires deep engagement. Such engagement is possible when students are invested in the work of composition (Bosch, 2008).

This research expanded upon other literature that examined music teachers’ beliefs about efficacy, and creativity and singing within the curriculum, and fills voids
that currently exist. Bartle and Cameron (2002) examined teachers’ efficacy beliefs and concluded that the amount of training a teacher had did not relate to confidence saying "those expressing lack of confidence had as much, and in some cases more musical preparation as those expressing confidence" (p. 2). Socially constructed beliefs regarding “confidence and competence” (p. 1) which under-pin pedagogical choices can be especially powerful when teachers are forced "outside their 'comfort zone'. Dongani (2004) cited creative activities and composition as a creative activity, as being outside that comfort zone. Dongani’s work concluded that teachers' pedagogical decisions are founded in their perceptions or beliefs about their circumstances. She explained that educational institutions thrive on discursive environments that are antithetical to the inclusion of creativity. Since many teachers are reared in this environment they believe that creativity and inspiration are un-teachable. This thought process, according to Dogani, has led to apathy surrounding the inclusion of creative activities such as composition. Could this belief about creativity or teachers feeling out of their comfort zone be contributing factors in music composition's exclusion? Similar to the study proposed here is research conducted by Scott (2010), which examined Orff teachers’ beliefs about singing. While noting variations in how often and within what context singing was incorporated, strong family and collegial experiences were found to be important in forming the foundation for teachers’ beliefs about the importance and role of singing in their classrooms. She also found that efficacy beliefs, in this case those related to singing ability, could be successfully overcome when incorporated into larger philosophical beliefs about the importance of singing. How then might larger
Philosophical beliefs be contributing to teachers’ perceptions of success or frustration in relation to composition?

Research indicated that composition can make valuable contributions to students’ music education (Hogg, 1994). Since teachers’ beliefs have significant impact on their pedagogical choices, and since research also stated that many teachers are having difficulty including composition, it is important to explore those beliefs that impact teachers’ perceptions of composition (Dogani, 2004). Exploring the origins of those beliefs may help develop understanding of how music teachers have been influenced and why they make particular pedagogical decisions. This could contribute to the creation of more effective and inclusive instruction. Additionally, greater understanding of how teachers may be influencing their students’ perceptions and beliefs about composition may be achieved.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine music teachers’ beliefs about composition as well as how and to what extent they were manifest in pedagogical decisions pertaining to composition in the classroom. The complex of experiences and interpretations that work together to form beliefs probably cannot be discovered or understood through a questionnaire or any single process. Research into beliefs constitutes a very personal journey that requires time and opportunity to reflect in a variety of ways in order to uncover deeper beliefs, feelings, and motivations. It requires a “participatory worldview” (Heron & Reason, 1997) where “emphasis on integration of action with knowing is more satisfying” (14). This qualitative study utilized elements of
case study, life history approaches, and narrative inquiry; approaches that acknowledge
the complex nature of individual experience. Merriam (1998) described this type of study
as being “interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation” (p.
11) and noted that such studies “seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a
process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p. 11). Brunner
(2002) explained the complexity and need to understand life stories saying “What we
know intuitively about stories is enough to get us through the familiar routines, but it
serves us much less well when we try to understand or explain what we are doing or try
to get it under deliberate control.” As a qualitative research project, this study’s goal was
to render a deep, rich picture of the life experiences of four teachers, searching for ‘why’
teachers come to believe what they do about composition and ‘how’ those beliefs may
emerge in their classroom composition activities, teaching approach, perceptions of the
usefulness of composition, and success.

This study looked closely at four participants in an effort to understand the
“situation and meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Phenomenology, as
defined by Creswell (2007), aims to reduce individual experience within a phenomenon
to a description of universal essence through the perceptions of a large number of
participants (p. 63). This study does not claim to search for universal consistencies and
large numbers of participants would not allow for the depth of investigation required to
answer the questions posed in this work. While this study’s inductive process is similar to
that of grounded theory, it will not produce “substantive” theories and the accompanying
“categories, properties, and hypotheses” (Merriam, 1998, p. 18). Rather, purposive
criterion sampling set the parameters for locating participants who fit the following requirements of the study; 1) completed a music education degree program in the United States 2) currently teaching a general music class in a middle school 3) certified in the state in which they work 4) open to critically examining their beliefs and biography 5) able to dedicate the time to complete the tasks.

Utilizing concept sampling and variation sampling, four information-rich teachers were identified. Teacher participants were located through “reputational sampling” where recommendations were sought through references of those with knowledge. Studying four teachers allowed for sufficient depth while allowing for maximum variation in perspectives (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (1998) stated that even small samples intentionally selected for variation can produce significant findings.

Because beliefs “must be inferred as best one can… from all the things the believer says or does” (Rokeach, 1968, p. 2.) data collection and analysis were challenging. Data collection included teachers participating in reflective writings that included biography, observation of composition in the classroom, and an interviews. Since validity, or trustworthiness, in qualitative research strives for plausibility (Merriam, 1998), this study included rigorous methods for assuring accurate depictions of intended meaning through triangulation, member checks, and the direct accounts and conclusions of each teacher.

**Delimitations**

This study focused on the personal experiences and perspectives of four music teachers in the United States, and no claim was made that these teachers are
representative of all music teachers. The views expressed by teachers in this study may not necessarily be generalized to other populations in other locations but rather exemplify situations, characteristics, and perspectives for further consideration. This study relies on previous research for evidence of the usefulness of composition in the classroom and does not attempt to prove the effectiveness of any approach. Uncovering beliefs has many challenges. Beliefs are very personal and can, at times, be so deeply rooted that they will be retained even when confronted with direct evidence that contradicts them. And while teachers will only reveal what they want to reveal, it is important to be aware that not all beliefs are knowable or expressible.

**Importance of study**

Previous research concerning music teachers’ beliefs has often focused on pre-service teachers, considering their beliefs about themselves, classroom management, what constitutes “good” or effective teaching, beliefs about and the usefulness of reflecting on beliefs for pre-service teachers talent (Brand, 1982; Butler, 2001; Dogani, 2008; Jones & Parkes, 2010; Jones & Parkes, 2010; Schmidt, 1998). Other research considers how the examination of beliefs can support professional development and support change and the improvement of practice, the role of beliefs in association to self-efficacy and beliefs surrounding the ability or lack of ability in singing talent (Abril, 2007; Brand, 1982; Butler, 2001; Bartel & Cameron, 2002 Dogani, 2008; Jones & Parkes, 2010; Jones & Parkes, 2010; Schmidt, 1998). The only study found related to music teachers’ beliefs surrounding composition was Dogani’s (2004) research, which was conducted in a primary classroom in England.
In contrast, I have chosen to focus on the beliefs of teachers at the middle school level because the majority of the previous research pertaining to teachers’ beliefs bypasses middle school, and instead examined pre-service teachers, elementary teachers, and the beliefs of high school math, English, and science teachers (Baron, 2010; Grauer, 1998; Raymond, 1997; Renzi, 2005; Yerrick and Hoving, 1999). While elementary music programs often associate strongly with specific methods such as Orff and Kodaly, middle school is less likely to have these strong methodological ties (Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 2009; Duling, 1992; Gerber, 1992 Lindeman, 2011; Shehan, 1986;). With fewer methodological ties and a “lack of uniformity in practices” (Duling, 1992, p. 3), a “search for captivating materials never ends” (Gerber, 1992, p. 37). These factors may lead middle school teachers to devise instruction in ways that utilize a more intuitive perspective derived from core beliefs. As such, insights from this work may be particularly beneficial to this group of teachers. This study of the influences that contribute to teachers’ beliefs and their relationship to their classroom practice explored why various pedagogical decisions about composition are made, why teachers’ perceptions vary, and why some teachers view composition as being difficult to present while others do not. Beyond that, it may also shed light as to what forces are at play in nurturing teachers’ beliefs.

An investigation into the origins of the core beliefs that are foundational to beliefs about composition may offer insight as to how personal interpretations grounded in personal realities may skew experiences and uncover perceived messages from families, society and culture. Insight into the beliefs that develop in response to interpretations of
experiences in K-12 education programs and university music teacher programs may bring teachers new insights that will encourage them to reconsider the type or breadth of music presented and the terms in which they speak about music and composition. This study may also underscore conflicting musical messages that students typically encounter between school music programs and outside music and may assist the profession in reconciling such chasms. In gaining insight into how teachers’ beliefs influence their pedagogical decisions about composition, music educators, from pre-school through college may understand and take into account such interpretations and the ramifications of such messages, intended or not, when making their own pedagogical decisions. Kagan (1992) offered a succinct and powerful case regarding the importance of studying teachers’ beliefs saying:

The more one reads studies of teacher beliefs, the more strongly one suspects that this piebald form of personal knowledge lies at the very heart of teaching. Teacher belief appears to arise out of the exigencies inherent in classroom teaching, it may be the clearest measure of a teacher’s professional growth, and it appears to be instrumental in determining the quality of interaction one finds among the teachers in a given school. As we learn more about the forms and functions of teacher belief, we are likely to come a great deal closer to understanding how good teachers are made (p. 85)
Chapter II

Review of Literature

Music Teachers’ Beliefs

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers’ beliefs about composition in the classroom, including the origins of those beliefs and their relationship to core beliefs, and how those beliefs may be reflected in pedagogical decision-making. In this chapter, the nature of beliefs is explored in order to understand, frame, and organize this proposed study. With this understanding, an examination of music teachers’ beliefs about teaching in general reveals the complex interwoven nature of their beliefs about themselves, their efficacy, creativity, and the role of listening. Additionally, the literature concerning teachers’ beliefs is presented.

**Beliefs.** Beliefs are typically referred to by a variety of names such as perspectives, theories, perceptions, conceptions, and practical or personal knowledge. The nature of a belief is one of fine lines, blurred boundaries, and perceptions in relation to knowledge, experience, and culture. Beliefs can exist and emerge in a variety of ways. For instance, they can be conscious, subconscious, or tacit. Just as experiences impact people to different extents, beliefs also come in a variety of modes and intensities. Some beliefs relate to specific environments and do not transfer to other situations (Baron, 2010) and may not only be context-specific, but content specific, varying from subject to subject (Kagan, 1992). For example, beliefs about how a math class should be conducted may be very different from beliefs concerning how a music class should be conducted. The illusive boundaries between beliefs and knowledge are explained by Nespor (1987). In
examining beliefs through an epistemological perspective, he differentiates “knowing,” from “knowledge” explaining that “knowing” incorporates a point of view while “knowledge” is factual or cognitive. This situates “knowing” as the hinge pin between “knowledge” and beliefs. Pajares (1992) notes that it is this merging of knowing and believing that forms the basis for human construction of reality.

This study will use Rokeach’s (1968) definition of belief: “any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does” with the belief that “All beliefs are predispositions to action” (p. 113). But beliefs can be far more elusive than this definition suggests. The process of identifying beliefs requires investigation of their origins, reaching back into their social and cultural birthplace. Beliefs are social and cultural constructs that are embedded and revealed within enculturation, as well as formal and informal education (Pajares, 1992). Dewey (1938) described beliefs as reflections of cultural and social experience that are the result of chains of events that impact the future: the situational influences. In other words, experiences arise from the relationship between a situation and the individual’s past. Experience and culture are related in that experiences are rooted in culture and are then reflected back in experience resulting in integral links that join beliefs, experience, and culture. It is this chain of events that this study will use as a conceptual framework in examining teachers’ beliefs about composition and how they were formed.

Nespor (1987) concluded that beliefs formed early in life are more resistant to change, even when confronted by firm evidence to the contrary. Such central beliefs become the nucleus around which other beliefs must find a compatible relationship.
Similarly, Rokeach (1968) defined central beliefs in terms of how they bind to other beliefs. A belief is likely to be more central if it has bearing on individual identity or is held in common with others. Those beliefs that are learned from first-hand experience tend to be more directly connected to the self and tend to form more central beliefs than those that are acquired from others. On the periphery are those beliefs that associate more with personal taste and preference.

Belief systems. It is the relationship between beliefs that creates systems of belief. Thagard (2000) explained that “A belief is justified not because it is indubitable or is derived from some other indubitable belief, but because it coheres with other beliefs that jointly support each other” (p. 4). The relationship between beliefs has been described by authors utilizing various terminology meant to express a hierarchy of beliefs. Such terms include core, central or foundational. Beliefs labeled in this way are thought to be stronger beliefs, more deeply held. These beliefs inform secondary beliefs or derivative beliefs, creating systems that support and reinforce one another. Beliefs can also form clusters that account for their ability to vary depending on context (Leatham, 2006). Such clustering accounts for phenomena such as why a science teacher may believe that his class should require homework while a music class should not. Leatham explained that individual beliefs must be integrated so as to make sense alongside one another. Therefore, weaker beliefs, those beliefs that emerge from primary beliefs, must adapt to stronger beliefs. Leatham’s (2006) “sensible beliefs system” (p. 5) argued that beliefs are always related and sensible to the person who holds them, though outsiders may not always perceive them as consistent or sensible. Thagard (2000) used the metaphor of a
raft in describing how beliefs support and buoy up others around them. Such coalescence of beliefs forms larger systems of belief. From this perspective, it is then not enough to name teachers’ beliefs about composition. Rather, it ultimately is the relationships between beliefs and how beliefs align that may offer deeper understanding regarding teachers’ beliefs about composition and the pedagogical shape they take.

Nespor (1987) differentiated between belief systems and knowledge systems stating that belief systems are personal and not subject to approval from groups. Belief systems, unlike knowledge systems, were found to be less open to reason or change; qualities Kagan (1992) found to be consistent across the literature. Teachers’ knowledge systems may be similar, having developed through the formal education of the University system. Yet their beliefs about composition vary. This then raises the questions as to why beliefs regarding composition might be different when the knowledge systems appear to be similar.

**Relationship between teaching and beliefs.** Generally, the literature suggests that there are strong ties between teachers’ beliefs and their pedagogical decisions (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992; Renzi, 2005). Kagan (1992) argued that knowledge is no more than a confirm belief and therefore “most of a teacher’s professional knowledge can be regarded more accurately as belief” (p. 73). Pajares (1992) pointed out that beliefs “influence knowledge acquisition and interpretation, task definition and selection, interpretation of course content, and comprehension monitoring” (p. 328) which has implications for pre-service teachers as well as in-service teachers as part of a community of continuing learners. Despite these links, some research points out inconsistencies
between beliefs and instructional practices (Kagan, 1992; Khader, 2012; Pajares, 1992; Renzi, 2005). Pajare's (1992) citation of Munby’s (1992) review of literature, while also confirming these same strong ties, goes on to explain that there is a body of research that found teachers’ beliefs were not embedded in their pedagogy. Munby attributed such findings to two issues. First, he believed that the research design in these studies was flawed and second, inconsistencies between beliefs and instructional practices were the result of external pressures such as those from school administration, curricular demands, and standardization that may be antithetical to a teacher’s core beliefs.

Khader (2012) also noted that teachers in his study were less likely to reflect their beliefs in their teaching when class sizes were large or teaching loads were heavy, thus, leading to his conclusion that teachers’ may abandon their beliefs when external pressures are exerted. Another interpretation is possible, though. Pajares’ (1992) synthesis of research on beliefs culminated in a set of 16 points. While each of these points holds valuable information for considering the nature of beliefs and the role these beliefs play in teachers’ definition and use of composition in the classroom, number eight holds particular implications stating that beliefs related to education are considered substructures that require understanding in relation to more central beliefs. For example, if a teacher believes that the development of logical discursive thought processes are critical life skills, she may choose to construct curriculum that educates and illuminates this linear logic. If another teacher believes that learning to be inventive or creative is important in order to adapt to life changes, he may embed his teaching in experiences that promote divergent thinking, situations that include levels of ambiguity, have many
variables, and a range of possible answers.

There is also a body of research, such as Khader’s (2012) study, that concluded that teachers’ beliefs may not necessarily be closely tied to their teaching. Khader failed to consider teaching beliefs are secondary or substructures of other more central beliefs. Also, had Khader taken Leatham’s (2006) “sensible belief system” into consideration and presumed, as did Rokeach (1968), that beliefs are precursors to all actions and that teachers’ actions, as sensible beliefs, and were reflections of their beliefs, he may have gained some different insights. Teachers may have been yielding one set of beliefs in favor of other more core, or primary beliefs. So while Khader and Munby may have perceived teachers as relinquishing their beliefs when external pressures arose, alternate explanations may be possible.

It seems apparent that teachers have to balance their beliefs with their pedagogical decisions and the realities and expectation imposed by the social powers and political institutions in which they need to function. For instance, suppose a middle school principal decides that he wants the entire school to focus on the history of the last half of the 20th century for half the year. The music teacher, however, believes that most music after 1950 has less value than music of previous generations and she complains about the mandate. While there are many options for fulfilling the principal’s expectation, in the end the teacher decides to abide by the mandate. A variety of beliefs may have interceded between the initial statement of belief and the ultimate decision to fulfill the principal’s request. The teacher may believe that it is preferable that the students experience music of the late 20th century rather than none at all. Other beliefs, such as the importance of
retaining her job and preventing financial hardships on her family may supersede beliefs about priorities within the music classroom.

There is still another option for how external stresses between the environment and beliefs can play out. Bruhn (2005) presents a powerful portrayal of an English teacher whose beliefs are so strong and so at odds with that of the school and district in which she works that she physically, emotionally, and professionally alienated herself from the rest of the school, relying on her personal and efficacy beliefs for her pedagogical choices. While a resourceful and highly principled teacher, the ramifications for such estrangement can result in a teacher with deep wounds that prevent her professional growth, prevents her from contributing to the greater school community, and ultimately limits what she can offer the students in her classroom. Glimpses of music educators' situations can be seen in this portrayal since music teachers are also often isolated physically, culturally, and professionally. They may find themselves relegated to an area in buildings away from the other traditional classes and colleagues, and have limited opportunities to connect with other music teachers.

Pajares (1992) concluded that teachers’ pedagogical beliefs are the strongest predictor of teacher behavior. As complex filters for perceptions of the world, the untangling of how beliefs function in teachers’ pedagogical approaches can be complicated by external stressor as previously described, and internal stressors related to perceptions of efficacy and parameters for defining teachers’ comfort zone (Bartel & Cameron, 2002; Khader, 2012). A secondary or derivative belief may fall by the wayside under the pressure of internal or external stressors and give way to core beliefs. To
discover teachers’ core beliefs about composition and its pedagogical function, research must separate the knowledge system from the belief system and tease out the hierarchy of beliefs.

**Music teachers’ beliefs.** Research concerning music teachers’ beliefs is extremely varied in its focus, population, and perspective. It ranges from studies concerning beliefs about singing in the United States to beliefs about Orff instruction in Australia. It can include examinations of how beliefs compare among different groups to focusing on pre-service teachers’ perceptions of what constitutes effective teaching. Some research, such as Brand’s (1982) study of music student teachers’ beliefs about classroom management, focused on measuring changes in beliefs. In contrast, Snyder’s (1996) study about music teachers’ beliefs about classroom management examined how and why pre-service music teachers adopted certain classroom management styles and the beliefs that underpinned their choices. While both studies examine beliefs held by pre-service music teachers about classroom management, their focus and goals were very different. Such diversity of perspective and focus can create challenges in identify groups of studies whose visions contain a common thread.

Since beliefs are inter-related, it is also difficult to isolate music teachers’ beliefs about specific areas, such as, for example, singing. Embedded in beliefs about singing are beliefs about many things, such as pedagogy and self-efficacy. The music teachers in Scott’s (2010) study were so committed to the Orff principles that they strove to find ways around their beliefs concerning their perceived lack of vocal ability. Believing they were not good singers, these teachers were motivated by beliefs that were more central to
their identity than was their voice. These beliefs were the foundation for perceptions of
good teaching and effective education. As college students these teachers were drawn to
various aspects of the Orff method such as freedom and creativity, along with the
opportunity for students’ active participation in making music. Though these music
teachers had similar procedural knowledge and methodological grounding, their
motivations for using the method were frequently very different. Common belief
surrounded by differing beliefs is a reoccurring theme in the literature.

Beliefs related to singing ability and efficacy can emerge as subsets of more
central beliefs; in this instance, the larger philosophical stance embedded in the Orff
approach. These music teachers embraced Orff because of its relationship to their core
beliefs that classrooms should be flexible settings that encourage active musical
participation by students. An excellent example of Leatham’s (2006) *Sensible Beliefs
System*, the music teachers in Scott’s (2010) study used their voices even though they
doubted their singing ability. In other instances, it is possible that music teachers less
committed to the philosophical and educational principles of the Orff method might have
found ways to circumvent having to sing. But the fact that these teachers persisted in
finding ways to include singing says volumes about their beliefs and the relationships
between their beliefs. The teachers’ use of their voices did not nullify their belief that
they were not good singers. Their beliefs about their singing ability simply succumbed to
a different belief; one that spoke to a higher imperative. Beliefs that are more central are
shown here to have the ability to mitigate issues related to vocal identity and efficacy. It
may then be possible that teachers who find success incorporating composition into the
classroom find barriers to its inclusion less problematic because they are motivated by larger philosophical and educational beliefs.

The teachers’ beliefs in Scott’s (2010) study were able to accommodate their self-efficacy beliefs regarding singing. Beliefs pertaining to identity and music teacher efficacy make up a strong thread within the body of research about beliefs. Bartel & Cameron (2002) utilized mix methods to measure and compare self-efficacy in Canadian music teachers. They specifically examined the relationship between self-confidence and its relation to verbal encouragement from family and teachers, stressful music experiences, and perception of talent. Early influences and stresses can lay the foundation for beliefs about capabilities that could be self-fulfilling. This suggests the possibility that a student with early stressful experiences with standard notation and theory, still feeling inadequate, may be reluctant in their subsequent role as music teacher, to present composition. Bartel & Cameron’s research found that students with more music training frequently reporting lower self-efficacy. It is possible then, that more training and more methods for teachers to use in teaching composition may not be the entire answer to teachers’ difficulties incorporating composition. It should be noted that Bartel & Cameron’s study was rooted entirely in a survey of self-perceptions and actual competence was never measure or observed.

Utilizing questionnaires, a study by Jones & Parks (2010) also investigated beliefs about self-identity of 143 students to find out why students chose to pursue music education rather than performance degrees. Students’ beliefs about their identities were typically grounded in early positive music experiences. While these students noted that
they enjoyed music and believed teaching music was useful, the strongest reason expressed by students for studying music education was that it had become part of their identity. The next most significant reason was that they believed they could “help students by acting as a role model” (p. 41), feelings that were frequently rooted in the desire to become like a former teacher. Such findings hold significance for the influence music teachers may have as role models in children’s creation of identity as well as the propagation of beliefs that may or may not be contradictory to best practices or conflict with music education methods classes.

The contribution role models play in handing down teaching styles and approaches brings to the forefront the difficulties that college music teacher education programs can face when striving to bring change to the classroom. If in-service teachers pass along beliefs that foster perspectives antithetical to beliefs foundational to current practices, pre-service teachers may struggle to align those beliefs. In relation to composition, if an admired teacher passed along the belief that a firm grounding in traditional notation should be the foundation of all music education, a pre-service teacher may encounter difficulty adapting that practice to students who have little interest in music or to a general music class. Problems may also arise if that pre-service teacher tries to inappropriately adapt those beliefs to very young children.

Both Jones & Parks’s (2010) and Baretl & Cameron’s (2002) have contributions to make to the conversation regarding teachers’ beliefs about their role within a classroom and the ramifications that role has on classroom structure, the relationship between students and the teacher, and whether those beliefs can support the kind of
environment necessary for composition to occur. Specifically, if teachers have
constructed beliefs that define their role as one of handing down knowledge to students
rather than encouraging students be more active in acquiring knowledge, they may use a
very structured approach to composition. Those same teachers may find that the
structured approach works well with one class but not with another. If a teacher is
committed to a belief about a particular teacher role and what students should know and
do, it may prevent the teacher from altering the structure of the activity to accommodate
students’ needs. Such beliefs may lead to assumptions that students who experience
difficulty composing within that teacher’s specific approach to composition are simply
incapable of the demands associated with composition. Rather than utilizing a different
approach, the teacher may just discontinue its use with classes who are unable to adapt to
her approach.

While agreement is fairly easy to come by when identifying good teaching, it is
often difficult to achieve consensus as to what specifically makes it good (Mills & Smith,
2003; Schmidt, 1998). This ultimately makes defining good and bad teaching difficult.
Here again, agreement about larger core beliefs more readily find consensus while the
details surrounding those central belief frequently reveal much broader beliefs. In Mills
and Smith’s (2004) study, teachers in high schools and higher education in the United
Kingdom agreed that first and foremost, a good instrumental teacher must be an excellent
performer. Beyond this core belief there was great variation as to what contributed to
good instrumental teaching.

Beliefs about identity infiltrate other beliefs and are visible in questions regarding
what constitutes good teaching. Schmidt (1998) studied four student teachers’ beliefs about what makes good instrumental teaching. Their beliefs were very personalized and varied considerably. Each case presented a student who came to music education through very different life and musical experiences that became part of their filter for envisioning themselves as music teachers. Schmidt considered students’ family and musical histories and followed their progress as they struggled with how to align their beliefs about their identity, including efficacy related to their perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses, with their vision of what it meant to be a good music teacher. The expectations and pressures exerted by families, not just musically, but those especially related to efficacy are examples of those early experiences that become core beliefs that can be difficult to change. This research also considered the influences along the life paths of three teachers, the beliefs that developed, and how their beliefs brought them to their current usage of music composition in the classroom.

Schmidt’s (1998) interesting insight into the struggles between identity and career choice and development also raises questions about what happens when teachers’ beliefs about good teaching and identity are at odds. To take that line of thought further, questions arise as to what happens when a teacher’s belief about identity fails to respond to student needs. If a teacher knows, intellectually, that composition has many benefits for students, yet they also believe that composition requires a lot of theory, that theory is boring, theory is not one of their strengths, composition takes a lot of class time, and that it is too demanding for students, what beliefs will ultimately prevail and what learning will take place as a result?
Unlike the struggling pre-service teachers in Schmidt’s study, Duling (1992) examined the beliefs of two exemplary music teachers, exploring their personal and professional development of content and pedagogical knowledge in light of Clandinin’s definition of beliefs as “personal practical knowledge”. One teacher, identified as being rooted in a “social perspective,” focused on using music as a tool to teach students to learn to get along. The second exemplary teacher focused on creating a “positive experience with music”. Duling (1992) found these core perspectives to be rooted in each teacher’s history of family, mentors, role models, and ‘reinforcer mentors”. While the beliefs of those in both Schmidt’s (1998) and Duling’s (1992) studies sprang from the communities from which they emerged, the pre-service teachers in Schmidt’s (1998) study were preoccupied with uncertainty concerning their developing identity and how to merge it with a new profession, while Duling’s (1992) exemplary teachers’ success sprang from stability of identity grounded in large-scope universal beliefs. Might stability of beliefs have a role to play in perceived success in presenting music composition in the classroom?

Notable in Duling’s exemplary teachers is that while they all had similar educational experiences, their approaches differed because their perspectives were grounded in beliefs established through personal experiences. The origins of those beliefs were not explored by Duling. If music teachers have similar experiences of composition at the college level, factors related to their families and the cultural norms in which they were grounded could then be a significant factor in influencing perceptions of composition and its use in the classroom, out weighing the educational influences. For
example, a teacher who grows up embedded in jazz, or music rooted in improvisatory or oral traditions may be committed to beliefs about composition that supersede those of structured notational traditions taught in college.

Composition is frequently considered a creative activity and teachers’ beliefs about creativity, what it is, who is or can be creative, and whether it is a trait that can cultivated vary and have bearing on both educational process and outcomes. Odena & Welch’s (2009) study found that six music teachers from the United Kingdom who taught students between the ages of 11 and 14 believed that creativity was a quality all children possessed. The study looked for qualities within categories that were identified by teachers as supporting or indicating creativity. The categories for those qualities were organized by themes regarding the pupil, the environment, the process, and the product, utilizing composition as the mode. Teachers believed creativity is nurtured when students cultivate personal traits such has being adaptive and innovative, and that home-life can make important contributions to creativity. Also envisioned as important to creativity were the emotional environment, school culture, teaching methods, classroom setting, time, physical environment, and the teachers’ attitude and approach. Varied activities, group work, improvisation and composition, and the inclusion of structured and unstructured processes also were believed to be important in supporting creativity. The final category noted the role of assessment in which the balance of originality, musical style, and conventional practice played important roles. While teachers agreed that these components were important in supporting creativity, beliefs were again seen to vary when identifying specifics and little consensus among beliefs could be found related to
specifics such as what type of home life supported creativity, or how to structure assessments.

Unlike the Odena & Welch (2009) study where teachers assumed all students had the ability to be creative, the teachers in the Greek study by Zabaino’s (2012) believed that creativity was an innate characteristic that not all students possessed and to which education could add little. While 30.8% of the teachers in Zabainos’s study felt that teaching played only a minor role in nurturing creativity, 4.4% saw teaching as playing no role. Beliefs about student efficacy concerning their ability to be or learn to be creative has significant ramifications for curriculum development and approaches for presenting composition. If education has little role in the development of creativity, curriculum might take on a very different perspective. After all, why spend class time on creative activities if they are believed to have little or no benefit? If composition is viewed as a creative process and the teacher perceived such experiences as having little impact on fostering creativity, the teacher might then be less likely to offer such opportunities.

Webster (1979) was also interested in examining the links between creativity, musical aptitude and musical achievement. In a study that included quantitative and qualitative methods. Torrance Tests (1974), the Colwell Music Achievement Tests (1970), and the Gordon Musical Attitude Profile (1965) were administered to 77 high school students and data were also collected through questionnaires and the review of academic records. Compositional and improvisational tasks were also used to evaluate musical creativity. Webster found that musical achievement was the best single predictor of creative thinking ability in these students and that there was no relationship between
music aptitude and measures of creative thinking in music. It should be noted though that
two of the compositional tasks were taken home to complete so what was measured was a
product instead of the process. It also leaves in question issues related to any
collaboration, influence, or participation by others. Alternately, breaking the yolk of
musical aptitude and creative music thinking could help teachers rethink their beliefs
about who has the capability to participate in composition in a creative manner, opening
the door to meaningful music experiences to many more students. Webster (1990)
suggested that “in the final analysis, we are limited only by our own creative thinking as
teachers” (p.28).

The limited use of creative activities in school music education in the United
States has been highlighted in research such as that conducted by Orman (2002). Using
timed observations rather than self-report, Orman found that 0 to 3.51% of class time was
spent on composition and arranging activities in grades 1 – 6 with the average being
1.03% with a standard deviation of 7.48%. Orman further explained that while the
National Standards for music related to singing, playing instruments, reading and
notating occupied the greatest portion of class time, a closer examination of the time
allocation revealed something that could be more consequential. Of all the standards, the
lowest proportion of class time was spent on those standards that required creative or
artistic skills. In fact, every standard requiring creative skills was ranked among those
with the lowest proportion of class time (162). While not included in the scope of
Orman’s study, it raises questions as to how teachers’ beliefs about teaching,
composition, and creativity, are contributing to their classroom pedagogy.
Student assessment has taken a central role in schools in the United States over the past two decades. Consequently, some music teachers may be discouraged from utilizing a creative perspective of composition if they believe that assessment cannot be performed effectively. This leaves composition grounded in activities that eliminate ambiguity, with a focus on specific criteria and outcomes, and right and wrong answers. The 112 primary and secondary general music teachers in Zabainos’ (2012) study offered very mixed perceptions regarding creativity and its assessment. The most often cited example of creativity was rhythmic improvisation at 40%, while 15% responded that instrument construction was a good example of creativity. What these teachers perceived as creative tasks appears to be rooted in very different beliefs. Teachers ranked their feelings of efficacy related to teaching and assessment of music creativity as high, yet rooted their assessment criteria in non-music criteria. This included criteria such as eagerness, participation, originality, co-operation, and effort. In addition, 31.2% could not describe any criteria for assessing creativity. The study also found that creative lessons were more frequently found in elementary grades and tended to be replaced in secondary grades with theory and history. The conclusion drawn in this study presents a picture that appears confused. Why are teachers presenting creative tasks if they believe they have little impact on students? Do they include creative tasks because the school administration believes creative tasks are important? How does their definition of musical creative align with the constructing of an instrument? These teachers believed they possessed substantial skills in assessing creative music tasks and yet they utilizing assessment criteria that have little bearing on creativity. The application of survey
methodology for such a large number of participants yielded many questions and little in the way of a clear picture. A follow-up study that allows for direct observation and open-ended questioning might clarify such questions.

Listening plays a key role composition and it has also been at the center of the music education debate regarding the benefits of aesthetic and praxial approaches. Cusano (2004) employed questionnaires to investigate the beliefs of 110 teachers’ across the United States about teaching music listening. The questions were grouped around issues related to beliefs about listening, materials, reason for choosing to teach listening, music preference, student involvement during lesson, methods of teaching, and confidence in teaching. The results demonstrated that teachers believed listening was important because it contributes to aesthetic experience and to cultural, social, and historical awareness. However, there appears to be inconsistency between their stated beliefs and what is actually done. While teachers reported that one of the primary benefits of teaching music listening was its contribution to developing awareness of cultural diversity, these teachers also reported discomfort with Non-western music and relied primarily on Classical or Jazz for listening examples. Might this discrepancy have been due to discomfort related to Non-western music? Might the teachers in Cusano’s study have believed that Jazz sufficiently fulfilled the criteria for cultural and social awareness? Why were Cusano’s teachers not inspired by their belief that listening fosters social and cultural awareness to learn more about Non-western music or overcome the discomfort from their lack of familiarity as were the Orff teachers in Scott’s (2010) study? The teachers in Scott’s study were driven by strong methodological and philosophical beliefs
that allowed them to move past their own efficacy doubts about singing. What was the
difference in the belief structures between these two populations?

From this body of research it is clear that beliefs can mold and influence
curriculum and pedagogical choices in significant ways. The conclusions and questions
this body of research has asked pertaining to areas such as efficacy, creativity, good
teaching, and assessment, can be extended to music composition in the classroom. The
conclusions these researchers have drawn at times exhibit common themes pertaining to
the importance of self-efficacy and identity and pointed out that it is easier to find
common beliefs around large issues, while beliefs pertaining to specifics around those
beliefs can vary greatly. The studies that have been presented exemplify the complicated
web and multitude of possible directions responses can lead when investigating beliefs.

**Composition in the Music Classroom**

*Purported benefits.* Research has noted compositions’ contribution to creative self-
expression and empowerment, higher order thinking and musical problem-solving, and
creativity (Hargreaves, 1996; Koutsoupidou and Hargreaves, 2009; Miller, 2004;
Running, 2008; van Ernst, 1993; Webster, 1990). Bates (2009), from the perspective of
“needs theory”, concluded that improvisation and song writing enhance personal
autonomy where students experience “the freedom to question and transform social and
cultural practices” (p. 25). Incorporation of composition has been shown to re-enforce
positive attitudes towards music and musical studies (Blom, 2003; Hogg, 1994; Riley,
2006). Hogg (1994) noted that students were at a high level of engagement when
“organizing, refining, and performing their own compositions, [and] making a song their
own…” (p. 17). Composition can be undertaken in many ways. It can be technical; grounded in standard notation and principles of voice leading, or it can be creative; activating the imagination and utilize flexible approaches including graphic notation. Still, some teachers struggle to find ways to include composition while others appear unconvinced as to its benefits (Bell, 2003).

**Graphic notation.** The use of graphic notation is a prominent component of the creative music movement. It is also a key element of music educator and Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer’s (1986) creative approach to composition, which is being used in this study as the model for creative composition. The implementation of graphic notation includes such benefits as allowing for more interpretation on the part of the performer as well as quicker and easier access to musical interpretation by participants who do not read music – both in performing and composing. It encourages both creative and analytical thinking. Bergstrom-Nielsen (1999), at Aal University relayed experiences utilizing graphic notation with music therapy students saying “intellectual capacity can work very well together with fantasy” and make a “powerful combination” (p. 4). Graphic notation can be a pathway to richer thinking and processing. Visual ideas as a mode of communication of thoughts can be representative of a depth of understanding as exemplified by Darwin’s concept of the evolution of species as portrayed by his “Tree of Nature” (Gruber, 1981). Beliefs that ground teachers in traditional notation may blind teachers to such benefits.

Research concerning representations of sound created in this manner has revealed a great deal about people’s inner musical experience (Bamberger, 2003; Barrett, 2002;
Barrett, 1997; Berkley, 2001; Hargreaves, 1986; Kennedy, 2002; Miller, 2004; Welch, 1998; Tan, Wakefield, & Jeffries, 2009; Tan and Kelly, 2004). Hargreaves (1986) concluded that musical representations, as opposed to traditional notation, indicated a much higher level of musical thinking than had previously been thought, exhibiting both formal and intuitive musical perception. Hargreaves pointed to a British report that notes the importance of both ‘formal’ and ‘intuitive’ music learning and that composition and improvisation are integral to musical learning. He cited Gardner and the Harvard Project Zero as defining symbol systems as foundational components in artistic development, labeling them as ‘pre-symbolic’ and ‘symbolic’ (p. 2-7). Teachers whose beliefs support this type of musical interpretation may have different perspectives of composition or the educational process than do teachers who believe that standard notation is central to the role of music education and their purpose as a music educators.

Welch (1998) identified four stages to the development of such musical representations; scribbling, action equivalents, figural, and imitation. Barrett (2001), however, suggested that such stages may be non-discursive. As non-discursive events they do not necessarily move in a linear progression, but rather, children may move back and forth between stages, utilizing imitation one day and scribbling the next, or utilize both perspectives within one work. Barrett (1997) noted that young children were able to replicate performances from their notation a week and more later, suggesting that children are associating deep meaning to their drawings and making strong connections between the drawing and the sounds they represent over significant periods of time. There can, however, be confounding factors during the early years of language
acquisition and vocabulary development. Children’s verbal preoccupations may tend to interfere with graphic representation just as they can interfere with melodic accuracy (Barrett, 1997).

The use of alternate notation allows students to work at their own level, including special education students (Miller, 2004). It also saves time that otherwise is spent correcting traditional notation errors which can frustrate students and interfere with their sense of ownership over their work. Graphic notation may not aid the learning of standard notation, but junior high school students who used graphic notation to create compositions were found to be more creative than those who used standard notation (Miller, 2004). Kennedy (2002) pointed out that “Notation can always be taught; however, creative ideas need to be captured and preserved when they appear” (p. 107).

It has also been found that graphic representation may be helpful in listening and lending insight about how students listen, “bridging the gap between music listening and musical listening” (Tan and Kelly, 2004, p. 209). The link between graphic notation and listening has implication for aiding students in the development of analytical ability and aural acuity, as well supporting students’ musical expressions and understanding. This may suggest that music teachers who are student centered, whose beliefs about education include meeting a student wherever he or she is at that moment, may utilize flexible modes of interpretation such as graphic notation.

Music teachers’ decisions whether to use graphic notation or not holds a whole array of beliefs in question including those related to learning as a sequential or non-discursive event, and beliefs about the importance of traditional, standard musical
practices in music education. It also raises questions regarding the role of language. Whether a teacher identifies with a method that emphasizes language, or a school administration requires the teaching of reading in every class, decisions as to how verbal, visual, literal, figurative, and aural experiences come together in pedagogical practice in the classroom reflected teachers’ values and priorities as derived from their beliefs.

**Creativity in composition.** Music composition is frequently thought of and presented by teachers as a creative endeavor (Wang & Sorgin, 1997). As demonstrated in the literature earlier, when considering teachers’ beliefs about creativity and how it influences their pedagogical approach, questions must be asked regarding who is creative, how creativity is identify, whether it is conceptualized as a thing, a person, or a process, and how and what should be measured for assessment. Givens (1962) suggested that many perspectives of creativity underscore the necessity for a comprehensive perspective that allows for a multi-faceted process. The various facets of the creative personality and process have been studied from a range of perspectives including those of sociology, psychology, philosophy, cognitive science, and education. The complexity of the topic frequently breaks into dualistic perspectives that focus on either the creative person and product (Abinun, 1984) or the creative product and process (Mingoia, 1961), all of which have implications for composition in the music classroom.

Insight, novelty, and spontaneity are often confused with the more complex act of authentic creativity. The creative process, far from being a response to unbridled restraint, functions within the guidelines of specific boundaries. Boden (1995) stated that “To throw away all constraints would be to destroy the capacity for creative thinking.
Random processes alone can produce only first-time curiosities, not radical surprise…” (p. 2). Abinun (1984) chastised progressive schools and those who have romanticized creativity for creating its strong association with unconstrained spontaneity and self-expression. He suggested that while self-expression may provide motivation for creativity, it does not automatically fulfill other necessary criteria such as value. There is an equilibrium that must be achieved between technical competency and “somnambulic ecstasy” (Aler, 1964, p. 91), a heightened state with no ultimate purpose. This lays the foundation for a perspective of composition whose goal is to support creativity where tasks have boundaries, objectives, and value.

Using Ignacio Gotz’s (1981) expanded framework based on Wallas’ (1926) definition, the nature of creativity, far from being an intangible ideal, can be conceived of as a coherent process that can be supported and encouraged in the classroom. Gotz’s (1981) etymological approach defined creativity as a process rooted in “making” which underscores creativity as a process. Gotz (1981) notes that this ‘making’ begins with Wallas’ four steps: preparation, incubation, insight and verification. Gotz expanded this process to include a resulting product which he refers to as “concretization”, where insight enters the world in a meaningful way. Gotz reinterprets Wallas’ verification stage as an evaluation process that requires usefulness, instills greater meaning, or contributes significantly to understanding. Gotz’s definition can be generalized and used as a framework that offers insight that will result in greater support of creativity in the classroom. This framework supplies specific guidance for shaping compositional tasks that support creativity.
The preparation stage, where teachers spend a great deal of time, is the basis from which creativity emerges. It is at this stage where information and understanding of traditional and historical forms are learned. Famed French scientist Louis Pasteur summed up a similar idea when he stated “Chance only favors the prepared mind” (Kubinyi, 1999, p. 15). The preparation stage prepares the way for insight. Boden (1995) presented creativity within the concepts of cognitive maps and conceptual space. She spoke of these spaces as structures or forms, such as musical or poetic structures, that create constraints within which creativity can occur. Such forms create structures for knowledge which Abinun (1984) believed were critical for creative expression.

Burnard (2007) described creativity from the perspective of social psychology noting that social factors related to peer groups and influences, along with shared goals and group work have the ability to either support or inhibit creative activity. Group activities and individual work are both imbued with social and cultural influences. Burnard concluded that “musical creativity can be understood best as a socially and culturally situated practice highlighted by the ways in which the various elements of creativity interact differently in different contexts and cultural worlds” (p. 1208).

The role of culture and society, and music’s innate social characteristics are at the very center of music. Historically, music’s evolution is attributable to the pressures exerted on it from the societies, cultures, and politics from which it sprang (Turley, 2001). Students bring these influences with them into the classroom, which subsequently become embedded in their work as creative acts (Stauffer, 2002). Vygotsky’s theory of ‘zone of proximal development’ states that the act of learning is itself a social construct.
Blom (2003) quoted Reimer (1989) saying “music experience… is sonorous expressive form, not in isolation, but as culturally derived… that cultural values and experiences become music when given sonorous expressive form” (p. 82). Blom also quoted Elliott (1995) who said “whenever individuals begin to compose, they are never acting ‘alone.’ Their composing is always ‘situated’ and social…” (p. 82). It should also be noted that “meet[ing] students where they are musically” (Johnson 2004, p. 134) in addressing social and political diversity in the classroom is important in the empowerment of student. Students’ compositional works can be creative interpretations of their worlds, acknowledging their perspective and experience of the world. Teachers who believe their students’ perspective of life and music is irrelevant to their class may ground their compositional tasks in more formalized tasks and musical models that have little relationship to the student’s experience.

Group work during composition is one example of how social learning occurs in music classrooms. Some believe that groups can spark creativity through brainstorming or during the incubation stage (Mingoia, 1961). Mingoia warns though that “team creativity” can result in “pooling mediocrity or, worse, ignorance” (p.153). Group experiences function primarily to promote individual creativity and not a type of mass creativity. While groups can incite an individual to action and encourage depth of purpose and meaning, it is important that the individual not lose him/herself. The group creates a basis from which individuals can consider frameworks and conceptualize possibilities. Once this is completed, Mingoia contends that the creative process progresses on an individual level.
The creative process, particularly during the incubation phase, requires time. While a great deal of time is traditionally spent in classrooms in building foundations, the time between incubation - thinking about an idea, and insight – that actual moment of dawning, does not withstand time pressure well. Priest (2006) found it was important that students have enough time to develop authentic involvement in their work. Time constraints are of great concern to teachers working within specific class periods and performance schedules. Presenting authentic creative opportunities need to be planned to include allowances for the time to bring the process full circle. Such beliefs about creativity can impact the design of the classroom and types of compositional projects undertaken.

While Gotz (1981) recognized creativity as a process rather than a personality trait, elements of personality do play a significant role in incubation, step two of the creative process. How information gets strung together during this phase can be greatly affected by personality. Abinun (1984) and Givens (1962) presented a variety of traits based on those found in the general population and then consider specific traits necessary for a creative personality to exist. Such traits include persistence, discipline and concentration. Abinun (1984), however, interjected numerous caveats whose sheer numbers of possible combinations exemplify the ambiguity that exists in quantifying this particular personality type. Boden (1995) broadened the role of personality and pointed out that personal characteristic, such as idiosyncratic preferences, explain accidental creativity or serendipity. A choice that is made later in life that appears to be an act of chance can actually be attributed to a stylistic approach based on the development of
personal characteristics.

Insight, stage three, is that glimpse into something previously unseen and where novelty and originality are given their own niche. Insight is often mistaken for creativity but it lacks other defining qualities such as “concretization” (Gotz, 1981) and value (Abinum, 1984), along with any meaning or contribution it may make to the world as a whole (Gotz, 1981). It is important that teachers have students carry compositional tasks through into the production, integration, and evaluation process and not terminate the creative process after insight is achieved. If music teachers’ beliefs about composition as a creative act go beyond the insight stage, students would perform and evaluate their compositions.

Motivation, which is necessary to carry out the creative process to its conclusion, is an important aspect of any classroom. Music teachers’ beliefs about motivation may be interfering with the creativity they are trying to support. Hausman (1979) found that a creative person is most often motivated by a desire for expression and not by a need to be recognized or to be different for the sake of being different. According to Priest (2006), motivation is rooted in task involvement, which requires appropriate external and internal stimuli. External rewards generally create barriers to creativity, shifting the focus from the task to the reward. Feedback that is informational supports creativity as it contributes to the base of knowledge, referring students back to the preparation stage. Self-evaluation is effective in supporting creativity unless it is impeded by self-criticism which is an internal manifestation of external criticism. Weinberger (1998) reviewed studies on the creativity of school children. While not finding a causal effect, he
concluded that actual music-making fostered greater creativity than just listening. This conclusion expanded on Priest’s (2006) task involvement theory. Might it then follow that students involved in composition would also be more likely to experience an authentic creative experience because of the level of involvement required in the task?

Pedagogical decision-making is affected not only by beliefs about who is or can be creative, but it can also be affected by beliefs about creativity related to race, gender, and socio-economic status. Little has been written in this regard. Greenberg, Shore & Davidson (1972) examined the relationship between caution and creativity comparing groups of lower socio economic African-American boys and girls, and more affluent Caucasian girls and boys of similar cognitive ability. Assumptions as to socio economic situation were made according the school attended and its location. The African-American children were described as coming from an “urban ghetto schools in Central Harlem” while the more affluent Caucasian children came from a “suburban school” (pg. 379). All scored similarly in measures of caution as evidenced in their ability to control their responses in both academic and social settings. The ability to control their responses, ultimately was not found to interfere with their creativity. It is in measures of originality that the more affluent Caucasian girls and lower socio economic African-American boys were found to be more creative than their counterparts.

The complex nature of creativity has been conceived and described in a variety of ways. Amabile (1983) described creativity as a multi-faceted trait that involves domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills, cognitive ability, personality characteristics, and social factors. Addressing issues concerning different types of creativity, Gardner (1993)
takes a different view of the creative process and envisions it as a function of high-level, cross-domain functions. The result is that it can be categorized as ‘little-c’ creative or ‘big-C’ creative, with children’s work usually falling into the ‘little-c’ category, thereby creating a way of conceptualizing a form of creativity that may be exhibited by children. Koutsoupidou and Hargreaves (2009) worked with two groups of six year olds where one group experienced improvisation using their voices, bodies and instruments. Using pre and post-tests of creative thinking in music they found that after six months the improvisation contributed significantly to the development of creative thinking, especially in the areas of flexibility, originality, and syntax. But there was more at work here than just the addition of improvisational activities. Koutsoupidou and Hargreaves noted that instruction in the control group was teacher centered and utilized what they described as a “didactic” (p. 252) approach. According to Merriam-Webster, didactic defines an approach to teaching that utilizes lecturing and books rather than demonstrations and active student participation. This raised questions as to how much of the results were due to the more creative approach than the actual improvisation, or if the control group’s responses might have even been suppressed by a teacher centered approach.

Webster & Richardson (1994) noticed a clustering of articles around the topics of critical thought and creative thought, and argued that these creative dimensions are most useful when not only integrated, but also layered with aesthetic experience to create a rich form of musical thinking. Creativity comes during the process of making when directed by musical problem solving or other compositional tasks that are goal-directed,
while critical thinking is a response to activities such as critiquing. Some forms of music making, however, such as performance groups whose goal is technical excellence, do not possess such creative and aesthetic qualities and were labeled by the authors as purely psychomotor tasks. It seems difficult to reconcile though, that while committed to the belief that creativity is a process and not a product, Webster and Richardson state that without a resulting product, the process is no more than “musical daydreaming and not real musical thinking” (p. 10).

Runco (2003) and Webster and Richardson (1994) both considered the nature of creativity within the educational setting and both believe that creativity is a process. However, they came to two very different conclusions regarding the materialization of that process. While Webster and Richardson pointed out that “we cannot be sure that music thinking has occurred unless there is a product that demonstrates the result of thinking” (p. 10), Runco (2003) moved past the concept of creativity encapsulated in boundaries, objectives, and value envisioning it as a personal construct that should be distinct from any social validity and requiring no outward expression. In other words, in “personal creativity” (p. 319) the creative process exists internally just as does a thought. If the thought is not spoken, it does not mean the thought did not occur. From this perspective, a teacher’s goal would be to create an environment that encourages divergent thinking and “problem discovery” (p. 323). Runco hereby extended the proposition of creativity as a process to one of personal “thinking or problem solving that involves the construction of new meaning” (p. 317). The idea that “to understand is to invent” (p. 317) results in a broad conceptualization of creativity that is then inherent in all students.
Runco, while admitting that his vision of creativity has not been tested, warned that group work and other types of collaboration, while beneficial in other ways, can encourage conformity and discourage divergent thinking. Runco, in this work, revealed how his beliefs about creativity are embedded in his beliefs about the purpose of education, the efficacy of students’ creativity, and the role of assessment. The result is an educational environment that nurtures creativity through divergent thought, assessment criteria founded in process, and the development individual growth rather than the creation of a socially valued product.

This body of research pointed out the breadth of beliefs about creativity, how it is expressed, as well as beliefs pertaining to what can support or interfere with its expression. The role creativity plays in teachers’ music classrooms is subject to a teacher’s beliefs about the role of creativity in music education, who can be creative, how to assess creativity and its existence as process or product, whether they consider themselves creative, and the type of tasks they believe support creativity. The structure of the classroom, the use of group or individual work as well as the amount of freedom in tasks, is also dependent upon a teacher’s beliefs about creativity. However, questions regarding how these beliefs relate to more core beliefs and how they were formed still linger.

Composition and student attitude. Beyond the role that students’ attitude can play in student achievement, Hargrove’s (2008) review of literature concluded that “classroom management has been identified as the variable that has the greatest impact on student achievement, and teacher-student relationships have been identified as the key to
effective classroom management. “(p. 59). Apathy or boredom can lead to classroom
disruptions. Teachers who struggle with students because of their attitudes make
decisions that impact the classroom environments and the type of work that can occur.
For example, a teacher may choose to have students work individually on computers
when composing rather than having them work in groups with instruments if she believes
students will not behave appropriately. Ultimately, helping students become invested in
their work is part of good classroom management and effective education.

Investigating musical achievement, performance, and attitude, Riley (2006)
conducted a study using pre and post-tests with band members. One group participated in
compositional experiences grounded in notational templates, conducting experiences and
“vocaphone exercises” (p. 31) along with listening and performance experiences, while
the other group participated in listening and performance experiences and not the
compositional ones. Similar gains in achievement and performance were observed, but
the group that participated in the compositional activities displayed an increase in
favorable attitudes toward music and learning. It should be noted that these results could
have been influenced by issues related to the amount of stimulation created by the variety
of activities within the composition group or the level of active participation required.
This same study, however, also noted that the benefits derived from the composition
group came within the same time parameters as the band class that did not participate in
compositional activities. Riley also found that students’ level of involvement in creative
music problem solving tasks was more dependent on students’ attitudes toward the task
than by the teacher’s choices. The inclusion of compositional activities appeared to open
students to musical experiences more than might have otherwise been thought. Kaschub (1997) came to a similar conclusion regarding the positive contribution of compositional activities on students’ attitudes after involving sixth grader general music students in the creation and performance of vocal music compositions. Though having about two-thirds of the students in the general music class also involved in the choral and instrumental program may not be representative of most general music programs, the students’ previous aversions to singing dissipated because of the level of involvement students experienced.

**Composition and assessment.** The ability to assess students is of great concern to the teachers who participated in the research conducted by Byo (1999), Phelps (2008) and Strand (2006). Beliefs about composition and the role of creativity in composition can create very different perceptions about how composition should or could be assessed. When considering issues of assessment, it is important that teachers understand what they are assessing. Webster and Richardson (1994) stressed the importance of composition as process and not just product. The difficulty some teachers find in conducting assessment during composition is that composing is an activity that is frequently judged by the output or product rather than the process. When judged in the light of process, evaluation occurs in terms of musical thinking, which can be achieved through improvisation and analyses of compositional tasks (Webster & Richardson, 1994). How compositional tasks are assessed also depends on the purpose of the task. Burnard (1995) reminded teachers of the importance of differentiating between instructional tasks and compositional tasks which can have very different perspectives and goals. If the task is instructional, as in for
example the creation of a composition whose goal is to teach and demonstrate a student’s
ability to accurately place four beats in a measure, the criteria for assessment is much
different than if the purpose of the composition is to create a composition in honor of a
friend’s birthday, which is a much more person assignment. Mingoia (1961) explains his
belief about the goal of assessment of any creative task saying “Artistic growth of the
individual takes precedence in value over other considerations. The process and product
are judged only in relation to what each has contributed to the creative growth of the
individual” (p. 154).

Perspectives on teacher and classroom traits. Green (2007) suggested that while
what is taught in the music class and rehearsal room has shifted significantly in the past
40 years, the pedagogical perspectives have remained stagnant. Yet, when considering
the nature of composition in the classroom, the research literature made specific
suggestions as to the conditions that lend themselves to higher rates of success (Miller,
2004; Hogg, 1994). Such contributions are linked to teaching style and classroom
procedures. Assessment grows from the teaching style and classroom procedures, with
composition viewed as process rather than a product (Webster and Richardson, 1994).
Classes that offer environments conducive to success evoke creativity, motivation,
higher-order thinking, and musical problem-solving. Environments that nurture these
qualities may be grounded in particular beliefs that support specific philosophical
underpinnings.

Miller (2004) appeared to disagree with Green (2007) and instead believed that
significant changes have taken place. Miller’s personal shift from a behaviorist approach
to that of a constructivist approach is one that she believes to be the general experience of many teachers. The study is a description of her personal journey as an elementary school teacher, utilizing what is portrayed as a fundamentally new perspective. Miller goes on to describe the fundamental changes required in conceiving the role of the teacher. Here the teacher assumes the role of facilitator and “empowers children with curricular and musical choices” moving past the “sing, move, play” (p. 59) model. This personal tale relays the process and conflict faced by the participant-researcher as she searches for approaches to composition that respond to teachers’ expressed problems related by teachers in the research literature which include a lack of time and the need to accommodate many levels of students. As such it is grounded in a very singular perspective that is embedded within a constructivist paradigm.

Miller’s reflective study began to define some of the specific classroom and teacher traits, such as flexibility, that have been identified with successful classroom compositional experiences (Hogg, 1994; Bosch, 2008). Teachers who found success in utilizing composition spent much of their time in analysis and assessment of student thinking and processing (Miller, 2004). Hogg (1994), in choosing an ethnographic context for the study, drew conclusions about classroom and teacher contexts that benefited students in composition based on the observation of classroom events. While Hogg stated that 50 teachers were interviewed, little was relayed in the article about the specifics of what was asked, and responses emerged only in general categories. The conclusion of the study included a list of 16 characteristics these teachers brought to their classrooms, including such elements as allowing enough time, not worrying about time
off-task, expecting but not insisting that each group perform, keeping tasks simple, and allowing advanced students to work on their own. The research also categorized the teacher participants’ teaching strategies as based either in knowledge, accomplishment, or empowering. While the number of teachers who approached teaching composition as an empowering agent made up the smallest portion of teachers, they were the found to be the most successful. These teachers’ goals strived to move students past knowledge and accomplishment to assist students in achieving personal growth by connecting to the expressive qualities of music.

Similarly, Blom (2003) considered teaching style and after observing teachers categorized them as either ‘expanders’ – those who moved students past the basic assignment structure, or pastiche teachers who retained the lesson structure and worked only within those predetermined parameters. The ‘expander’ teachers were more likely to focus on composition as the main goal, and take on “The roles of “enabler” and “teacher as composer” (p. 90). This was found to be “the most valuable for teachers working with students composing activities as they allowed both students and teachers to reveal their potential” (p. 93). Blom warned though that a teacher taking the role of student too far could be mistaken for being unprepared and could also take valuable time away from class. The musical foundation for this study was minimalism. Blom concluded the article saying “And if the introduced material is drawn from a relevant and contemporary music aesthetic, such as minimalism, then these teachers are facilitating in students a deeper engagement and dialogue with contemporary society and culture” (p. 96). While this was a study undertaken in Australia, there are a number of issues as to what constitutes a
contemporary music aesthetic and what effect there would be if this type of music were not the central medium. Were Rap the resource genre used, would the teachers and students have engaged similarly? If not, what are the ramifications for generalizability of this study?

When teachers are not able to adapt to a more flexible teacher role, composition can become no more than a technical exercise. Such was the finding of Dogani (2004) who concluded that teachers are frequently not able to release their expectations for children’s compositions. Thus, composition becomes a convergent activity looking for singular right answers, rather than a divergent activity that allows for a multiplicity of solutions. The teachers in Dogani’s study may have experienced conflicts between beliefs related to identity or the role of a teacher, and student freedom during the compositional process. Supportive teacher who encourages independent learning will also be supporting greater success, but Dogani acknowledges that the role of teacher as expert can be difficult for some teachers. This vision for the role of the teacher, she points out, was articulated by Schafer (1975) who claimed that the teacher should stimulate investigation by posing questions and problems. After that, the role should change to one where they are no longer the person in the classroom who possessed all the answers.

Berkley (2001) considered the teaching of composition to 16 year-olds paying particular attention to three activities related to composing and their associated motor and cognitive skills. They included generating, which related to exploring and improvising; realizing, which included practicing, fixing a version, recording, transcribing, and notation; and editing, which included modifying, adjusting, evaluating, self-criticism,
appraisal, and judgment. These three types of activities operate in a continuous cycle. The teachers in his study had approaches that varied from strict notational projects meant to imitate traditional forms in schools where 90% of students had private instrumental lessons for years, to semi-formal approaches, where imitation was also used, but pop and jazz were the musical models and graphic scores were utilized. The author pointed out that class time can be used up quickly correcting notation errors and that such errors can demoralize students in their attempts and interfere with their sense of ownership. It was noted that the more flexible teaching style produced students who were more independent thinkers, even in students whose academic ability was less.

The repeated key claim regarding classroom atmosphere and teacher traits that best support composition in the classroom related to the benefits of flexibility. Flexibility has been related to teacher traits, class procedures, and the ability to work within boundaries while also moving beyond them. The implications for flexibility bring into question teacher beliefs about what music education is meant to achieve, the role of art music and traditional forms, and the role of popular music. Education perceived as the memorization of facts will likely be less flexible than education perceived as the discovery of relationships between people and the environment. Interpretations of what it means to be flexible can vary greatly. While one teacher may believe that group work automatically signifies flexibility, another may find that the inclusion of any music other than that specifically associated with art music constitutes flexibility. Questions also arise as to the relationship between self-identity and pedagogical flexibility. If a teacher is insistent and firmly grounded in their identity and perceptions of good teaching, can they
Still find success utilizing composition in the classroom?

**Common classroom approaches to composition.** Composition can take on different focuses by utilizing acoustic or electronic instruments, computer notational software, and synthesizers. It can emerge in traditional or postmodern compositional techniques that emerged in the creative music movement of those such as John Paynter (1970) and Schafer (1975) and continued in the work of Hamann (1991) utilizing the voice, or discovered sounds. Composition can be a solitary or group process, and investigate the practices of various traditions and communities (Hogg, 1994; Wiggins, 1990). It can also be used in assessment, revealing what student know and think about music (Webster and Richardson, 1994).

Classroom experiences in composition can and have been undertaken from a wide range of perspectives. For example, they can be acoustically or technologically based, focused on technical components such as manipulation of rhythm and notation, depict knowledge of specific form, be exercises in mimicking or duplicating styles, or be flexible creative ventures. Bosch (2008) noted that composition had traditionally been an activity reserved for advanced music student and as such, many compositional methods are based in traditional notation, voice leading and harmonic functions. The implications of this were addressed previously in this work as part of the discussion regarding teachers’ difficulty agreeing on a definition of composition, music, and teachers’ comfort level in including composition. Bosch (2008) went on to define what she believes are basic streams for approaching composition; those situated in traditional notation and form with the ultimate goal of teaching students how to compose, and those like Paynter and
Schafer who, while promoting composition as a creative, interpretive activity, in Bosch’s perspective, are teaching “creative listening” (p. 41).

With the development of music notation software, the computer is frequently a mode identified with compositional activity. Reese and Hickey (1999) presented a perspective of composition as a technological process. They advocate for the use of technology because it gives “users direct control over creative decision making concerning sounds, where to store those sounds, and how to facilitate the altering and refining process used on the sounds” (p. 26). The requirements for participation included internet connections, music synthesizers, and MIDI software. The study utilized pre-service teachers as mentors to whom students emailed their compositions, which were grounded in traditional notation. In response they received suggestions for improvement. The teacher’s role was to give and clarify instructions, support and teach the technology, and monitor relationships between students and pre-service mentors. Far from being musical, these goals may more exemplify beliefs about education in general, the role of technology, and beliefs about the role composition can play in supporting those other beliefs.

Manchester (2002) believed that the use of technology in composition was worth the cost. Convinced of the benefits of composition, she believed the utilization of technology offered a better experience to using classroom instruments since she perceived most classroom instruments as having “limited expressive capabilities” (p. 8). Such remarks may speak to issues related to efficacy – either her own or her students. It could be that she believes her students have limited ability in creating a musical result, or
she has been unable to find a way to teach them to use instruments expressively. Or, she may believe that all classroom instruments lack the ability to produce a musical sound. Alternately, it also reveals beliefs about the expressive qualities of computers and software programs.

Manchester explained her process of giving instructions and demonstrations pertaining to the use of the software on an oversized monitor prior to going to the lab. She also spent time modeling the process for composing that students were to use before going to the computer lab. Utilizing what is described as “non-notational” (p. 11) software, students worked in pairs where they took turns being the decision makers for each of the predetermined steps in a highly structured process. Assessment included the teacher listening in on conversations between composing partners as they discussed their process.

It is difficult to know what the ultimate goal and focus of Manchester’s class was meant to be. The messages conveyed concerning beliefs about composition as a creative venture utilizing “non-national” software were juxtaposed against highly structured instructional methods while grounding assessment in the conversations of partners. The assessment approach appeared disconnected from all the previous instruction. While a lesson can be looked at from this surface perspective, questioning how this lesson reflects Manchester’s beliefs and where those beliefs originated can offer far more insight into what this teacher was attempting to accomplish.

The European model presented by Kodaly and Orff methods became foundations for many music programs in the U.S. Popular methods such as Orff and Kodaly contain
improvisatory components that also reinforce the educational concept of sound before sight. Since these two methods are rooted in folksong traditions and focus early experiences on assimilating repertoire, composition’s role is naturally limited and figures into the method through improvisational experiences.

Jorgensen (2008) wrote at some length about the lack of compositional activities in methods such as those most used in the United States; Kodaly, Orff and Dalcroze (p. 162). Since Kodaly and Orff are rooted in folksong traditions and focus early experiences on assimilating repertoire, composition’s role is naturally limited and figures into the method through improvisational experiences. What composition that does exists is again envisioned as a more advanced approach to music education, occurring after students have spent 5 or 6 years in this sequential program. By that time, students are expected to be utilizing traditional notation. The American Orff-Schulwerk Association website described the development of patterns as a resource for improvisation and later original composition. It is after the three phases of exploration, imitation, and improvisation that composition is encountered, grounded in traditional western notation. The Organization of American Kodaly Educators’ website does not mention composition on its pages dedicated to describing “The Kodaly Concept” or “The Methods of Teaching”.

While The Organization of American Kodaly Educators’ website did not mention composition on its pages dedicated to describing “The Kodaly Concept” or “The Methods of Teaching,” Choksy (1999), does. Here she described composition for grades one through six in a few paragraphs labeled “improvising and composing”. Composition in the grades 1 and 2 is improvisatory while in grade 3 students create new words and verses
for songs and compose with rhythm. By fourth grade students are taught a song except for the last phrase, which they are to invent. In grades 5 and 6, Choksy stated that students who have participated in years of Kodaly training should progress to vocal experimentation and application of standard notation, performing tasks associated with augmentation and diminution of melodic lines as well as the writing of variations, counter-melodies and extensions of famous works. The initial introduction to the notation of sound using literal symbols such as stick figures, hearts, and stars are meant only for use as a transitional phase leading to standard notation. While it is possible for a teacher to supplement lessons with compositional tasks, those beliefs would need to link to strong, more core beliefs about the benefits of composition and larger general beliefs about education. Questions would remain about how the beliefs emerge for teachers who find no need to augment Kodaly or Orff approaches with opportunities to compose.

**Listening.** Listening is frequently associated with an aesthetic approach to education and within this context, it is frequently conceived of as a passive activity (Barrett, 2002). But listening, a fundamental in Schafer’s creative approach, is meant to be a stimulating activity and has been identified as having a significant role in the compositional process, and the development of musical understanding and enjoyment (Bamberger, 2003; Bosch, 2008; Kennedy, 2002; Tan, Wakefield and Jeffries, 2009). Tan and Kelly (2004) differentiated between ‘music listening’ and ‘musical listening’. When engaged in listening during the compositional process, students listen more intently because they are more invested (Bosch, 2008). Listening is a foundational practice that should always precede the visual; any kind of notational representation (Tan, Wakefield,
and Jeffries, 2009). Kratus (1994) however noted that different from listening that fosters creativity as a divergent activity, audiation, a term used by Edwin Gordon (1989) described a way of listening that recognizes culturally situated musical syntax, correlates with musical structure and has a negative correlation with exploration, interfering with creativity. Swanwick (1999) cautioned against teaching listening in ways that focused on isolated exercises because

> By themselves these analytical slicings can be constricting. There is a prior state of intuitive response, a way of attending to music that is often driven out by aural analysis, where sounds have potential to become gestures or even cross over between the senses as images (p. 47).

Teachers who interpret the role of listening in composition as the ability to perceive ‘slices’ of musical ideas are exhibiting very different beliefs about composition than a teacher who asks students to listen within the larger context of an entire piece of music.

**Teachers' Beliefs about Composition**

The research pertaining to teacher’s beliefs about composition frequently draws its conclusion from broad surveys. As such, it relays general beliefs about composition as reflections of pedagogical actions but reveals little about the foundations for those beliefs. Still, the research has yielded both some very consistent strains as well as confusion. In order to begin to understand teachers’ beliefs about composition, it is necessary to consider the music education footings that may ground some of those beliefs. Some teachers may have been influenced by these events personally, while some may have been influenced through role models, or family whose musical beliefs were
colored by these events.

On one hand, composition is embedded in historical baggage in the form of theoretical structures that are bound in perceptions of composition as an advanced mode of study reserved for upper level students (Bosch, 2008). On the other, composition during the 1960’s emerged in K-12 music education programs as the centerpiece for the creative music movement. Burnard (2007) situated British educator and composer John Paynter, and composer R. Murray Schafer at the center of this movement as they advocated for the use of compositional experiences in music education for children. Green (2007) described the creative music movement as an offspring of the ‘progressive education’ and ‘child-centered education’ vision. The approach was grounded in work in which the child was responsible for their learning, which frequently occurred in groups. Outcomes were flexible rather than ‘predetermined’ (p. 12).

Kennedy (2000) described the educational atmosphere in the United States explaining that the Soviet Union’s successful launch of Sputnik I in 1957 ignited curricular changes in the U.S. that drove the ‘basics’ movement, leaving the arts on the periphery of school curriculum, to fend for themselves. Kennedy goes on to explain that the music community responded with a variety of studies and pilot programs, such as The Young Composers Project in 1962, the Contemporary Music Project for Creativity in Music Education, the Seminar on Comprehensive Musicianship in 1965, and the Manhattanville Music Curriculum Project, which began in 1965. It was during this period that Schafer was developing his teaching approaches while working and teaching in Canada.
After having been displaced by the performance of popular music within music education programs in the 1970’s (Green, 2007), composition began to emerge once again with the 1994 publication of the National Standards for Music Education. Much of the research revealing teachers’ beliefs about composition during the past fifteen years has emerged from the expectations laid out in the National Standards. Phelps (2008) studied trends in the types of articles published in music education journals between 1964 and 1989 as well as dissertations, books, and conference reports. The conclusion was that there was an increase in interest in composition in K-12 since 1990. Phelps, at the same time, surveyed Maryland MENC members and found a low frequency of compositional instruction at any grade level. Less than two thirds used any compositional activities during any of the time periods surveyed. Teachers believed composition was too time-consuming and considered it less important than other activities, giving priority to issues related to accommodation of various levels of ability, special needs, and assessment.

Studies have repeatedly found that teachers believe they lack the time, resources, and training to include composition, and that other priorities take precedence over composition (Bell, 2003; Byo, 1999; Lam, 2004; Phelps, 2008; Schmidt, et. al, 2005; Strand, 2006). Teachers also believed that standards that drew on creativity, including composition and improvisation, were the most difficult to include (Bell, 2003; Byo 1999). Bell (2003) investigated teachers’ beliefs surrounding the 9 standards. After participating in a series of classes and creating lessons geared to the standards, teachers were asked to voluntarily complete a survey that asked them to reflect on the standards. This revealed that standard 3 having to do with improvisation was believed to be the most
difficult standard to implement.

In Hong Kong, Lam (2004) conducted a focus group for 30 kindergarten music teachers from which four were selected to participate in case studies that investigated music teachers’ perspectives on promoting creativity in young children. Again, as in the studies by Byo (1999) and Strand (2006), accessibility of resources for students was imperative. This raises questions as to what resources are believed to be necessary and how might different beliefs about composition effect the answer to the question regarding the type of resources needed.

The close relationship between composition and improvisation was demonstrated in Stravinsky’s referral to composition as frozen improvisation (Heffley, 2000). Both have been identified as problematic areas for K-12 music teachers in the United States. A study by Schmidt, Baker, Hayes, and Kwan (2006) found that while studying 6 of the 9 National Standards, teachers spent the least amount of instructional time on composition and improvisation activities. Byo (1999) found that classroom and specialist teachers in fourth-grade public elementary schools in Florida cited composing and improvising as the most difficult of the National Music Standards to address, again citing the a lack of resources, time, equipment, and materials. Teachers also felt unprepared to teach composition, lacking training or a method. One teacher is quoted as saying “I feel this is a weakness of mine, which makes it difficult to teach” (Bell, 2003, 37). Improvisation was identified as an area where teachers felt they would most benefit from additional training and ideas.

Teachers appear to bear out Jorgenson’s (2008) observation that while receiving
core theory training, teachers do not possess “sufficient musicianship and musicality” and that “composing, arranging, and improvising requires teachers to be musicians if they are to help students to compose” (p. 163). Teachers in Bell’s (2003) study echoed similar feelings and when teachers feel less competent in an area, they will be less likely to include it, or will dedicate less time to it. Similarly, was apparent in Green’s (1997) study where teachers in Great Britain were found to avoided twentieth century music and compositional techniques “because they self-avowedly did not know much about it and were not, therefore, familiar with its style” (69). While Byo (1999), Phelps (2008), and Strand (2006) did not focus specifically on compositional methods of the twentieth century, the teachers in the studies in the United States similarly avoided composition in general because they believed they lacked sufficient knowledge. Beliefs such as these could make other obstacles within the educational system, such as time, appear even more insurmountable and the likelihood of inclusion even more remote.

Strand’s (2006) survey of music teachers in Indiana and found that 5.9% used composition in the classroom often, with general music incorporating it only slightly more than ensemble directors. The vague parameters as to what constitutes composition complicated the issue and what became clear was that teachers’ beliefs about composition varied significantly. Some teachers included dictation, practicing standard notation, and improvisation, as well as complex tasks in their responses. Strand’s (2006) study also pointed out that teacher beliefs about the process involved in composition varied greatly from one another and from the researchers’ perspective. Reflection and revision, elements that have been identified as important components of the compositional process,
were not described by teachers as part of the compositional procedure. A lack of technology was reported as the reason for the lack of inclusion by 28% of respondents, while 26.5% believed they did not have enough instruments to undertake composition. The conclusion that the largest obstacle was teachers’ perceived lack of time, and that time spent on composition would result in the neglect of other important learning experiences reveals beliefs that composition is not worth the perceived time it takes and that there are other more important activities that take priority. With the number of benefits associated with composition in the classroom, a more detailed investigation as to what beliefs are at work in making these decisions could supply greater understanding about how teachers’ beliefs are influencing their pedagogical decisions.

Teachers in Odeana & Welch’s (2009) study concluded that both teachers and students should cultivate traits such as flexibility, open-mindedness, willing to take risks and make mistakes, and a willingness to try a variety of methods. These beliefs ask for very particular traits in both teachers and students that have strong ties to identity and self-efficacy. The implication was that teachers who do not have these characteristics would have difficulty presenting composition. What specific beliefs do Odeana & Welch’s teachers have about composition that leads them to this conclusion? Might their beliefs about composition be rooted in a particular definition of composition or successful composition?

While the teachers in Lam’s (2004) study felt strongly that teachers should embody their beliefs about composition so as to motivate students, there are assumptions within this statement with distinct consequences. It makes presumptions similar to the
ones made in Odeana & Welch’s (2009) study. It presumes that teachers who include composition believe composition is important, that it makes significant contributions to student learning, and also embodies beliefs about students’ ability to compose. But what about teachers who have doubts about their ability to teach composition, their students’ ability to learn to compose, or question composition’s usefulness, especially in light of a shortage of time and materials? Embodying some attitudes toward composition, such as ambivalence, would not benefit or motivate students. Worse yet, might a teacher who believes that composition is inappropriate for students but feels obligated to include it in the curriculum anyway be doing more harm than good?

Summary

The body of literature concerning beliefs covers a diverse range of issues within which is embedded a wide spectrum of foci. Within this body are a range of conclusions, each colored by the beliefs of their authors. Their beliefs, as all beliefs, served as precursors to their actions which took the form of these studies (Rokeach, 1968). Beliefs possess varying intensity as some are more central while others are more peripheral and cluster in ways that make them flexible. They develop relationships that make some beliefs derivates of others, creating systems that reinforce one another (Thagard, 2000). Those most enduring beliefs are developed early in life, relate to the self and are the result of first-hand experience (Nespor, 1987). These are the foundations for the realities in which a teacher lives and works. Beliefs about their capabilities and strengths, their students’ capabilities and strengths, and their pedagogical practice infiltrate the classroom.
The approach a teacher takes towards composition will be a reflection of not only their beliefs about composition, but how their beliefs about composition relate to other beliefs. If the lens is pulled back to see the larger picture, a web of beliefs may be revealed (Green, 1971; Pajares, 1992; Thagard, 2000). Beliefs about composition may be related to those about what composing is, the teacher’s identity, beliefs about their or their students’ creativity, their ability to manage a classroom, how they envision assessment, the nature of creativity and education, and the role of a teacher. The list goes on to include basic beliefs regarding right and wrong, truth, the nature of gender, and perspectives on institutions and power structures. Beliefs do not necessarily reside on the surface and at timed, actions may not appear to be connected to beliefs. However, in Leatham’s (2006) perspective, beliefs and their associated actions always make sense, whether it is obvious to the outsider or not. So to truly understand the motivations and reasons for teachers’ pedagogical actions concerning composition, it is necessary to look deeper in order to both discover more central beliefs and to understand the relationship between beliefs.

As socially and culturally constructed phenomena, the classroom is fertile ground for the expression of teachers’ beliefs that can in turn influence students’ beliefs (Jones & Parks, 2010). The ramifications for a teacher’s expressed beliefs in the classroom are significant due to their impact on the students and school community in which they function. Not only do teachers’ beliefs influence curriculum and how it is delivered, teachers are role models who can have a significant influence on the developing beliefs of those in the classroom (Jones & Parks, 201). Additionally, experiences within the
classroom continue to mold, reaffirm, or redirect teachers’ beliefs as they continue the chain of experience as a reflection of culture, which is reflected as beliefs (Dewey, 1938).

When considering music teachers’ beliefs about composition, the literature warns that the path is likely to reveal a complicated web. How composition fits into the curriculum and within larger belief systems pertaining to the nature of pedagogy, education, and life values may reveal insights into beliefs about the nature of creativity, the teacher’s identity and self-efficacy, and student efficacy. Just as important though, is to understand how those beliefs were formed; the part that previous teachers, families, and teacher preparation programs have played. For it is here that a more complete picture can emerge and allow for the possible development of more effective ways of fostering effective music teachers.
Chapter III

Research Methodology and Procedures

This chapter presents the approach and supporting structure for this study. It explains the goals in the form of the guiding questions, and defines the participants and their selection. The process for collecting and analyzing data while also accounting for its trustworthiness are discussed.

The purpose of this study was to examine music teachers’ beliefs about composition as well as the origins of those beliefs, and how and to what extent these music teachers’ beliefs may be revealed in pedagogical decisions pertaining to composition in the classroom. These issues were examined utilizing the following guiding questions:

1. What do music teachers believe about composition?
2. How do music teachers define composition?
3. How do music teachers present composition in the music classroom?
4. What prior experiences, including educational, social, and cultural, underlie teachers’ beliefs about composition?
5. How are music teachers’ beliefs about music education related to their beliefs about composition and how are those beliefs expressed in compositional activities in the classroom?
6. What relationship may exist between teachers’ beliefs about composition and their feelings of success or frustration in teaching composition?
7. How do teachers’ beliefs about composition relate to their core world view beliefs?

8. What part do historical influences related to politics and gender play in teachers’ beliefs about composition and its role in the classroom?

9. What role does efficacy play in teachers’ perceptions of their ability to teach composition, their beliefs about composition, pedagogical decision-making, and perceptions of success or frustration in the teaching of composition?

**Research Design**

This study, as a qualitative, multi-case study design, utilized an interpretive descriptive approach that focused on four middle school music teachers. A qualitative perspective is appropriate in instances when a researcher is “interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 11). Such studies “seek to discover and understand a phenomenon, a process, or the perspectives and worldviews of the people involved” (p. 11). In this instance, the study was attempting to understand teachers’ beliefs and their origins and how they emerge in music composition in the classroom. As a qualitative research project, this study’s goal was to render a deep, rich picture of the life experiences of several teachers. Yin, (1994) explained that questions that focus on “how” and “why” suggest research that is explanatory while questions that examine “what” tend to be exploratory studies. This study embodied both explanatory and exploratory perspectives. The personal nature of beliefs and the unique circumstances of each person’s life events that contribute to their development mean that each case is unique. At the same time, Yin recommends utilizing “replication logic” (p.
envisioning each case as a separate experiment. This approach contributed to the reliability of cross-case analysis, highlighting variables and commonality between them.

This naturalistic study included elements of life history approaches and narrative inquiry that acknowledge the complex nature of individual experience. It looked closely at a few participants in an effort to understand the “situation and meaning for those involved” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Ethnography and case study can often be very similar. Ethnography was rejected in this case because this study’s main focus was not to situate the teacher within a specific culture. While teachers in this study were situated within the social – cultural grounding of their lives and their classroom, it was not a specific setting that was of interest, such as the school. While there are some aspects of phenomenology as the study looked at the current state of teachers’ compositional instruction, it did not, as defined by Creswell (2007), aim to reduce individual experience within a phenomenon to a description of universal essence through the perceptions of a large number of participants. This study does not claim to search for universal consistencies and large numbers of participants would not allow for the depth of investigation required to answer the questions posed in this work. While this study’s inductive process was similar to that of grounded theory, it did not produce “substantive” theories and the accompanying “categories, properties, and hypotheses” (Merriam, 1998, p. 18).

Teachers’ beliefs about composition, the origins of those beliefs, and the resulting classroom pedagogy are envisioned in this study through a constructivist, socio-cultural framework. Teachers bring more than facts to share with their students in the classroom. They bring with them beliefs that filter their interpretations of the world, the educational
process, identity, and efficacy. These beliefs also color their understanding of knowledge acquired during their teacher education programs. Pedagogical decisions cannot truly be understood without understanding these other influences.

Leatham’s (2002) *Sensible Beliefs System* (SBS) also guided this research. According to the SBS, those actions or statements that may appear to be incongruent with a teacher’s beliefs are the result of a lack of understanding by the researcher rather than flaws of research design or flaws in the belief system of the participant. If, for example, a teacher believes that incorporating creative music-making into the class has great benefits for students but claims not to have enough time because the principal expects two concerts a year that require extensive rehearsal time, it could be concluded that their pedagogical actions do not align with their beliefs. Since SBS was based on the construct that all action is predicated by beliefs and that all beliefs are sensible, the teacher in the previous example was moved to actions grounded in more central beliefs. How beliefs cluster can also contribute to how beliefs are interpreted by those observing. Because beliefs about education are considered secondary beliefs (Pajares, 1992) they are likely to be subject to more central beliefs. Also, in the world of sensible beliefs, beliefs and knowledge are both viewed as subsets that fall under the category of what is believed. Important also is that a researcher’s inability to see the sense within a belief system does not mean it does not exist.

**Participants**

This study was designed as a multiple case study that investigated four teachers’ beliefs pertaining to their instructional practices concerning music composition as well as
the origins of the beliefs that support those practices. Utilizing concept sampling and variation sampling, four information-rich teachers were identified. These teachers were located through reputational sampling where recommendations were sought through references of those with knowledge. Studying four teachers allowed comparisons between similar approaches and across approaches. It also allowed for sufficient depth while allowing for maximum variation in perspectives (Merriam, 2009, p. 80). Even small samples intentionally selected for variation can produce significant findings (Merriam, 1998, p.63). Purposive criterion sampling set the parameters for locating participants who have completed a music education degree program in the US, are currently teaching a general music class in a middle school, are certified in the state in which they work, are open to critically examining their beliefs and biography, and are able to dedicate the time to complete the tasks.

Middle school was selected as the focus for this study for several reasons. The majority of the existing research found pertaining to teachers’ beliefs bypasses middle school, focusing instead on pre-service teachers, elementary teachers, and the beliefs of high school math, English, and science teachers (Baron, 2010; Grauer, 1998; Raymond, 1997; Renzi, 2005; Yerrick and Hoving, 1999). Additionally, while elementary music programs tend to associate strongly with specific methods such as Orff and Kodaly (Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 2009; Lindeman 2011; Shehan, 1986), middle school tends not to have these strong methodological ties (Duling, 1992; Gerber, 1992). With no strong methodological ties and a “lack of uniformity in practices” (Duling, 1992, p. 3), a “search for captivating materials never ends” (Gerber, 1992, p. 37). These factors may
lead middle school teachers to devise instruction in ways that utilize a more intuitive perspective derived from core beliefs.

**Researcher’s Role**

The qualitative case study framework situations the researcher as the primary means of data collection, interpretation, and analysis. Abrahams (2000) cited Sara Lawrence Lightfoot’s description of the relationship between a researcher and a participant as similar to a painter and their subject in her book *The Good High School* (1983). She explained that in both instances there was a need “to enter into relationships with ‘subjects’ that had the qualities of empathetic regard, full and critical attention, and a discerning gaze” (p. 45). Continuing in his own voice Abrahams eloquently relayed a musical analogy comparing the role of the researcher to the conductor, both of whom undertake the task of analyzing data or musical scores, identifying themes and motives in the hope of bringing understanding to an audience. Both require “interpretation that reflects the biases, values and judgments of a connoisseur” (p. 46). James (1907) defended the foibles that can be associated with interpretations saying “no theory is absolutely a transcript of reality, but that any of them may from some point of view be useful” (p. 33).

Since the role of the researcher integrates them in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data, it is important that biases and values be disclosed. I have taught music for 18 years in the classroom, rehearsal halls, clinics, and workshops, from preschool to college and retirees. I had the opportunity to establish a music department from its inception to fruition in a new arts school for students in grades 3 through 12,
which allowed me to assemble my thoughts and priorities for formulating an educational approach based on my beliefs about the purpose of education and the role of music within it. I have also conducted community workshops about the voice and teacher in-service sessions including a regional Maryland *National Association of Music Educators* gathering, and presented a *National Association of Music Educators* poster session on composition in the classroom. My interest in the use of composition in the classroom emerged during my undergraduate degree work attending performances by the University of Delaware’s Music Department’s new music ensemble. There I was introduced to the works of John Cage, Pauline Oliveros, and La Mont Young. While at the same time researching classroom approaches during my elementary methods class, I found R. Murray Schafer’s books on composition in the classroom. These experiences contributed to significant changes in what I believed about music, education, and the balance between aesthetics and praxialism.

**Data Collection**

The purpose of data collection was to uncover teachers’ beliefs related to the use of music composition in the classroom. According to Pajares (1992), “beliefs cannot be directly observed or measured but must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do” (p. 207). It is this statement that guided the collection and analysis of data. Investigating beliefs in this study involved teachers in a personal journey that will encouraged them to reflect through story-telling, biography, and the interview process in an effort to move beyond the surface and tease out deeper core beliefs and belief relationships. Tacit beliefs were recorded through classroom observations and researcher notes. As is typical
for qualitative research, the data collection and analysis had an emergent quality. While each case was envisioned as a replication, it was a replication in the sense of searching for answers to the same research questions and its utilization of the same methods of data collection. Its emergent qualities appeared in the personalized crafting of questions in response to the unique and personal nature and construction of beliefs.

Following a successful review from Boston University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB), data collection included a variety of approaches. After initial contact with each participant, they were asked to complete a survey that collected basic demographic information and ask broad questions pertaining to their philosophy of music education and their definition of composition. Teachers were then asked to write two reflections about life events and role models that they believe have significantly impacted their beliefs about life and music. One reflection specifically related to memories and experiences from early childhood through middle school and the other from high school through college and to present. Each layer of data contributed to the development of the picture of the participant and their beliefs, and laid the foundation for the observation of the composition lesson. Having this body of data, a final interview clarified and expanded upon points that previously emerged. Each layer of data worked to inform the next; the reflective writings informed the classroom observations, all of which joined in the development of questions for the final interview that served to focus, clarify, and enrich each teacher's story. Such data collection and analysis are referred to by Mellon (1990) as “integrated activity” (p. 24). Utilizing this technique, questions were developed that were pertinent to each teacher and most likely to evoke the most insightful responses.
Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis were integral in this study. The emergent nature of the study, in response to the highly individual nature of beliefs, appeared in the questions that evolved in response to each participant’s reflections. In this way, continuous data analysis aided in eliciting more meaningful responses. The data analyzed included the researcher notes, teachers’ written documents, and audio recordings. An inductive approach was employed in data analysis that allowed themes to emerge and be considered in light of the guiding questions and literature. Interpretation data was approached as a complex undertaking. The analysis of close readings was undertaken with the understanding that experience and meaning are individual, social, and cultural, and that context for meaning within a text can never be certain.

“The goal of qualitative data analysis is to uncover emerging themes, patterns, concepts, insights, and understandings” (Patton, 2002). In this instance, two layers of analysis was undertaken; that related to the belief systems of each participant, and that related to how those beliefs emerged within compositional tasks. Developing understanding of such systems was, as previously noted, grounded in Leatham’s Sensible Beliefs System, a framework also used by Smeal’s (2008) study of secondary math teachers and Çiğdem and Oğuzhan (2012) who studied pre-service math teachers’ beliefs. SBS grounds itself in the work of Green (1971) and Rokeach (1968). It begins with a description of beliefs in relation to their centrality, creating a hierarchy of core and peripheral beliefs. The logical organization between beliefs yields perceptions of primary and derivative beliefs – beliefs that relate not just as subsidiaries, but beliefs that
exist as extensions of other beliefs. Examining how beliefs cluster is also important when considering how they can at times appear malleable or inconsistent. These relationships underlie the thematic analysis in relation to composition in the classroom. Data were initially read looking for patterns and topics that became categories. Subsequent readings revealed themes that become subcategories, at which point, a picture of each individual participant emerged. Then common and conflicting categories and themes were examined across cases.

Important to the trustworthiness of a case study design is the gathering of data from multiple sources and through the use of multiple techniques. The use of written, reflective responses allowed participants to reflect and refine their ideas and beliefs and put them in their own words. The interview process created opportunities for spontaneous reflection that revealed more nuanced information. Beliefs in action were expressed through observation of class instruction. Such diverse approaches added to the benefits of triangulation. Member checks also provided the opportunity for participants to clarify meanings.
Chapter IV

Results

This chapter discusses the findings of the study, beginning with a detailed case study of each participant. Each case study presents insight into the teacher's philosophy of music education and their definition of composition through their classroom practice and the framework of their family and educational biography as expressed in their own words. This is followed by an analysis of each teacher's core, derivative, and peripheral or secondary beliefs and their relationship to their classroom and teaching of composition. Results regarding the study questions are then addressed. A discussion of each case and a cross-case analysis is then presented.

The participants, while having some common attributes, represent a range of approaches and beliefs about composition (see Table 1). Such common ground includes the fact that each is male, teaches middle school general music and band, and has a master's degree in music. On the surface, their definitions of composition appear to have much in common. Their perceptions of composition's function and purpose, however, are full of twists, turns, and questions and their paths diverge in very different and personal ways.

As can be the case in research, adjustments and accommodations were required in response to participants' needs. The study was originally envisioned to include four teachers with interviews after each reflection. The study was completed with three participants when several teachers failed to complete the full process. Teachers’ time constraints resulted in the condensing of the interviews. Rather than participating in an
interview after each reflection, a single interview acted as the culminating event. This allowed data from reflections and classroom observations to be analyzed in light of one another prior to the development of interview questions. In this way, teachers’ schedules could be accommodated while maintaining the integrity of the study.

The Case of Sam

The small suburban middle school where Sam teaches has seen several decades of use, but was well maintained. For the most part, the students, 77% of whom are white, came from what might be described as typical middle-income families. Music is taught in several different areas of the school that are connected through outdoor walkways and breezeways. The general music class was one of a suite of classrooms whose use rotated between several music teachers depending on the unit they were teaching. The classroom Sam taught his general music class in was a small tiled, tiered room with rows of desks on each tier. The entrance to the room was at the lowest level where Sam’s keyboard and desk were located. There were no windows to the outside and the ventilation was having a difficult time keeping up with the warm temperatures outside.

Sam’s large, friendly smile and gregarious greeting made him appear much larger in size than he actually was. His smallish frame and boyish looks made his 20 years or so of teaching experience appear implausible. On the other hand, his confidence and the knowledge with which he spoke made it all seem immaterial.

It was later in our meeting, about half way through our interview, when Sam found he was suddenly able to articulate an important belief he held about composition. It seemed to take him by surprise as he stopped and noted that it was after almost 30
minutes of his talking that he came to this one statement - "It's all about breaking down barriers." The barriers Sam was referring to were those between composers and regular people, classical and popular music, and teachers and students. Furthermore, the concept of community for Sam is one in which a level playing field exists. "What composition does is break down that wall between - there's you and there's musicians and composers. There's no difference. It's to break down the wall between them at their desks and composers' faces up on the wall. There's no difference. In a nutshell - that's why I bring composition into it - into all the lessons."

There was a grounding philosophy in Sam's approach to teaching that was not simply student centered - but human centered. It nurtured and encouraged students' creative exploration of themselves, each other, music, and the relationship between all three. Representative of Sam's focus, he framed the goal of breaking down barriers within the context of people - you, musicians, and composers. Repeatedly, Sam put people squarely at the center of each issue (see Appendix E).

Sam defined composition as a process rather than a thing saying "composition is creating something new through silence or sound" (see Appendix A). The concept of composition as a human process rather than a product was not only central to Sam's definition of composition, that human process is a recurrent theme in his philosophy of education and music education.

One of the biggest struggles young people have is finding out who they are. They don't really know themselves, or are afraid to let others see the 'real them'. Composition, especially in jazz band and jazz units in general music
allows every student, regardless of their innate ability, to express themselves. Be it on classroom glocks, saxophone, singing, clapping, etc... it also builds a real sense of community - if we perform a song together - we are immediately a community of musicians working together simultaneously, and depending on each other. Unlike sports, there is no bench in music.

Imbedded in this statement were a multitude of beliefs about music education, and composition and its role in the classroom. Sam's belief that all students have something to gain from music and his desire to help students grow and become expressive individuals was evident and he believed that composition had a role to play in achieving these goals. Sam also believed that composition can be undertaken in a variety of ways, at a variety of ability levels, and that it had a role to play in encouraging the development of community. The concept of music as a reflection and an agent of community and community building was a central component of Sam's musical world. He spoke about composition and teaching in terms of what it means to the students. That meaning was derived from how they encountered music as they walked through the world each day.

Embedding all he does in the context of human development and perceptions, Sam drew on the common ground students have with music and each other through these social and cultural associations. On several occasions Sam spoke about his dislike for iPods and other forms of electronics where people are involved with music in isolation. From Sam's perspective, the musical experience is diminished when the context of community is severed from it. He underscored these beliefs with quotes on his office door. One was credited to Daniel J. Boorstin and reads *Technology is so much fun but we can drown in*
our technology. The fog of information can drive out knowledge. The other was credited to Max Frisch and says Technology is a way of organizing the universe so that man doesn't have to experience it (see Appendix B).

While Sam believed that composition was not about talent and that the door to composing is open to anyone through the process of experimentation, he walked a narrow path, encouraging students to take chances and judging when to demand more from them. This was evident during his class when he joked that one student was not participating because he was under an exclusive contract (see Appendix D). Such judgment calls were evident in a number of instances such as when Sam made the conscious decisions to ignore one student's dance attempt and chide another student. It is within that delicate balance that he says

I'm trying to get that misconception that improvising is doing whatever you want. It takes work, and that there is good music and bad music. If teachers continually focus on the nuts and bolts of 'good music' and touch on the aesthetic aspects of music it will make young people a more educated audience/future consumer and not simply accept sounds coming from the radio and mass media outlets, which all too frequently champion manufactured, mundane, computer generated sounds that resemble music.

Thus it became evident that Sam's use of technical elements spanned from standard notation to musical vocabulary as he wove historical references with popular and personal ones. This served to make available a multitude of avenues for students to
identify with the music. From those connections, students were able to create an aesthetic relationship with the new experience.

Sam stated that he wanted students to feel like music class was different and wanted students to feel different while in his class (see Appendix E). He believed that a casual and friendly approach opens students to accepting, or at least entertaining, new ideas. He stated that students need to be actively involved in music-making. Otherwise, students can feel "on the sidelines - or even further than the sidelines." He worked to maintain an atmosphere of respect and safety that encouraged students to experiment.

As much as Sam wanted his class to feel different from other ‘core’ classes, he drew on examples from such classes to underscore why he believed composition was important.

I honestly don’t know how you can teach music without a thirst for compositional techniques. How can you write a novel without understanding metaphor, simile, antonyms, commas, periods, etc… the guts of writing. Same with music, for me. There were tons of composers alive in 1790 – why does Mozart still get airplay and Salieri doesn’t? It has to do with the content and structure of his music. The Great Wall of China still stands, we still study Shakespeare, we still listen to Mozart, Duke Ellington, etc… – why? They built their masterpieces correctly. If musicians don’t know what ‘good’ music is, it will not continue.

In this statement resides the spirit of his previous comments concerning the importance of "nuts and bolts", in learning to distinguish "good and bad" music. By understanding the
components and nuances involved in application, Sam believed he could get students to make more insightful observations and ultimately more sophisticated judgments about the music they encounter in their lives.

Ultimately, Sam balanced a blend of classroom styles that nurtured respect with the goal of fostering experimentation meant to lead students to a fuller understanding of the music they encounter in their lives. Composition, like Sam's philosophy and larger perspective on life, was not a stand-alone event, but rather a natural outgrowth of curiosity, exploration, and creativity. In his class, Sam stimulated conversation and the thought process that supported that conversation, and then strove to test the theories that emerged, through experimentation. It was not a perspective reserved for a gifted few, those who were in the band, or just those in the jazz band. It was for all students. His philosophy was one of inclusion, acceptance, encouragement, and work. His passion for his subject was palatable and his students responded.

**The Experiences that Underlie these Beliefs**

Over the past 20 years, Sam has taught elementary choral music, middle school strings, band, jazz band, and general music, been a substitute teacher, taught marching band, and was an adjunct instructor of theory and percussion at a community college. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Music Education and completed a Master of Music in Percussion Performance. Teaching in a suburb of a major east coast city, this self-proclaimed "jazz guy" performs regularly. Among his early reflections he makes clear that
I truly practice what I preach. I’ve been there, and done mostly everything in music. When students ask "Why do we need to know this?"... I can give them real-life reasons why learning the fundamentals and mastering them is essential. All of my varied experiences, performing, recording, writing, getting published, lets the students know I didn't just learn this stuff in books and classrooms; I've done it and used it all 'on the job'.

The path that brought Sam to his current beliefs was filled with twists, turns, and challenges that have nurtured the recurrent theme related to the value of hard work. Sam believed that

The best teachers in any subject make learning exciting and interesting. Education should also make students accountable for their successes and failures, and allow the students to fail; sometimes it is the only way to truly appreciate well-deserved success... Don’t just dream – get up and do it! No one is born able to play an instrument, compose, or sing – it just takes a lot of hard work and dedication.

Having worked his way through life's challenges and possessing a unified perspective life, education, and music, Sam appeared self-assured and confident in his musicianship and pedagogical skills.

Sam described his musical tastes and background as eclectic. He relays fond memories of his dad making pancakes on Saturday mornings and playing Mitch Miller records. The stereo was the center of the family's entertainment and may be one of those early experiences that underpins his belief that music is communal by nature. The stereo brought a world of music into the house that ranged from John Denver to Sinatra,
Ormandy, Herb Alpert, Barry Manilow and Barbara Streisand. Such breadth of musical exposure within a context where each was valued equally might contribute to Sam's perspective that good music has a universal quality that is not related to genre (see Appendix B).

Though the Catholic school Sam attended in his early school career offered no music, Sam's parents gave him piano lessons when he was in the fourth grade. Though his parents appeared un-phased, Sam's piano teacher was dismayed by his desire to improve upon Beethoven, turning Fur Elise into a boogie-woogie. While Sam believes that his imaginative inventions motivated him to play longer, the solitary nature of the piano was problematic for the young boy.

Describing himself as always being "out of sync" with trends in pop music, Sam explains that he was "more interested in who was playing the National anthem than the sports teams." Much of the music that infiltrated Sam's early life came by way of cartoons and movies, sparking his imagination. Sam claimed that his first experience with classical music was in Bugs Bunny cartoons. Later it came in the form of movie music; especially that associated with Star Wars and Rocky. He was very aware of how music permeated his imagination as a child and described using the 1812 Overture as the 'soundtrack' for his action figure play.

It was in band in high school that Sam became serious about music because it was here that the communal nature of music, rather than the solitary work at a piano, told him "this is where it's at." Since his band teacher did not teach percussion, an outside instructor was brought in. It was after a couple years of study with this instructor that
Sam realized that this person was performing professionally with famous professional entertainers. It became clear to Sam that he had something very special that his friends at other schools did not have. His focus and practice intensified (see Appendix C).

While fine as a hobby, music as a career was not what his working-class parents had in mind for him. He went to college, trying several different majors until the death of a classmate. No longer attending classes after this event, Sam failed all his classes. Searching for a solution to the problem, his parents asked him what he wanted to study. Sam once again told them he wanted to study music. Sam began a music education program where he described himself as a "paratrooper who hit the ground and never stopped running." He went on to explain that "I didn't have much of a musical education, but I think it made me so hungry for it that when I got to college - people were like 'I hate aural training. I hate theory.' I'm like - how can you hate theory? This is incredible. You put a seventh above the root and it has that tension like it was... Everything was brand new to me" (see Appendix E).

Sam relayed stories of the influences of two professors and a student who headed the drum line. Each, in their own particular way left their mark on his pedagogical approach and the beliefs and philosophy that underpin it. An indelible impression was left on Sam by the fellow student who led the drum line and patiently took the time to help teach the others (see Appendix C). One highly regarded and successful college theory professor met with students and conversed with them about their composition in a manner that respected their creative decision-making while encouraging them to explore new or alternate options. This professor broke the barrier between professor and student
and spoke to students with respect.

In his younger days, Sam said his approach to composition was structured and grounded in theory. His theory professor challenged his notions about theory and composition as he compared harmonic structures and approaches of Mozart and the Beatles.

This theory professor said "You can't always start from the architecture and get to the piece. Sometimes you have to listen to the piece and say "that's great" and it happens to have one chord. So he went the other way also. He said you have to look at music both ways."

Sam drew the connection between these experiences as well as his own experiences composing after the birth of his twin daughters to his classroom philosophy.

I would never tell them [students] they're wrong. I might suggest something else...
"hey - did you think of this?" Cuz when they were doing their improv stuff, a couple of them hit like a - I don't know - an E natural or something that was wacky. I said "Try a Bb" But I didn't say "No! That's absolutely wrong!" because, especially you know as a jazz musician - there are no wrong notes. It's just “how do you get out of the corner you just painted yourself into.” Sometimes that's where the magic happens. You're like "Really? Look how you got out of that problem. Ummm... and for me - like the jazz - classical - it's all the same. There is no difference in genre. It's just music to me."

Sam's early beliefs about composition as a theoretical structure could be described as secondary beliefs - those that were learned later in life and with which he was less
personally invested. Those beliefs gave way to core beliefs whose roots were laid early in life and in which he had other deep connections, in particular, those related his parents.

Similarly, Sam wanted to encourage that respectful, thought-provoking conversation. It was in that context that he believed creativity could be encouraged. Connections to Sam's early imaginative ventures with music and his own boogie-woogie versions of Beethoven were echoed in these experiences and his valuing of creativity and the creative process is further exemplified. When asked about ways other than the one he demonstrated that he might present composition, Sam was somewhat lost for a response. In an attempt to help him think through the question from another perspective I then asked in what way he would not present composition. Again, grounded in the human context, he responded that he would never tell students they were wrong. While his experiences with his theory teacher may have served as a model for this perspective, Sam instead pointed to an event from his own life outside of music involving an incident that prompted him and his wife to remove their daughter from the preschool she was attending (see Appendix E). His three-year-old daughter colored a face red and was told by her teacher "you don't ever paint someone's face red." When Sam asked his daughter why she was not allowed to color a face red his daughter said "She said it's wrong." His daughter responded to the teacher saying "You're wrong". This exemplified Sam's core belief that being told you are 'wrong,' especially within creative activities, inhibits growth and shuts down the development of the intellectual thought process that he experienced in his theory classes.

Sam's recollections of his music education professor were very different and stand
in stark contrast to those of his other professor. "One of the things I remember sticking out like a sore thumb is one of the professors said "never ever play pop music in your school music program". And as an undergraduate I thought to myself "you're an idiot." And I kept my mouth shut. As I did in all my education classes because my opinion didn't matter. "Okay, ma'am. I won't do that. It's evil." A far different experience, this perspective of feeling unimportant in his methods classes is not reflected in Sam's memories of other classes - in particular his recollections about theory and composition classes, or marching band.

Composition was not a specific topic in Sam's method classes. He vaguely recalls tasks where undefined activities around units related to world culture that might possibly have incorporated something related to composition along with discussions about consonance and dissonance, and tension and release. Methods for teaching composition to a seventh grade general music class were not elements in his methods classes. What his methods class did contribute to his teaching was to "be organized, keep moving, and set your priorities and pick your battles.

**Sam's Belief System**

Sam's primary beliefs appeared to cluster around a central belief that community is vitally important as shown in figure 1. Such valuing of community includes such derivative beliefs, beliefs that exist as extensions of primary beliefs, as communal support, inclusively, and the belief that everyone has ability and deserves a chance to try or do that which they feel compelled to do. His early childhood experiences around music related to family are strongly linked to this communal drive. This can also be observed in
his thriving on music that was more social, such as those experiences in band rather than
the solitude of the piano. Sam's belief that he had the right to reinvent Beethoven is also
an example of the existence of these beliefs early in his life.

Related to the primary belief that community is important are beliefs in the worth
and need for diversity, respect, and communication. The belief in the value of diversity
could be observed in Sam's regard for music regardless of genre. Diversity is also a key
component of improvisation and composition that not only allows, but requires students
to think in divergent ways and perceive music and the world from other perspectives.
Those perspectives may be musical, cultural, or historical.

Related to the valuing of both community and diversity is respect. Beliefs that are
derivative beliefs to respect are those related to the need for rules, tradition, duty, and work. These are beliefs that were reinforced by Sam's working-class family. Sam believed in respect for the institution of schools, and the foundational rules and tradition of music theory and repertoire. These beliefs underpinned the requirement for respect within the classroom. That respect was also foundational for supporting risk-taking in the creative process of composing. It was because of that respect for community, rules, and work, that students' had the responsibility to engage and work.

The belief that communication, and its derivative beliefs concerning the value of
discussion and opinions, even diverse opinions, are important and could be observed at a
number of points in Sam's story. For instance, the lack of dialogue with his parents' and
their resistance to his studying music resulted in years of educational mishaps. On the
other hand, the theory professor who engaged students in intellectual discussion, who
could easily have put his own self-importance above the opinions of his students, took a position that valued the exploration and development of ideas. He also valued diversity in creative decision-making. Alternately, Sam was not swayed by the music education professor who believed Pop music should be excluded from the classroom. It was less likely that Sam would embrace such an idea since the professor appeared not to value or respect Sam's views or discussion around the issue. Also, the foundations for inclusion among genre had already been laid at a young age through the positive relationship with his parents.

Figure 1. Sam's Belief System
Findings Pertaining to Study Questions

Sam's Beliefs about Composition, its Uses, and Definition

While Sam's definition of composition was broad, his context for its use in the classroom falls well within the traditional parameters for Western music. He utilized standard notion and vocabulary as guideposts and parameters within which students could investigate possibilities. Beyond Sam's formal definition of composition, "creating something new through silence or sound" Sam utilized composition because "It's all about breaking down barriers." It served to break down barriers between people while helping build community and common ground. As such, Sam conceived of composition as a human process, not a thing that sits apart from the human condition. Its production is part of a human expression of those conditions and he includes some insights into the historical, social, and cultural context from which it came.

Sam used composition to bridge the divide between 'school music' and real world music. He believed that composition helps students find their place in the world as he repeatedly compares what music and life, across the spectrums of time and place, hold in common. Composition in Sam's class required the development of the confidence to try and to experiment. Sam was persistent in reinforcing that "Mistakes are no problem. Try stuff. You can't worry about making a mistake." The non-threatening, conversational style of Sam's classroom environment supported that experimentation and confidence building. In the classroom, Sam supported these beliefs by creating an environment that says "Let's have a conversation. We're all human. We all feel hot in the classroom sometimes. We all have families. Music happens in our lives." This environment
supported the development of confidence that was required to take the risks involved in
the type of experimentation foundational to Sam's approach to composition. It also
created a common bond not only within the classroom, but within a universal context as
Sam made musical, social, and historical connections; connections between now and
then, and from one genre to the next. That bond even extended to sharing common
ground with those famous "composers" whose pictures resided on the walls.

The challenge to work through the creative process; do more, try harder, and think
through the process, and to then make it better were constantly present, though not in an
overt fashion. Sensing when to push students to try harder, Sam's enthusiasm, quick pace
and wit prodded students. It was as if there were hanging in the air the ever present
challenge to "think - because I'm going to challenge you. Experiment. Pay attention" as
he works to convince students to share in the dabbling in the unknown and be vulnerable
together.

**The Impact of Prior Experiences (Social, Cultural, Educational) on Beliefs**

Strong connections were evident between Sam's experience of the world and his
beliefs about composition. He himself concluded that it may have been the eclectic mix
of music he experienced as a child that influenced his vision that genre has nothing to do
with the value music may have (see Appendix E). Those experiences in his youth at
home were not stand alone events though. This perception was reinforced in his theory
classes where compositional techniques and analysis blurred the lines between genres. By
the time he experienced a belief contrary to this in his music methods class, his beliefs to
the contrary were more central and connected strongly to other beliefs related to music's
social and cultural importance. The professor who Sam portrayed as being closed to discussions and rejecting the utilization of Pop music in the classroom made Sam feel his views and opinions were unwelcome, and often just completely wrong. This exclusionary context served only to reinforce Sam's beliefs about the benefits of being musically inclusive, especially since Sam's experiences with valuing a breadth of music was grounded in a respect for both open dialogue and Sam's opinions. Here, links between valuing and respecting Sam's point of view formed strong links with valuing and respecting a broad range of music served to create and reinforce strong core beliefs.

Sam's own early experience with experimentation was rooted in the curiosity of a young boy. While his boogie-woogie version of Beethoven was not generally supported by his piano teacher, his 'improvements' upon Beethoven were not problematic for his parents. Again, the role of context in the development of beliefs can be seen. Here it suggests that the relationship between Sam and his parents who had already reinforced an egalitarian perspective across musical genres as well as a broad perspective of who was entitled or capable of creating music was more central than the relationship and beliefs held by his piano teacher who was less inclined to support his experiments.

Those early years around the stereo with the family were also foundational to Sam's beliefs that listening to music, unlike Barrett's "passive" (2002, p. 73) and Elliott's "disinterested" (1995, p. 33) listeners, was an engaging, active event that was socially driven. This need for socially grounded music experiences was very personal for Sam as he identified the solitude of practicing and playing the piano as problems for him. While it is hard to say what difference having had classroom music in elementary school might
have had, what was clear to Sam was that when band became an option in school, a whole new musical world, founded on these early beliefs, opened up. The social component of music-making helped make the musical experience blossom. Experiences in college, such as those in the music classrooms where the social interplay through intellectual discussion and learning through social leadership on the marching band field, served to reinforce this belief.

The social and cultural influences that underlie Sam's beliefs about music and composition extend to the role music plays in conveying the messages culture and society project. Sam experienced the power of music in telling stories while listening to music with his family around the stereo, in his imaginary play with action figures, as well as in movies. His use of examples from popular music, movies, or in prodding students to think about social situations where they have heard music similar to what they were hearing, are examples of his situating music in students’ every-day world. Adding his personal touch, Sam used his own life, being moved by the birth of his twin daughters to write music, to exemplify how motivation to experiment with sound to create music can emerge.

It is here, after students have been encouraged to open themselves to the process, value their own musical exploration, and see music's relevance to life, that Sam's beliefs about the work of music and the educational process take root. It is here that those elements of the creative process that come after the initial experimentation; the practice, the thought process, and refinement, take place. For Sam personally, the belief that the joy and work of music can join together seems to have appeared in high school when he
was motivated by the teacher brought in from the community who performed with various prominent entertainers. The realization that he had an opportunity that his peers did not and that he needed to take advantage of it motivated him. It appeared again after several false starts in his college education after having been dissuaded from studying music by his parents and the death of a friend. These personal events contributed to beliefs that music and composition, in order to have the opportunity to be 'good,' require work. And the work of music brings great satisfaction.

**Connections between Beliefs about Music Education and Classroom Activities**

Sam's philosophy of music education began by stating that 'the best teachers in any subject make learning exciting and interesting." He then went on the talk about the necessity for high expectations, holding students accountable, that learning should be related to real-life, the importance of active learning, and that there "is absolutely a place for every student in music - as long as they are willing to invest the time to improving." It is interesting to note that in Sam's philosophical statement, he spoke first about what makes a good teacher and then went on to explain the student's role. Sam's classroom exemplified this philosophy in that Sam was genuine in his enthusiasm for the subject matter and was focused on finding ways to personalize information to build understanding in order to engage students so they could go about their job of learning. No one sits on the 'sidelines'.

That fine balance between teacher and student obligations expressed in his philosophy was evident in the classroom. Sam defined it as his job to create interest and excitement around his subject matter that would engage students in learning. It was then
the students' job to engage and persist. For Sam's part, he expressed commitment to creating a classroom atmosphere that motivated students to engage, participate, and take chances. The enthusiasm and the perspective that Sam and his students were on a journey together, could take risks together, have fun together, and share their ideas without fear, formed the basis from which students could test the boundaries of what they could do. It was this foundational approach and the resulting classroom atmosphere that fulfilled Sam's end of the educational bargain and provided that basis from which students could engage and learn, and supported the high expectations for their growth.

Those high expectations were very important to Sam. The idea that you had to work for rewards was founded in his working-class family and the struggles he encountered in finding his way to a college music program. He mentioned on a number of occasions that he wanted students to come to understand the difference between 'good' and 'bad' music. In his philosophy of music education he stated this could be accomplished by "focusing on the nuts and bolts." Similarly, Sam compared understanding English literature with writing and understanding music. While this exemplified his respect for the formal structures and the necessity he felt for students to become familiar with the use of these elements, it also clearly defined his goals.

Sam's use of composition was no accident or coincidence. For Sam, composition helped him fulfill his end of the educational bargain. Embedded within an atmosphere that invited students into the world of music, showing them that they could be musicians and composers and lovers of all kinds of music, he engaged and challenged students. By requiring respect for all, being cordial, and encouraging active engagement by students,
he motivated students' to make their best effort - whatever it may be on any particular day.

The relationship between beliefs about composition and success in the classroom.

Sam's definition of composition was both broad and active. Framing composition as "creating something new through silence or sound," he described its use in the classroom as a component of students’ musical growth process; finding themselves through both creative and communal ventures. Yet Sam had a respect and saw the necessity for the formal components of composition doing what he often refers to as "slipping in" the technical components.

Success in achieving his goals in the classroom was evident in the level of student engagement and productivity. The caring and respectful nature of the class fostered these qualities and improvement in students' skills and willingness to step into unknown territory was clearly visible. Improvisation and experimenting, while 'slipping in' terminology and standard notation, are presented as second nature to each student and well within what they already know and do. Sam's historical, cultural, and social context presents students with ways to identify with what they are being asked to do. While Sam presents it as 'easy', he also underscores the fact that if students really want to get good at it, it will take a lot of work (see Appendix D).

It makes sense that Sam achieved his real world connection through tools that were also real world, tangible tools and ideas. It is through the use of standard notation and vocabulary, complimented by instruments such as bells or guitars that students utilized codified notational and harmonic systems and traditional forms to explore music.
Ultimately, Sam created a framework for utilizing composition that embedded musical learning and understanding in a traditional music context that is made relevant by social and cultural context that spans time and repertoire. Defying such boundaries, students were encouraged to reconsider their perceived boundaries, to take risks, experiment, and create.

The relationship between Sam's core world view and composition. What lies at the core of Sam's beliefs? It is clear that Sam believed in the importance of human relationships, especially those that foster respect and support human exploration and engagement with the world. Also central to Sam's beliefs was the value of music regardless of genre. These beliefs were formed very early in his life and reinforced through his teen and college years. Sam repeatedly returned to themes of relationships and breaking down barriers in his reflections and interview. This was also exemplified in how generous Sam was with his time, the re-telling of his life events, and the thoughtful way in which he responded to questions from a stranger in taking part in this research. Just as Sam does not put value one time or place in music history, or one type of music over another, or a band students’ composition over that of a general music student’s composition, Sam envisioned and worked to create an environment in which his students could experience a level playing field that allowed each student to envision their own success and accomplish whatever they put their mind to.

Historical, political and gender issues in Sam's vision of composition. The broad eclectic musical world that Sam embodied appeared to have some general leanings. He was a self-avowed 'jazz guy' and he used this doorway into students’ worlds during his
demonstration class. His writings included experiences performing in marching bands and within an orchestral context. His early love of the orchestral music associated with movies such as *Star Wars* and *Rocky* clearly made a significant impact on him and continued to be a potent influence in his musical identity. Music of other cultures or written by women or minorities in particular did not hold a category unto themselves.

Sam's tendency to remain grounded in identifiable goals, identifiable instruments, and standard notation was strongly evident. They are the tools that allowed him to relate to the real world of students, make a wide variety of styles of music accessible to students, and helped satisfy questions related to why music is important and how it is relevant in the real world. However, other cultural realities were omitted from his *C Jam Blues* lesson. There was no mention of issues related to race in the discussion of Duke Ellington or Louis Armstrong. There was no discussion as to why jazz presented as a new form of music or one particular to the United States. And while Ella Fitzgerald was mentioned, there was no reference to issues related to gender or the role gender played in the world of jazz and composition.

The role of efficacy in perceived ability, success, pedagogical approach, and success in teaching composition. Early in Sam's reflections he described his need to be able to respond to students' questions as to why they needed to know about music (see Appendix A). Most evident in his response to that question was that he himself embodied proof of its real-world application. In his role as a working musician, he had used the information that they were learning. Beyond the professional experience, Sam presented a persona of someone whose confidence is exemplified by the friendly manner
with those he encounters, not needing to prove himself. He demonstrated an ease both at the keyboard and in how he communicated with the students. His comfort with the music and in communicating with the students was evident in the flow, quick pace and wit, as well his ability to respond to each student with personalized critiques. It is unclear, however, if these traits would still be as visible if Sam were to experiment with other musical traditions or compositional approaches that were less familiar or technically grounded.

**Conclusion**

Sam has experienced the kinds of success utilizing composition reported by researchers such as Blom (2003), Hargreaves (1996), and van Ernst (1993) related, in particular, to composition's contributions to self-expression, empowerment, increased student engagement and musical problem-solving. Sam's beliefs, fostered and reinforced through family, social and educational experiences, underpinned what appears to be a coherent philosophical approach to music, composition, and life. As Sam stated, "music is music" and he embodies some of Allsup's suggestion that we have a need for "diversity of taste" (2006, p. 12). Ultimately, Sam concluded that the purpose of composition in the classroom is to help break down walls; walls that divide people and walls that confine people in narrow definitions of who they are or can be. His approach in the classroom exemplified this as he encouraged musical and intellectual exchange through experimentation, creativity, and technical understanding, all of which was reinforced by respect and the development of communal bonds.
The Case of William

I heard a great quote the other day: “Getting good at anything improves your ability to get good at things”. I think that’s something I try to use in my teaching...I want kids to learn about music, but I also want them to learn to think. Being able to think is maybe the single most important thing we can learn how to do. So maybe we should add that to my philosophy...I want my students to learn how to think, and I try to do that by helping them think about music, both as a listener and a musician.

William teaches in a private school set in a wooded area among old large stately homes. The school has a sprawling campus that has accumulated buildings over its more than 80 years of educating students from mostly higher income families. Entering William’s current school, with its wood and glass panels and large receptionist desk, was more like walking into a lawyer’s office. The general music class was held in the band room. It was a light and airy carpeted room with lots of glass that offered a view to the wooded area outside. William, an athletic blonde young man with a thoughtful and quiet demeanor, found himself here a year and a half ago after teaching band in a high school whose student population offered a variety of behavioral challenges.

William undertook his part in this study with an intent and focus that was characteristic of his approach and beliefs about life and learning. When ultimately asked what he most would like to make clear about his beliefs after having gone through the process involved in this study, William's response emphasized the importance of teaching students how to think with the goal of "getting good" (see Appendix L). In this response,
William too was 'getting good' through the continued evolution and revision of his philosophy of music education and evolving beliefs about music composition in the classroom.

"Getting good" and learning to think, as with many of William's goals for his students, are goals he held for himself as well. While he clung to the routines of his life, he worked to keep his vision of education and music flexible and open to revision. Through what at times appeared to be an inner struggle between analytical processes and the spontaneity of musical creativity and expression, he accepted the necessity of this growth process saying "you can always get better." William goes on to say

I want to be good at things but I tend to spread myself too thin. I get paralyzed by my thoughts sometimes, and that’s frustrating. I think too much when I shouldn’t, and sometimes I don’t think enough when I should be thinking carefully.

Reflection on the ups and downs of pedagogical decision-making and the search for refinement in thinking merges with William’s continual striving to 'get better'. This theme emerged again in William's second reflection where he stated "There is always another level of correctness/precision that can be attained" (see Appendix I). It was sometimes an uneasy friendship between "correctness/precision" and those things that foster creativity. Over the course of this study, the modifications William made to his philosophy of music education and definition of composition are a testament to his desire to get to "another level of correctness" and also to further his search for his own creativity. He appeared to question himself on a regular basis. While such perpetual questioning could be viewed as a weakness, and though it undoubtedly made William uncomfortable, it opened him to
new possibilities, greater 'precision' and 'another level of correctness.' Continually challenging the status quo, be it internal or external, he strove to find meaningful connections with his students and exhibited fearlessness in questioning and exploring his beliefs.

Revision was a form of 'getting good' practiced by William. While still envisioning composition broadly as "intentionally organizing sounds", William revised his purpose for using composition (see Appendix K). His primary reason for utilizing composition was previously strongly associated with its value as an assessment tool (see Appendix G). Now envisioning such assessments as mechanical tasks to evaluate whether students can, for example, put the correct number of beats in a measure, his goal was now to help students understand the creative process. When asked what prompted these changes William responded "I can’t think of any one thing...just the shifting nature of life, and constantly adapting to what it seems the students need or the curriculum requires." William took his current position a year and a half ago, moving from a large public high school to a small K-12 private school. He talked about his current school saying "Walking down the hallways you see the artwork. It's pretty awesome. There's some pretty neat stuff and the kids are encouraged to be creative." It appeared that in his continual goal of ‘getting good,’ William was adapting to his current surroundings, which had inspired him to re-evaluate his beliefs.

William did not set creative process as a goal because it was an area he considers one of his strengths or because it was an easy approach with fuzzy boundaries. In fact, being creative is an area in which William says he struggles. He criticized himself when
referring to his perceived lack of creativity saying that in his lesson "There's no room to just say "That sounds beautiful. Go with it." I'm not good at that." He is aware that he spends far more time stressing theoretical devises and goes on to talk about how anxiety concerning his own relationship with creativity has contributed to his teaching and personal growth.

I think that I may downplay or even gloss over the creative side of things because it’s such an area of need for me. I have often said that if I could change one thing about myself, I’d like to be a more creative/independent thinker, and creativity is one of those “hard to teach” things anyway, so my anxiety definitely affects my approach. When I think about teaching composition, I think about all the things that happen after the “idea”, and that’s definitely what we talk about most. In fact, if it weren’t for Stephen King’s book *On Writing*, I’m not sure I’d even be able to talk about the creative part as much as I do (which isn’t much). How do you teach someone to be creative?

William vividly saw the patterns of routine in his life and was very aware of not only their existence, but their role in his life exclaiming "Oh yes, process and routine are all over my life in every possible way." From breakfast to how his percussion equipment was packed in his van, he stated "Routine makes me feel comfortable, and the process of finding the most efficient routine is very interesting to me. Spontaneity terrifies me in every aspect of my life, except for when I’m making music." He believed that routine and the structure that it offers is an important element in his life (see Appendix K). Such ideas have brought William to believe that it is when playing music that he is most
creative and least likely to be boring and predictable. Music is the thing that brought balance to Williams’s life that, while freeing him, also brought him some level of comfort in its patterns.

While William stated that "Being able to think is maybe the single most important thing we can learn how to do", his comfort with the analytical process of thinking was counter-balanced by his own struggle with issues surrounding creativity. For William, there was a connection between thinking and creativity that was reflected in his statement that he would like to be a "more creative/ independent thinker." Believing that creativity is an important way of thinking, he found some comfort in fostering creativity by conceptualizing it as a process - the creative process. The framework for composition and creativity that William chose helped him persist in his efforts to bring compositional activities into his classroom despite his trepidations. By approaching the tasks through the "process of composition" and the 'process' of cultivating creativity, he fed into his strength in order to develop a perceived weakness.

Alright. Yeah. And I'm definitely a process oriented person. As much as I love music and being an artist and sort of being creative, I don't think that creativity is one of my strengths. If I wasn't a music teacher I'd be a math teacher and I would be formula and format and process and pattern and you do this to get that.

The concept of patterns re-emerges in William's philosophy of music education. The core of his original statement said "Every student is capable of making music, and it’s our job as music educators to find music with which our students can connect in a meaningful way." The active form of the connections, connecting, can be envisioned as a
process in itself. When asked what constituted "a meaningful way" he responded with an extensive list of examples that exemplified building connections with prior knowledge. These examples often included recognizing patterns; form, bass lines, rhythmic, or tonal. Being able to recognize a pattern in one place should promote the ability to recognize that pattern in something new. With this as his foundation, William worked to find music or popular frames of reference with which students already have some familiarity. This allowed him to stretch students’ application of that knowledge into new situations. These types of experiences, he explains, are necessary before students can create their own musical ideas. Similarly, he stated that

most of my composition assignments include parameters, so instead of saying “Write a melody”, I might say, “Write a four-measure melody in the style of _________”, or “use the chord progression from ‘Happy Birthday’ to write your own melody”, or maybe “develop a set of rhythmic variations based on the first four measures of _________”. Basically, “take what you already know and understand, and use it to do something more”.

William described not only the approaches explained above, but he also reflected on other perspectives on composition he has utilized. He recalled classes he had previous taught describing a process where composition was studied through the analysis of pieces rather than being undertaken as an active event. He now looks back on such conventional approaches with some regret admitting that it was frequently just a way of saying he had fulfilled a standard. This revelation became clear as he proclaimed "This whole process for me is like ‘Holy cow. I never really did teach about composition. I talked about how
to compose."

Even though William has experimented with many approaches for teaching composition, and even though he himself experienced innovative musical composition that incorporated sounds such as the jingling keys and gongs submerged in water when he was in high school, he is still conflicted about how to apply his definition. He pointed out that "improvisation and composition are pretty closely related. I wish there was a way to jam those standards together because when you improvise you are composing. Right?"

Context in defining composition became a point of contemplation for William because when improvisation is used in the context of jazz, he has no doubt that it qualifies as composition. He continued to think through perceptions of and relationships concerning improvisation and composition noting

I wonder how much of that is when we think of improvising we think of the tenor sax and jazz and a ton of notes and all that stuff. But when you're doing fourth grade general music, they improvise on Orff instruments and they improvise on their knees and that's improvisation too. I can't help but think at some point Beethoven was sitting at the piano improvising and goes "Ah! That's the one. I'll develop it." So maybe it's the first step in composition.

While he currently applies these ideas to a class of ten, he made comparisons and tested his hypotheses through the lens of a class of 30. Here he saw limitations in how composition could be presented in those circumstances and reverted back to envisioning composition through pencil and paper exercises which he classifies as "pushing lead around on a piece of paper and it's not [composition]." He went on to admit that this is
still a work in progress saying "I don't know."

Before the development of his latest creative process driven approach to composition, William’s class went into the keyboard lab and worked on computers using Garage Band. While noting that they had some good "producers" in the group, this approach left William feeling unsatisfied. He compared Garage Band to giving students a word bank (see Appendix K). While students came out with a slick finished product and they were engaged in musical decision-making, he believed it shortchanged his students by limiting their creative choices and not challenging their creative process. He explained that the Garage Band project would be better suited as a follow-up to the current composition project. William also observed that the Garage Band project isolated students from each other and him. Utilizing his current approach, students were more engaged when learning with each other and with him. He was better able to observe their process and their thinking.

In these responses, William's desire to develop a community of learners and observe students' thinking process molded his curriculum choices. While he praised the self-directed element of experimentation that comes with his composition lesson, he ‘felt the need to be more involved in their process and the resulting educational relationship; the organization of their thinking patterns as they develop and link together. Such analytical organization of patterns, as expressed by William, was not cold or sterile. Rather, they were imbued with community and humanity where the acknowledgement of imperfection or embarrassment is not an indelible stain on one’s character. For William, the patterns and relationships that were fostered were reflective of relationships, not just
between things, but between people and their ideas.

William's kindness and acceptance of the rambunctious and curious nature of students and his intense desire to contribute to their growth was obvious in how he spoke to them, the generous way in which he compliment them, and his willingness to admit when he made a mistake or noted that he was embarrassed (see Appendix J). His perceptions of the world were grounded in beliefs that acknowledge a multitude of possible ways of being; that musicians have different strengths and students have different needs. It was a flexible vision that fit well with his perpetual striving for the 'getting better' for his students and for himself as both a teacher and person. Additionally, people have a responsibility to do their part. When they do, the result is "greater than the sum of the parts" (see Appendix L).

In his striving for "getting good" and his search for balance between his analytical, process driven self and what he seems to envision as his illusive creative self, William modified his beliefs about composition. He credited his current compositional approach to reflection and reading over the summer that brought him to Stephen King's book *On Writing*. From this he developed the structure for his lesson, encouraging and guiding students in the development of ideas, both tonal and rhythmic, that could be expanded through musical techniques such as sequences, inversions, and retrogrades. Sprinkled with examples from the familiar Stephen King story and TV show *The Dome*, musical examples on the keyboard, and standard notation, William lead his students from one idea to another, and one technique to the next. He brought the lesson to a close with a comparison of those final details of articulation and dynamics to the salt and pepper in
seasoning food and character development in stories, when the author decides if a character should have such traits as an accent or a limp.

Insight into William's beliefs or the state of his beliefs can be gleaned from some of his definitions and are helpful to keep in mind when working to understand William's meaning. One such instance arose in relation to William's definition of 'musical'. When asked if his mom was musical, he overlooked her singing and dancing, and focused more on whether she played an instrument. Such responses contribute to understanding of how William defines ‘musical’ and the context he envisions for his mother in relation to music. Again, in considering whether he had made up songs as a child, he strongly linked songs with words rather than just melodies (see Appendix K). He did not conceive of the music in his head as a child, which he said was constantly there, as songs because he did not hear them with words. Also, while having a broad definition of composition and experiences with 20th century compositional techniques in high school, his focus was guided by his strong kinship with form, patterns, and structure in the European Art music context.

Ultimately, William believed that learning to think and to see connections and patterns is a flexible process of reflection and revision that is embedded in a creative venture allowing for experimentation and respect. He also believed that these are among the most valuable things he can help students learn to do. It is not, however, a lesson or world reserved for his students alone. It is a life-long striving in which he himself participates. Within it, he freely admits his perceived weaknesses, his embarrassments, and his hopes for "getting good".
Experiences that underlie those beliefs. William struggled with the thought that his father was not the first person to come to mind when asked about his early musical influences. He could not deny that his childhood church music director, John, had the most profound mark on his early musical life (see Appendix H). William's admiration for John was significant and his impact on William's life was immense. William professed that the foundation for his life, both musical and ethical, came from the musical lessons he learned with John. William recollected "I'm sure that on more than one occasion I've made the right decision in my life because of words I learned as a member of his choir." He went on to recall John's approach with the children saying

He took on a different persona when working with kids ("Uncle Igor"), and had invisible imaginary friends who used to help him solve rehearsal problems…for example, he’d stop in the middle of a piece, get really quiet and say “what was that, Yak? You think the children should sing louder at the refrain? What a wonderful idea! I’ll tell them!”…or other such gimmicks to keep us engaged (Yak lived inside the piano until one day when he grew too large, and a new stuffed snake appeared in the rehearsal room…I’ll always remember when we finally got to see Yak!)

The pipe cleaner figure in William's current classroom pays homage to John and Yak. William went on to explain "[John’s] energy, enthusiasm, creativity, musicianship, and support definitely got me moving in the right direction, and he is without a doubt the single most influential person on my early musical development." William described instances where he has directly drawn from John's alter ego "Uncle Igor" saying
I do sometimes stop in the middle of a piece and say things like “Mary, [pretend character] did I hear you say earlier that we should take a bigger breath at measure 71? Because I think that’s a great idea. Let’s try it everyone”…definitely the influence of my dear “Uncle Igor”!

Here it becomes clear that William's generous spirit in his classroom and his playfulness with students were modeled for him during these early years.

Drumming appears to have played a significant role in the development of a strong bond between William and his father (see Appendix I). He was his first drum teacher and drumming was key in the development of their relationship. He relayed the story of his father playing drums in high school, but sold his drum set when he married William's mother so they could buy furniture. Playing drums was an interest that was rekindled when William became interested. He and his father played along to all kind of music, from Barry Manilow to The Pete Fountain Orchestra, and William believed that this is where he really learned how to listen. He proudly stated that it was his father's idea that William play his exercises at the tempo of whatever song came on the radio rather than using a metronome. William made a strong connection between his father's encouragement of utilizing familiar music and layering new skills on top with sound educational practice.

It was some time before William explained that his very supportive mother and the father he spoke of so admiringly were divorced. At one point noting that his childhood was "chaotic," he described himself as the youngest in his class, "quiet and shy," and as always being the last to do things such as tie his shoelaces. The language
William used in his descriptions suggested a self-deprecating vision of himself that contributed to his mantra associated with 'getting good'. He described himself as "boring" and he "labored" over the realization that his father was not the first person who came to mind as important in his life musically. He, on several occasions referred to being "embarrassed" by things such as not keying into lyrics like his wife and children do, not immediately recognizing the sequence in the class example, and in his reflection where he wrote that he did not want to be a music teacher when he went to college. He commented that he had "lots of bad ideas" in his head. William also made it clear that the thought of being asked to compose something makes him "paralyzed with fear." While possibly related to some of his early insecurities, such perceptions also may contribute to his empathetic approach in the classroom and his need to strive and get better.

William went on to explain that the routines he developed in childhood helped him deal with the "chaos" and helped him feel more in control of his life. Though he believed that in adulthood those things are less true, he felt that "having a routine is part of my routine, so why would I stop?" The routines and the structure they provided were first mention by William in his reflection about the percussion teacher he studies with from seventh grade to his freshman year of college (see Appendix I). "She was very organized, she had a great sense of humor, and an excellent method to get her students from point A to point B in their work. I learned about structure and discipline from her." Her application of structure and organization may have fed into William’s predisposition for routine which may have not only further reinforced his kinship with such elements, but also strengthened his bond with music.
When it came to composition, William said he had no idea where his ideas for teaching composition came from. His recollections of composition were not related to music education methods classes, but to those of theory and analysis classes that were taught by a professor who was a composer. He spoke with delight about discovering the patterns in Bach in theory class and was influenced by his best friend in college who was a composition major, becoming a composer by proxy. His own attempts, however, always fell below his expectations leaving him now with only anxiety over the prospect of having to compose.

William did not start out to be a music teacher. He first thought he could make a career of music came from his church music director who gave him his "first paying gig." However, while William saw his future as a performer, his parents wanted more stability for him and insisted that if he were to study music, he needed to study music education. Resigning himself to a major in music education, William's approach was to “learn as much as I can and apply to it a performance career.” This apparently worked well "until I was student teaching." He went on to explain "I really, really, really loved my first student teaching placement, and it was extremely gratifying to work with the kids and see them learn and improve." He confessed that it made him wish maybe he had paid more attention in some of his other courses that were focused on teaching.

The dominant influences during William's teen years and early adulthood came from other students and with band leaders other than his school band teacher. These experiences brought him insight into the significance of not only personal responsibility, but how that responsibility contributes to the whole. His experiences with composers who
came into his school to work with students in the performance of compositions that utilized 20th century techniques opened William’s eyes to diverse ways of defining music. When hearing the recordings of these performances, it also made William realize the balance between his own part and the implications for the group as a whole.

I was working as hard as I could to play the right notes the right way at the right time, and I don’t think I had any idea what was really going on around me. When I first listened to the CD after it was released, I was amazed at how different it sounded compared to what I heard while I was playing my parts…the whole was so much greater than the sum of the parts, and I’d completely missed it while being immersed in my own responsibilities.

He recalled a friend playing a CD of a brass ensemble saying ”I’d never heard anything like it…the balance, intonation, blend, and ensemble “tightness” were at a level I’d never noticed before. Again,

it opened my eyes to what was really possible in music, and made me start to pay more careful attention to what was being asked of me as a performer, particularly in terms of how my part fit into the overall musical structure.

Similarly, William learned to think beyond his own part at a summer jazz workshop. He described an instance where

During the solo, one of the players got lost in the form and missed a section change, so the instructor (the late Boysie Lowery), told him to sing the tune in his head. It hit me…holy cow, even when no one is playing the melody, the melody still exists through the chord changes!”
Here, William's understanding of the dynamic relationship between one person and the group on the whole began to evolve.

Significant to William's beliefs about the value of individuals and the complicated issues surrounding assigning value and assessment was the story about William's friend Ed, who he considered a role model. Described as someone who was "always listening to something new, trying to learn more music, and in general just loves the process of taking in music" Ed was not accepted into the music program at the local university. The reason, as William understood it, was that he was not a "well-rounded musician" which translated to issues around not having a sufficient background in music theory and Western Art Music. William "was shocked that someone with as much knowledge of music as Ed would be considered “unacceptable”". Ed's life was significantly impacted by this event and though he has an excellent regional reputation as a performer, Ed still feels anger over being rejected by the university. William sees a flaw in this system of valuing and evaluating and said "I think of him often when I encounter a student who has high musical intelligence but in a different area of expertise than the “norm”.

The great organizing force of music in William’s life can be found in drum patterns and in an analytical and process driven sensibilities. His drumming was a significant factor in his development as a child, helping him develop his identity, and assisting in stabilizing his relationship with his parents. Music also served to help William apply his routines. He credited music for helping develop the organizational skills contending that "I found myself first as a musician. So I'm pretty grateful to music for that. I definitely learned a lot about how to think, and how to manage my time, and all
those non-musical things because of having to do them in music." It was not clear how or if William separated the musician part from the non-musical skills part. However, when examining the connection between his own experience and the type of thinking and analytical skills he believed are a priority in his educational philosophy, the two appear to have a symbiotic relationship.

**William's Belief System**

At the core of William's beliefs are relationships - those that reveal patterns and connections in the world and music, as well as those between people. Experienced early in his life, music was a way to connect with his father and mother, establish an important role model in his church choir director, and it helped him develop the structures and processes exemplified in Dr. Smith, his percussion instructor after his father. The routines that emerged as derivative beliefs contributed to the value of these beliefs as early organizers of his life that have helped William find balance and control. From this flowed two avenues as depicted in figure 2; one of goal-oriented process and the other the context in which those goals are achieved.

William embraced and even relied on those connections, patterns, and routines and found in them the route to "getting good," where there is always more to learn and the need to strive to reach that next "level of correctness/precision". Accomplishing this required the development of thinking skills that would foster the routine of organizing the world and seeing and understanding the patterns that hold it together. Here, the role of learning to think, perceive patterns and relationships, and make connects are conceived by and achieved through a process driven approach.
The belief in such goals and methods are balance with equally strong beliefs that extend the rational perceptions of relationships, connections, and patterns to the realm of human interaction. William strongly believes that is more to the world than just ourselves. This belief is associated with two derivative belief. First, when we connect with others we create something that is more than the sum of the parts. Also, that in connecting and sharing with others, we teach each other. William also finds great value in the "thinking in real time" that is required when playing in ensemble, where people have to react together. In further examining the relationship between people, William has come to the belief that there is value in the diversity of people, musicians, and music. In some ways this can be envisioned as derivative belief because it can be perceived as more than just a way of perceiving connections and relationships, but as a way of considering being more than just ourselves. It acknowledges the value and contributions of varying perspectives.
Findings pertaining to study questions

William's beliefs about composition, its uses, and definition. At the core of William's definition is a broad perspective that leaves room for interpretation and application. While William's definition of composition remains consistent, his perceptions surrounding it and its uses are flexible. Defining composition as "intentionally organizing sounds to create music" was a matter of practicality for William because it allowed for his belief to function as part of the evolutionary process of 'getting good.' Struggles still continued for William when considering what constitutes composing as opposed to "pushing lead around the paper." He also continued an internal debate in differentiating between improvisation and composition, perceiving some distinction since he interpreted the National Standards for Music as treating them individually. William also wrestled with the perception of improvisation as being relative to context; being
perceived in one way when associated with children playing Orff instruments as opposed to perceptions when embedded in the jazz idiom.

Though William had high school performance experiences with composers who utilized 20th century compositional techniques, he grounds his classroom activities, both past and present, in standard notational experiences or experiences that utilize standard practices that frequently involving technology. Those high school experiences with 20th century techniques have not found their way into his classroom. When discussion concerning the use of graphic notation arose, William explained that those were experiences that students encountered in the fifth and sixth grade. He described graphic notation as not only sound scores, but linked them with graphic listening guides. Unlike standard notation whose recurrent use was meant to promote musical development, graphic notation and other 20th Century compositional techniques were experienced and left behind.

William's uses for composition have continued to evolve and adapt depending on the classroom situation and environment. As he reflected on the various uses, a shift in his primary beliefs can be observed. At one point he envisioned composition as a standard that needed to be fulfilled. It was a standard to be met because it fulfilling the duties of his job and the expectations of the administration. Composition also played a significant part in William's assessment strategy. Last year's seventh graders composed by organizing sounds in the Garage Band software on the computer. Motivated by the creative atmosphere of his current school and influenced by the technical facility of his students and small class size, William challenged himself to bring more to his students in
their compositional education. Utilizing process structure as his bridge into the personally uncertain territory of creativity, William developed the concept and accompanying plan to teach composition as a creative process.

**The impact of prior experiences (social, cultural, educations) on beliefs.** William’s belief in the importance of relationships and connections as well as the importance of there being "more than just ourselves" is clearly depicted in his life. Music was William's way of finding himself and connecting not just to the world, but, from a very young age, to his family. Music served as a hinge pin in the relationship between himself, his mother, and his father. As a stabilizing factor in those relationships, it united them when they were otherwise distanced. Even now it acts as a unifying bond with his sister who, while in their youth, dislike William practicing drums when he came home from school, now says she doesn't mind her own son coming home and practicing drums because it is like having William back.

William's belief in the importance of relationships was reinforced in his early musical experiences where it gave him an identity at a very young age. He found a nurturing musical and moral influence in his church music director who exemplified teaching relationships that William still carries with him. As William got older he found that the importance of those personal connections and relationships were greater than he had imagined. Friends have, throughout his life, been great sources of inspiration from which he has learned a great deal. They have shared their recordings, involved him in their musical compositions, and challenged his concepts of what makes someone a musician. The importance of these relationships is not lost on William. His statement
that we are "more than the sum of our parts when we join with others" stems from these early encounters.

Over the course of William's education he experienced a wide variety of music that for the most part underscored the European tradition and standard notation. His early education under his father's tutelage included Pop, jazz and classical music which reinforced a place for the value of diversity in music that while fairly broad, does not overtly cross cultural lines. While experiencing some 20th century compositional techniques in high school, William has embraced the structure and patterns embedded in these traditional musical forms. This affinity for structure merges with his teaching style and emerges in the process of helping students learn to think in the pursuit of 'getting good.'

**Connections between beliefs about music education and classroom activities.**

William's philosophy of music education was clearly reflected in the class I observed. He worked to help every student learn to think about music in ways, and through methods and means, that connect to their world (see Appendix J). The discussion format utilized in William's class was free-flowing and flexible, with students frequently calling out answers and more or less thinking out loud. He questions them intensely. The Smart Board grounded the discussion and provided the ability to compare and contrast examples in a way that was both efficient and entertaining. William's use of popular references familiar to students, such as *The Dome* helped to engage them in the discussion. His questions aimed to provoke thought, create connections, and encourage them to form ideas. Formulating ideas was the starting point for this lesson. The constant exchange of
questions and responses were punctuated with terminology, standard musical devices, and keyboard demonstrations. William lead students through structured alterations, patterns and connection between musical devises, enticing them with new possibilities for mutations of the example, hoping they would see the patterns and connections between not only the musical devises, but the compositional and creative processes of music and stories.

What William said he liked about this lesson, which he felt was missing in the Garage Band experience, was that here he not only had more contact with the students, but he got to "hear their thoughts more." It presented a delicate balance between wanting students to think and knowing how much they could take in, pacing the intensity of information with moments of release to play with different colors for the notation on the Smart Board. A few moments of exchange concerning the difference between a sequence and sequins also provided some moments of respite that allowed students to refocus. William believed in their ability and worked hard to challenge them while still finding those connections that would reveal experience meaningful to them.

The relationship between beliefs about composition and success in classroom. A flexible vision of composition that continued to develop and mature has allowed William to experiment with various visions of composition. From an approach that deconstructs music in order to uncover how composers compose to a computer program where the challenge is to organize pre-recorded sounds, William continued to investigate composition as a vehicle to engage students in understanding music from the inside out. As he continued to strive to get better, and as he encouraged his students to get better,
William gave his lessons specific shape while at the same time being open to what students may contribute to it, and how as a community, they might change William's perspective for the future. He found a balance where his organization did not over-ride his goal of getting better, but rather formed a basis from which he and his students could grow.

The measure for success continued to develop as well. William was no longer content with checking composition off the list of things to be done in order to substantiate that he was doing his job. The fact that students managed to get the appropriate number of beats in each measure was no longer his measure for either his success or theirs. It was an active engagement with students; that connection where he could observe their thinking process, that motivated him and moved him toward greater success as a teacher. His moving from the Garage Band approach to the exploration of the creative process had students closer to the music, and him closer to his students.

**The relationship between William's core world view and composition.** William exhibits great consistency between his values, beliefs, and world views. He approaches the world with a great deal of humility. Such humility is a tribute to his belief that the world is about more than just ourselves and that together, we are "getter than the sum of our parts." His humble manner with the students demonstrates that the value in joining with others is not limited to those of a certain height, I.Q., or even a certain age. The relationships and connections he values in these instances are the human ones. His desire to get closer to his students is evidenced by his dissatisfaction with the distance encountered in the lesson with Garage Band and preference for the interactions he now
has with his latest approach. His belief in the value of connecting as human beings was likely what drew him to teaching during his student teaching experience.

In teaching, William has not only found a way to live his belief in the value of human connection, it has also given him a system within which to build and develop more structures for exploring the endless process of 'getting good'. Especially within the setting of the private school in which he works, the cultivation of his own thinking process is a valued part of his work. Within this setting, William has found a situation that not only allows him to live his beliefs, but appears to support and encourage it.

**Historical, political and gender issues in William's vision of composition.** William's encounters with composition have been dominated by traditional male visions of composition within European Art music. The guest composers he encountered in his high school, and the friends that he spoke about who composed or those that he created music with were all male. William made special note of the role of the percussion teacher he studied with after his father who was female and the impact of her organizational skills. While this did not appear to have any influence on his conception of composition in particular, it should be noted that this was the only female of musical prominence mentioned and that there were also no female influence noted at the college level, related to composition or not. This is also true of William's experiences on the whole. The only other females noted were his mother, who William described as not being a musician, and his sister who was described as "decidedly not" musical.

The students in William's class were not differentiated in any particular way, though all the girls sat on one side of the class and the boys sat on the other, seemingly of
their own accord. William did note that the use of graphic notation and more organic
types of composition were undertaken by the female instructor who taught fifth and sixth
grade. William's class itself did not contain any historical, political, or gender references.

The role of efficacy in perceived ability, success, pedagogical approach, and success in
teaching composition. William admits that he was "paralyzed with fear by the thought of
being asked to compose a piece of music." While he loved analysis and finding the
patterns in music, he stated that he never had a class in "how to compose." His comfort
with and affinity for the patterns and structures embedded in music have, in the past,
steered him toward deconstruction and the study of how composers have composed and
their process for composing. He now looks back on these approaches with some regret.

William questioned and even doubts his creative abilities when he is not behind a
drum set. He therefore arrived at an approach that challenged himself with the
exploration of creativity by embedding it in the shroud of process. Just as he looked for
'meaningful' ways into students' worlds in order to make connections that will encourage
them in continued learning, William has utilized one of his perceived strengths, process,
to also help himself build connections between his strengths and what he perceives as the
illusive world of creativity.

Conclusion

Percussion and teaching may very well represent and contain the perfect sum of
William's beliefs. At the core of William's beliefs is the value of relationships; those
patterns, connections and the resulting structures and routines that hold music, people,
and the world together. Percussion, especially playing a drum set, are the epitome of the
relationship between patterns. The analytical process of reading and performing such music demands working through a process of thinking and the motivation to continually strive for the "next level of correctness/ precision". Teaching also values and relies heavily on the development of structures that encourage the identification of relationships and connections that nurture process and thinking in order to help students, all with the goal of 'getting good'.

Such relationships, structures, and patterns extend past the analytical process and emerge on a personal level, in the classroom, and in how William interfaced with the world. Relationships within the classroom that value and encourage the sharing of ideas for mutual benefit and growth underscored and supported learning in William's classroom. His classroom also exhibited a valuing of diversity; including that of musical style and especially related to worth in varying abilities.

For William personally, music has been a socially organizing force since a very early age, contributing substantially to his identity, molding his moral character, and helping him make sense of his world when it seemed to be in chaos. As he got older those beliefs were further reinforced as he found that musical patterns and structures had meaning beyond his page and his part, encompassing both his social and musical worlds as they expanded. Music appeared to have been an organizing factor in defining his relationship with his divorced parents. The organization of musical relationships in ensembles required him to look and listen past himself, and while it was important to execute his part well, he was contributing to something greater than just "the sum of its
parts." Music was also an interactive sharing of ideas and recordings between him and his friends, and now his students.

The Case of Mark

Appearing a little nervous, Mark greeted me in the front office of this several decades-old, yet well-kept middle school and explained that he had to finish lunch duty. The school was set in the midst of a large middle-class housing development with rolling hills. Though located in the suburbs, integration laws of three decades ago continue to contribute to an ethnically diverse student population. Economically, approximately 40% of its students are designated as low income. The general music class was held in the band room; a small, dimly lit space with a low ceiling and over-filled with chairs, music stands, and equipment.

Having taught middle school music for seven years or so, this large, sturdy, soft-spoken young man entered into this study having finished his Master's Degree in Music Education just weeks before. Some of his nervousness may have been related to the typical anxiety a student may have when feeling like they are being closely examined. He approached this study with the mind and focus of a student, working to bring practice and educational theory together. Having had students come from the local university to do practice lessons with his students, he had seen them present lessons pertaining to composition. Mark had obviously been thinking about the role of composition in a general music classroom and marveled at their approach noting

I think that's why my student teachers are coming in now knowing how to do stuff because they're actually going through it and taking it a little more seriously
whereas I just either didn't take it seriously or it wasn't something that was...

His thoughts trailed off as he continued to think about the differences between the student teachers he sees now and his own past experiences.

Mark has struggled with his definition of composition and it continued to evolve throughout the study (see Appendix M). His original definition focused on the construction of musical ideas that needed to be written down so they could be performed "as close to the composer's original intent as possible". After considering the lesson that he saw student teachers present, and as he developed his demonstration lesson for this study, he decided that composition could still take place even if it were not written down, but it still needed to be reproducible. Though Mark realized on an intellectual level that composition could exist in many ways and noted that "Music is not black notes on white paper. Music is all around us", he repeatedly returned to say "I mean honestly. Again, it's still in my head, it's hard to get out of that mode what composition is a serious thing."

Further light was shed on Mark's beliefs about composition about half way into the interview when Mark, in described how listening, creating, and performing come together in general music, began to describe the improvisation unit he has now taught to 28 classes (see Appendix Q). None of Mark's reflections or philosophical statements had mentioned improvisation or its use in his classes or its relation to composition. His excitement, as he talked about the improvisation lesson was obvious, as he became more engaged in the conversation. He explained that, using the xylophone, the pentatonic scale, and Abersall CDs, he taught students how to hold the mallets, though noting it as "less important for this lesson" and explained what row of bars to play. He explained that
"no one can mess up" and that the students get to experience trading fours. He told students that it is like "magic" as he explained musical phrases and form. Further discussion of this lesson in comparison to the demonstration lesson he had recently given, again revealed deeply rooted beliefs about the formal nature of composition as he conceived of it. In explaining why he felt the improvisation lesson did not fit the parameters of the demonstration composition lesson asked for in the study, he said "You didn't want improvisation and that really wasn't quite - well then you could have - I guess I could have. But again, I'm still thinking that wasn't my definition."

Mark centered his philosophy of music education around listening, performing, and creating within a flexible hierarchy that was dependent on the type of class he was teaching. Mark felt strongly about the role of general music in students' lives and was disturbed by research he had read that claims only 20% of students in grades 6 - 12 participate in music. This, he declared, creates a "members only club." He believed that there just are not enough general music classes and he had a theory as to why general music in middle school is both scarce and difficult to teach.

We don't have enough of this music class that's not for performing because you know why? Because no one went through it themselves. We're all performers; clarinet players and flute and flautists and we never sat in a general music class. So we might not have these ideas to come up with this stuff because we've never seen it. So we have to just invent it from the start and that's scary.

Taken together, these statements begin to frame Mark's beliefs about the function of various types of music classes, who takes those classes, and how they will best interact
with music; who plays, who listens, and how they create music.

Mark’s goal for his general music class was to teach students how to talk about music through listening and to offer them a variety of musical experiences (see Appendix K). The listening focused design he has created was guided by worksheet questions intended to help students focus on musical devises and form, as well as historical events. This is an approach that Mark developed during his first teaching position. It was at a middle school and focused primarily on band. Feeling lost when it came to the general music class that was included in his teaching schedule he said "I was told "Don't worry about it because you need to focus on the band and make the band sound great. So why don't you go rent some videos, musicals from the music store or whatever." Show the movies and figure it out."

Not satisfied with that approach, Mark developed his listening and worksheet approach. With the help of the district's Understanding by Design initiative, his ideas were put into a formalized framework. This type of process required Mark to make decisions and determinations as to who he believed his general music students were, what they were most likely capable of doing, and what he believed was most valuable to offer them. These decisions were anchored by his belief that popular music was the best medium to use to gain entrance into students’ world,

not that kids don't want to learn about Beethoven. Kids need to learn about music, and that doesn't necessarily mean Beethoven... however we can get them to learn about it. Whatever we can do to do that. It doesn't have to be Mozart.

With a focus on listening, Mark believed that general music, beyond clapping and
"very, very little singing" is not a performing class. He believed that "there is that line. Like you have these kids that want to perform and the kids that maybe aren't interested in music." Mark also, on several occasions, differentiated between students and attributed their success to talent saying "Some of the kids clearly had a little more talent than other kids. They were able to do certain things and had ideas." This observation tended to imply that students have innate talent which contributed to their varying needs, and that some students would benefit from some lessons and be more prone to succeed than others.

Mark’s improvisation unit fulfilled the creating portion of his philosophical triangle and he used improvisation in both the band and the general music classes. While students in both types of classes had the opportunity to create music through these improvisational experiences, Mark explained that he envisioned different reasons and different goals, depending on the class. "In general music setting, the purpose is to get the students improvising without any prior (purposeful) knowledge” whereas in the band class the goal was to "develop their technical ability on their selected instruments, help them to develop musical ideas within the musical context, the ability to express those ideas on their instrument (from the mind to the instrument)." Ultimately, "in the band class my goal is to make them better musicians, improvisation being one of the means to that end" whereas in the general music class the activity was meant to add to overall musical experiences. Mark's belief was that "the band students are more aware of the function of the creations." Frequently associating improvisation to creativity and composition to concrete form, structures, and notation, Mark also differentiated between
composition and improvisation as a matter of degree of control, where improvisation offers the performer a greater degree of control. Such differentiation has implications for the types of musical expression available to students.

When entertaining ideas for other options for including composition in the general music classroom, Mark noted that he would avoid having students compose at a computer using notation, though he did not rule out using software programs where students combine pre-defined sounds (see Appendix K). Reinforcing his belief that general music students do not need to learn standard notation, he believes that undertaking it on a computer is equally inappropriate. While utilizing the computer and notational software is similar to his own compositional process, he believes it would require too much theoretical instruction for his general music students and would also require knowledge of how to play an instrument. Mark mentioned a cloud based program that he has tried with band students, commenting that he felt the band students would get more out of it since they had more foundation knowledge.

Beyond having remarked that he believed the students had fun with the study sample lesson and that they appeared to demonstrate a little more understanding of form, Mark was unsure as to whether the experience was as productive as he might have hoped. He went on to say though, that "It helped me see what they understood about form." Among his concerns, Mark found that asking students to compose in a collaborative group environment is antithetical to his concept of composing. While intellectually he understands the goals, benefits, and rationale, he returned to the fact that he conceived of composition as a solitary event. "In my mind, I sit in front of the computer in front of
Sibelius and... or I sit at the piano and get some ideas and then once I have something hashed out..." As he worked to justify the intellectual knowledge with his gut belief he continued saying "But that's, you have to start somewhere. And maybe if I got comfortable doing that maybe I'd get better doing it and maybe I could possibly take it even further."

Improvisation, as opposed to composition, was a component of Mark's teaching he both enjoyed and valued. He described his Master's project as having the goal of getting band students to improvise.

My whole project, inventing this improvisation in the classroom in the concert band setting because I felt like kids need to improvise and that felt like one way. It was also a great way for me to evaluate them, their skills; to get to hear them play, to evaluate if they have any concept of timing, harmony, just what are your ideas."

This, unlike his perception of composition, empowered students without the intensity and structure he associated with composition.

It was clear that Mark had spent considerable time thinking about the importance of general music, who general music students are, and the important role of teachers in students' lives. His use of popular music attempted to connect and engage students. He was concerned that the musical experiences he offered be accessible to his students and was apprehensive about or believed it was unnecessary to expect students in general music to learn standard notation. He worked to acknowledge and even pre-empt students' apprehensions over singing and was aware of and sensitive to the fine line in setting
parameters that can inhibit, support, or leave students floundering. He delighted in their success and counted them among his own. He also empathized with their struggles and self-consciousness.

The Experiences that Underlie Mark’s Beliefs

Mark stated that learning to play the piano had the biggest impact on his musical life. He credited his piano teacher who was also his family's beloved minister of music, recollecting "somehow John, my teacher, must have allowed me to learn the way that was best for me." Mark said he found the music in his head far more interesting than what was on the page and explained that he "liked to make up stuff on the piano rather than practice lessons" (see Appendix N). Unsure as to whether it was due to "just a lack of not wanting to practice what he gave me to practice," he explained that he would just sit and make stuff up. From day one I felt like it should go like this instead. I was very not into what was on the page in front of me. I just wanted to go with what was in my head.

It was not just at the keyboard that Mark made up music. He and a friend also loved improvising harmonies to the hymns at church. Such musical adventures were neither discouraged or support by his teacher or his parents. Mark said his parents were more concerned with "Are you practicing? Yes. So okay, great." Or, "Does it sound good when you play?" Mark joked that as the middle child of five he "was neglected. That's how [he] sees it." Ultimately, Mark said "I just sat and did it because I wanted to." When asked if he believed his early inventions at the keyboard constituted composing he responded
I might call it like a little kid doing it. "a little song." Yeah. But really I think of it more as improvisation because I'm making it up in the moment and it can't be recreated, which is kind of how I feel like the difference between the two are.

This underscored Mark's struggle with what Gardner (1993) described as 'little-c' creative and 'big-C' creative.

Mark came from a musical family where his father sang and had leads in the church musicals and his mother played clarinet. He claimed that his sister had the most talent, playing piano, organ, and flute and were evidenced by her having played for some of their church services. Important to the development of his beliefs, this valuing that emerged in a respect for the traditional structures of music, as opposed to spontaneous music-making could also be seen in Mark's definitions and judgments regarding talent when he reflected saying

I would never become a pianist either, as I would just consider myself "one who can play the piano". There is a difference in my mind. Growing up, I would always just go to the piano and play, and just make stuff up. I could read music but the music in my head was far more exciting to play.

Mark could not recall why he began playing piano other than "it was just expected that I play". Being involved in music was “just expected".

At the center of this musical family was a church minister of music that Mark explained "we really loved". He continued to describe him saying "He was actually from either Germany or Austria. He was born during World War II." The highlighting of such credentials suggested that the opinions that grew from the associated experience, and the
music and structures that emanated from them, were also highly valued. The value given
to the music director at this early stage in Mark’s life, and the fact that this was a value
that was reinforced by his entire family made the experience all the more powerful.

Mark remembered nothing about music classes in elementary school until one day
when someone wheeled in a xylophone. As far as he was concerned, music did not exist
in school until instruments were introduced. He also noted that, while being "the subject
of the other trumpet player's jokes," in 7th grade he had a band teacher who helped
correct his embouchure which resulted in a dramatic increase in his range. Consequently,
this new found range helped set Mark apart from other trumpet players.

His musical experiments continued in high school. Here, with the encouragement
of another student, he discovered that music theory had relevance to his trumpet playing
as he began to experiment with harmonization (see Appendix O). Composing and
arranging opportunities, and learning to read chords from pop music books were part of
his experiences during his senior year in high school. Even though he took a theory class,
Mark did not credit that experience as having contributed significantly to his growing
theoretical and innovative aspirations. Unsure of how it all came together, he credited his
"tinkering" at the piano and "a few things I learned from theory class."

During his time in college, Mark ventured into composing, writing what he
referred to as "Pop" songs. He fondly remembers "collaborating with friends who
would sing and play with" him. Mark's college music experience asked only that he
arrange music. He commented that
If your major wasn't composition, you were not expected to be creative through music like in improvisation or composition, unless you were in jazz band. And even in jazz band it was up to you if you wanted to improvise.

Recollecting that time in his life, he defended his lack of formal compositional experiences saying "there was no reason for our music professors to take the time to encourage us to create music, and even now I wonder how you can fit it all in." He added that "There wasn't that much creativity encouraged. Stick to the page."

Mark repeatedly pointed out that there was no expectation that he should compose and that he lacked guidance in learning to compose, teach composing, and in teaching general music on the whole. What he did learn and what he has created have been due to his own interest and persistence, and was motivated by his own need and desire to do his job saying "I just sat and did it because I wanted to" (see Appendix Q).

When it came to trying to create experiences for his middle school general music students, "this is kind of important I think, no one ever really taught me how to teach general music either." He reiterated several times the lack of instruction and guidance as to how to teach composition saying

Was anyone encouraging me to compose or did anyone teach me, teach me how to teach others? No. Absolutely not. So if I chose not to do it in the beginning of my musical career to now, no one has ever asked me to write something other than doing some arrangements in college just so you could show you could do it.
Mark's Belief System

A foundation of respect for rules and structures lie at the core of Mark's belief system. This valuing of traditional rules and structures was also responsible for how Mark defined and conceived of composition and improvisation. Growing up in a small town as the middle child of a family of five, the church and the musical influences of the music director with early 20th Century German roots were significant in his childhood household. These early experiences were key in Mark's codification of definitions for music and music composition. His judgments regarding his early compositions were still encased in those beliefs. His 'tinkering' did not conform to the standard definition of composition. While his early musical improvisations were neither discouraged nor support by his teacher or his parents, the silence around their existence may bear some of the responsible for why Mark continued to down play their importance referring to them as "baby songs" as opposed to "serious" compositions; those things that require standard notation, or at least need to be reproducible. This was the same concept of composition that was reinforced throughout his musical education, including college.

On the other hand, while Mark's affinity for improvising might have on the surface appeared antithetical to the structured approach with which he so strongly identified, congruity was achieved by Mark's belief that there was an appropriate "time and place" for things. This balance is depicted in figure 3. Mark spoke about such balance in reference to making judgments as to when a piece of music can be improvised upon or altered, suggesting that

I think there's a place when sometimes you just need to stick to the page and that's
what you do and other times where the moment suggests that you want to go outside of the page and improvise. It really depends on the time and place.

While this perspective allowed Mark some flexibility to modify his beliefs when rules and structures became too rigid or as new information was tested, it also had the ability to reinforce traditional boundaries as, for instance, when defining what students in general music were capable of or need in comparison to those in band. This was where one of the larger obstacles to utilization of composition arose for Mark.

Mark’s self-efficacy beliefs were grounded in a clustered of beliefs such as those concerning the nature of creativity and talent, which had implication for the role of teaching. All of these were subject to the influences of his core beliefs about respect for rules and structures, and appropriateness of time and place. Mark's perceptions of talent as an innate force rather than the product of skill development and training were reflected early on in his description of his sister. Just as revealing was Mark's categorization of his own piano skills, referring to himself not as a pianist, but rather as "one who can play the piano." "Making stuff up" was not as serious, accomplished, or valued as developing technique and skills. Mark's talent on the trumpet was revealed once his embouchure was corrected. What allowed him to play high was not training or practice, but his innate talent which had been released through the correction of his embouchure.

Similarly, beliefs pertaining to talent emerged in Mark's perceptions of his students’ capabilities. Reflecting on the demonstration composition lesson he had just taught, he noted that "Some of the kids clearly had a little more talent than other kids. They were able to do certain things and had ideas," suggesting that those with talent will
naturally get more out of such a lesson regardless of the instruction. Here, both his beliefs regarding respect for rules and structure as well his belief in appropriate time and place join together to support notions regarding who his students are, as well as their capabilities and curricular needs. Mark created very specific foci for each type of class, general music or band, having predetermined who were the listeners and who were the performers. He believed that students in general music class had no need to learn to read music and that the function of the class was to offer "as many musical experiences as possible." Alternatively, students in band received a deeper experience since they "are more aware of the function of the creations."

Clarifying on several occasions, Mark reiterated his lack of specific training related to teaching middle school general music and composition (see Appendix Q). He also mentioned his lack of rhythmic training, noting the difficulty he had reading rhythms in high school. He had no idea how he got through those early years, especially since he had a "leadership position". He also underscored a lack of training in those things deemed creative and frequently noted that he was told to "stick to the page". When taken together with the lack of acknowledgement of his early "tinkering" and the valuing of technique and structure, Mark had to rely on his own self-motivation. "I composed, and now arrange despite anyone's thoughts or encouragement."

The pull between creativity and structure was also embedded in Mark's comments concerning there being "a time and place." There appeared to be a delicate balance between the importance of the page and his concept of composition with his affinity for improvisation which at times seemed to equate to being inferior. Creativity was
something that Mark experienced in his piano experiments and singing during his very early in his life, which he accepts as part of a childhood experience. While he suggested that there was some creativity in composition, he tended to envision improvisation more as a creative activity that could occur in groups, while composition was perceived as a formalized, individual, structured undertaking. Mark repeated several times that creativity was not expected and was not taught and went so far as to point out that there just was not time to fit everything in, suggesting that creativity might be lower on the list of priorities. Possibly Mark interpreted the absence of creativity and composition in his life experiences and education as an indication of its value in relation to the written page. Ultimately, however, it is likely his beliefs in time and place appropriateness that has allowed him to continue to develop his work with improvisation in the classroom.

Figure 3. Mark's Belief System

Findings pertaining to study questions

**Mark's beliefs about composition, its uses, and definition.** The continuing struggle Mark faced with his deeply seated belief that composition was a formal, solitary, and
serious event grounded in standard notation was challenged by student teachers who visited his classroom. He saw the possibilities for the use of composition in the general music classroom, yet was still uncomfortable with the concept at a very gut level. He suggested that had he had more training in how to teach general music in middle school or if he had been taught more about compositional approaches, he might have felt differently. While he did find that he was able to see students demonstrate some greater understanding of form, and acknowledged that they developed a plan and carried it through to a certain extent, it still did not conform to his deeply held beliefs about the nature of composition.

Composition and improvisation were envisioned by Mark as distinct and separate entities. Through his eyes, composition was less likely to be as creative or as flexible as improvisation. While seeing limited use for composition because of the need for, if not standard notation, a method to make it reproducible, he believed that improvisation supported a musical experience that provided an excellent way of assessing students while offering them the opportunity to be creative. Mark also believes that improvisation, unlike composition, allows students more control and empowers them. Though Mark said he would consider using computer programs that allowed students to manipulate sound files, composition, as he conceived of it and as his current situation allowed, would require a great deal of instruction in the technical components of music; information that Mark believed was not of real value to general music students. He also believed that it would require the ability to play an instrument or have students sing in order to perform their compositions. From the perspective of Mark's framework for general music, such
performing was not a priority.

The impact of prior experiences (social, cultural, educations) on beliefs. Mark's early experiences "tinkering" at the piano and making up vocal lines to hymns went un-notice while musical achievements grounded in standard forms, structures, and practices were modeled and lauded. These experiences, being early in his life, embedded within a close family structure and within a religious context give them significant power in the formation of core beliefs. As a result, these characteristics have become both foundational to Mark's definition of composition and central to his belief system. While those encounters with music that were most personal included improvisation and composition, those experienced most publicly and through his formal education were reinforced and embedded in the traditional rules and structures of Western European Art Music. Neither composition nor improvisation were requirements or expectations and his recollections were that he was mostly expected to "stick to the page." His continued work in composing and improvisation has been due to his own desire and motivation.

Connections between beliefs about music education and classroom activities. Grounded in the belief that music education should be rooted in providing musical experiences that offer opportunities to create, perform, and listen to music, Mark prioritized the balance of these elements within the general music classroom. With a focus on teaching students how to talk about music, Mark primarily utilized worksheets that focused students as they listened to pop music. Here students were guided by worksheets as they applied terminology and connected historical events to the music they heard. This approach was created by Mark to support his specific goal of focusing on
listening, minimizing the creating or performing aspect. Creating and performing were addressed in a unit on improvisation. As Mark has experimented with composition in his classroom, he has used it as a way for students to demonstrate their understanding of form, a musical element he has found difficult to present. The introduction of group work along with a significant expectation for performance with his sample lesson added significant challenges and additional layers of learning that moved beyond Mark’s usual parameters for general music. Ultimately, Mark’s vision for the utilization of composition in the general music classroom was stymied by the confines of his definition of composition.

The relationship between beliefs about composition and success in classroom. The relationship between Mark’s beliefs about composition and his success in the classroom were closely tied. While Mark has had a long relationship with improvisation that he has grown and nurtured through his Master's program, his relationship with composition has been more complicated because of how he defines composition and what the act of composing entails. His definition of composition has severed it from improvisation, leaving composition as a process driven mechanical event that he believes holds minimal benefits for his general music students.

Having become more interested in composition through his observations of lessons taught by students from the local university, Mark found it necessary to expand his definition as he broadened his vision of and uses for composition in his class. It also made him rethink his classroom structure and performance expectations. Students were not working individually. They worked in collaboratively in groups. They had to apply
understanding and create something new that demonstrated that understanding rather than working from a word bank, as in their listening assignments. They also had to physically perform their work. These were a lot of changes to undertake in order to present this lesson. Having opened himself to not needing a composition to be written down, Mark considered possibilities for using computers that have students compose by making creative judgments in the utilization of sound files. There were many possibilities that Mark needed to weigh from the context of what he believed his students could do and what they would most benefit from. While he saw possibilities for its use in the classroom, it was still antithetical to his core beliefs about composition. While he already had a rich experience with improvisation that fulfilled the creative and performance portion of his educational philosophy, it remained to be seen what composition might offer that could not be achieved through improvisation.

The relationship between Mark's core world view and composition. Mark's core values permeate his world even though at times he shakes his head, struggling to find a middle ground between new possibilities and those seeds that were planted in him decades ago. The honored traditions of the European Canon and the large family structure that supported them were deeply embedded in Mark's values. Such values extend into the role and responsibilities of a teacher. While, as Mark noted, curriculum can be standardized, teachers make all the difference (see Appendix R). His belief that there is a proper time and place had the power to both reinforce strong traditional perspectives while also allowing him the flexibility to entertain new ideas and new approaches. It has allowed him to cultivate his love for improvisation and explore its educational
possibilities while working on his master's degree. It allowed him to ask questions regarding what can be taught and what should be taught. Yet, the concept of "time and place," at times, led him back to the standard structures that are filled with preconceptions about his self-efficacy and his students’ abilities and needs.

**Historical, political and gender issues in Mark's vision of composition.** Mark’s strong identification with the European compositional model posed a significant obstacle to his use of composition in the classroom. Yet, it did not appear to carry with it the historical gender prejudices found within this compositional tradition (see pg. 5. Also Koza, 1991; McClary, 1994) and those prejudices did not appear to be a factor within Mark's preference for its use. When describing an improvisational situation in band, Mark made special note regarding the involvement of a female student (see Appendix Q). Mark’s beliefs about his students’ compositional abilities did not outwardly appear related to gender, but was more related to beliefs about his students’ needs or talent. Mark has, though, been fully entrenched in the European tradition. Mark’s lack of guidance in developing creative and compositional activities has likely contributed to his struggle in conceptualizing approaches to composition outside the European tradition; those that may be rooted in other cultural traditions or methods of notation.

**The role of efficacy in perceived ability, success, pedagogical approach, and success in teaching composition.** Mark had very specific beliefs about his self-efficacy and his students’ abilities. His talent for improvisation at the piano as a child, something that was not acknowledged by his parents or teacher, led him to believe he could play but was not a 'pianist' (see Appendix Q). He envisioned improvisation as a pedagogical tool to
encourage creativity, though not envisioning it as a form of composition. Improvisation was something he said he figured out how to teach in the context of large band classes. Mark has figured out a number of things on his own, including teaching himself how to harmonize and improvise on the trumpet, as well as devising a method for teaching general music through listening. He is very proud of these accomplishments.

Mark was less confident when it came to presenting composition in the general music setting, noting on several occasions that no one had ever taught him how to teach composition and that he was not encouraged to be creative. This led him to feel insecure about how to present such activities. In reflecting on his demonstration lesson he said he would reconsider the guidelines but was unsure as to how to set parameters without feeling they were too restrictive or arbitrary. He continued to reflect on his composition lesson saying "maybe you have to start somewhere. And maybe if I got comfortable doing that maybe I'd get better doing it and maybe I could possibly take it even further." The listening approach Mark developed during his teaching assignment seven years ago was essentially the same as the lessons he typically teaches now. He has become "comfortable" doing it that way (see Appendix Q).

From the beginning, Mark made it clear that general music is "not a performing class." Mark’s composition lesson required students to demonstration, requiring some element of performance. Though Mark was comfortable singing as a child, he told his class he would not ‘embarrass them’ by having them sing, assuming and possibly reinforcing any reluctance they might have had regarding singing (see Appendix P). In anticipation of embarrassing moments, Mark told the class "What happens in Vegas,
stays in Vegas" implying that students should not say things or talk about what students may get up and do, presumably warning them not to make fun of other students. While these examples might have suggested that Mark was anticipating stress that students might feel, they may also have been reflections of uncertainty Mark may have also felt. For he says "'I feel I know the way in improvisation, but I would be driving blind if I were to attempt teaching composition since I myself was never taught.'"  

**Conclusion**  
Mark's early experiences within his family were supported in their religious life and by the church music director who was also Mark's piano teacher. They reinforced respect for traditional values and the musical rules embedded in the European music tradition. Mark also held the belief that there is an appropriate time and place for things. Subject to these core values were a cluster of beliefs about talent, efficacy, training, motivation, and creativity. While improvisation was an important part of Mark's musical experience from the time he was very young, and while it was not frowned upon, it also was not supported or encouraged. Improvisation held a subordinate position to the reading and performance talents such as those displayed by Mark's older sister.

Remarking several times about his lack of training related to composition, creative ventures, and middle school general music, Mark relied on his own motivation, talent, and efficacy. His students' abilities and talent were generalized according to whether they were in band or general music. This then dictated both the type and the goals for instruction. One of the most significant differences was that Mark believed that students in general music did not need to learn to read music. Because he so closely ties
composition to standard forms and notation, a large rift formed between his general music students and their experience with composition. While both band and general music students were offered opportunities to improvise, Mark's beliefs about what general music students needed to know, what they were capable of learning, and how he would utilize and prioritize class time limited the prospects for the inclusion of composition as Mark defined it. Mark taught within his expectation of his students. He, however, questioned how he employed his use of “time and place” appropriateness for composition and experimented with an alternative approach in his general music classroom. "My concerns as a music educator now are the people who don't have the motivation or won't ever try to do it themselves. How do I guide them? I feel I know the way in improvisation, but I would be driving blind if I were to attempt teaching composition since I myself was never taught."

Cross-Case Analysis

Introduction

The case study perspective aims to examine closely the particular situation of a person or place so as to reveal individual perspectives and the details of specific situations. Each teacher and situation contains its unique chemistry whose findings may not be generalizable. However, “A qualitative inductive multi-case study seeks to build abstractions across cases” (Merriam, 1989, p. 154). The multiple case study perspective has the advantage of identifying patterns that emerge across cases that can both enrich the understanding of each case and provide some generalizability.
While the foundations for beliefs about the nature of music were found to be influenced by early relationships and how they connected to music and one another, each musical biography took that teacher on a unique path. As shown in Table 1, all three teachers were male and had an instrumental, rather than vocal, concentration. Sam had been teaching the longest with about 20 years of experience, followed by William and then Mark. Sam's musical biography, in particular, stands apart from the others at key moments, such as his not having any school music experiences in elementary school. Also, his high school drum teacher was brought in from the outside community, and Sam came to major in music only after attempts at other majors. For each of these music teachers, their early lives were embedded in music at home in ways that strengthened relationships within the family. While these core relationships were sometimes enriched through church musicians, the influence of all these early relationships contributed to

Table 1
Demographic Information for Participants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Year Completed</th>
<th>Concentration</th>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
<th>Teaching Experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Master of Music</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Percussion</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Elementary Chorus, M.S. Strings, Band, General Music, Adjunct Theory at Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Master of Music</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Conducting</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>H.S. Band, Marching Band, Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Master of Music</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Music Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>M.S. Band and General Music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
beliefs about value in music, parameters for defining music, and self-efficacy
surrounding music, and were foundational to the core beliefs that emerged.

**Experiences that Underlie Beliefs**

Important to the development of beliefs for all three teachers was their family life as they grew up. Music held a strong and central role and their identity became linked with music. Sam and William both experienced an eclectic mix of music. While William and Mark both noted the importance of church music directors, Mark's early experiences appear to have been less broad and more concentrated around church music. Sam and Mark's musical backgrounds were rooted in early experimentation. While Sam's “improvements” to Beethoven were not supported by his teacher, it was not a problem for his parents. Mark's musical experimentations were not a topic of discussion by either his teacher or his parents. While being ignored, other qualities such as "Does it sounds good?" or "Did you practice?" dominated the conversations between Mark and his parents. Sam's experience offered a contrast in opinions where the more open and receptive opinions of his parents, along with the closeness of that relationship trumped the more restrictive opinions of his piano teacher.

Music during the first few years of elementary school appears to have been of little consequence and Sam's school music experience was, apparently, minimal, leaving private piano lessons as his only formal music education. While some teachers' early experiences began with or included singing, others first found their musical grounding at the piano. The introduction of instruments during third and fourth grade frequently brought musical revelations and offered new friendships. Highs school music teachers
were mentioned only in passing. The percussion instructor who was a working professional musician who taught Sam and William's private instructor during high school were of more significance in their musical experiences. Also significant were those friendships that often grew within music classes and ensembles that included musical exchanges that also nurtured musical growth and exploration.

College music experiences influenced perceptions around composition predominantly reinforcing those compositional approaches that underpin the Western European Canon. Frequently, it was experiences in theory or arranging classes that reinforced those standard definitions and parameters for composition. As important as what these classes contributed is what they did not contribute and the atmosphere in which those exchanges were held. Sam experienced music theory classes that were taught by a composer who asked him to compose. The atmosphere of these university classes was collegial, respectful of differing artistic opinions, and left him with experiences and perspectives that both supported previous beliefs and became foundational to his beliefs about composition in the classroom and how to support it. Neither William nor Mark were expected to compose, though William noted his awareness of one of his professors being a composer and valuing that particular lens in his studies. Both William and Mark were asked to arrange, which they both differentiate from composing. The composing that Mark undertook was self-motivated and not particularly encouraged. During both high school and college, Mark enjoyed composing and creating music with friends. William observed composition rather than participating in it through his best friend who was a composition major. Such relationships, experienced both with faculty members and
The Impact of Prior Experiences (Social, Cultural, Educational) on Beliefs

The social aspect of music is also a significant factor in the early lives of these teachers. The belief in music as a social event occurred for Sam when he realized that band was far more exciting than sitting alone practicing the piano. It was also reinforced in college where he discovered that teaching and learning could be fluid events that were not restricted or defined by formal definitions of who was the teacher and who was the students. William also found social relationships and the sharing of music and musical ideas were strong driving forces. This element grew, not only as he and his friends shared music, but also as he learned to listen outside of his own part, to the music of which he was a part. This reinforced the development of his belief that when joining together, where we become "more than the sum of our parts." Mark's social musical events, while
identifiable, were less dominant and took on a somewhat different nature. While he too commented on the importance of making music informally with friends in high school, his "leadership role" appears to set up a different kind of relationship when compared to the interplay in the exchange emphasized and described by William and Sam.

**Historical, political and gender issues in visions of composition.** The historical, political, and gender influences on these teachers is subtle. Strong female influences were evident in all three teachers' experiences. It was evident early in William's relationship with the woman he studied with after his father, and in Mark's admiration of his sister. It was also apparent as Sam related the story about a young female student who asked for help with a composition she undertook on her own. Also, both William and Mark gave specific examples of compositional and improvisational experiences that featured female students. This suggests that the perceived efficacy of female students within the context of composition was not in questioned.

Direct relationships can be observed when considering beliefs about the nature of composition itself. The most direct influence on the role of composition is in its dominant European conceptions. The concept of composition as an event grounded in standard notation and notational relationships is reflective of the continued dominance of power within the white European male construct of music (Koza, 1991; McClary, 1994). These are the constructs that pervaded the education and musical experiences of these three teachers. The only other cultural tradition apparent, which also happened to be common to all three of these teachers, was jazz. Improvisation, which is the component that most often sets it apart from the European tradition and breaks the binds to standard notation,
were varied and frequently viewed as optional in the experiences of these teachers. Their classrooms did not include or envision the use of forms and traditions from other cultures. Though Sam mentioned some music education methods classes talking about music of other cultures, it is not something he uses in his classes, preferring to utilize Pop and jazz. While William experienced and was impressed by Twentieth Century compositional techniques in high school, he does not implement any of them within his own class. Alternately, his female counter-part who teaches the slightly younger students does include the use of non-traditional musical sources and graphic notation.

Beliefs about composition, its uses, and definition, and their connection to beliefs about music education and classroom activities. The nature of each participants' beliefs about composition was determined through a variety of modes including their stated beliefs, their personal experiences with composition as revealed through their biography, as well as their beliefs as demonstrated in the classroom. Also taken into consideration was the vocabulary they used and their reflections in conversation. These perspectives revealed early relationships with music that has influenced both their philosophies of music education as well as their perceptions and the resulting beliefs about composition. The beliefs about composition and education, are by their very nature, secondary beliefs that adhere or are derived from primary or more central beliefs.

The broad nature of William's and Sam's definitions, who both envisioned composition as a process, allowed for variety in its uses in the classroom. Mark's definition viewed composition, as he put it, "as a fixed object" that was embedded in standard musical terminology with distinct boundaries and parameters, as though he
could envision the finished product even before it was begun. Sam had taught the longest and had little doubt that improvisation was a form of composition, while William and Mark debated the role of improvisation in composition. How or if improvisation played into their definitions was a significant factor in classroom perspectives. Particularly relevant is the fact that improvisation played a significant role in Sam's and Mark's early music experiences. It is likely that the attitudes of family and other relevant relationships of early childhood contributed to the beliefs as to improvisation's role and importance in relation to music-making generally, and composition in particular.

Beliefs about composition and its uses in the classroom, and beliefs about music education were reflective of one another. Sam's broad definition of composition, "creating something new through silence or sounds," was mirrored by his inclusive educational belief that compositional experiences have value for all students. Both the educational philosophy and the compositional uses supported his wider goal of encouraging self-investigation and communal connections that were defined by the responsibilities of both teacher and students. The revisions William made to his philosophy of music education were mirrored by his revisions to his beliefs about composition and its uses. William's continued to refine the expectations of his broad definition of composition, "the act of intentionally organizing sounds to create music" to include the fostering of creativity and aid in assessment by allowing him to be more closely involved in observing students' thinking. His philosophy and his uses for composition have migrated closer to one another. One of the reasons this has occurred is because he believed that "it is the teacher's job to look for meaningful ways to connect
with students in order to ultimately teach skills related to thinking and aid in becoming better listeners and musicians." This is precisely what he continued to do. Mark’s philosophy of music education and compositional beliefs are both very precise and possess very specific parameters whose conflict can be explained by their inability to reflect one another. Embedded in his philosophy of "creating, performing, and listening" where the dominant emphasis is determined by the type of class, were very specific beliefs about students’ needs and abilities. With deeply held beliefs about the essential nature of composition, Mark struggled with composition in the classroom because he had not found a way to align his beliefs about composition with his beliefs about music education and his beliefs about his students. When Mark expanded his vision of composition by not requiring its being recorded in standard notation, new options for its use appeared. However, his core beliefs about composition and student efficacy remained at odds.

The approaches utilized for presenting compositional activities responded to the teachers' beliefs about music education and composition in Sam's and William's cases. Sam's class, while rooted in the historical context of jazz in the first half of the twentieth century, offered a free-flowing, fast paced environment, and encouraged experimentation as well as personal reflection as to where students might encounter similar music in their lives. William's class was more structured, grounded in traditional notation, and employed reflection and conversation that encouraged intellectual reasoning in understanding the creative process.

Though Mark's definition of composition expanded to meet the demands of his
lesson, his philosophical perspective remained intact and confounded his process. As a continuation of the discussion of form from the listening assignment, Mark attempted to find mid-ground between his improvisation lesson and the structured concept of composition that dominated his beliefs. Mark searched for parameters that would support his students in developing understanding of form, a topic he has experienced as difficult to teach, while also introducing students to both a new educational setting and a new type of task. This lesson was more performance and creative heavy than Mark's philosophy allowed. It also conflicted with his beliefs about his students' abilities, as well as what Mark fundamentally believed was appropriate for them. While Mark educationally and intellectually understood that there could be benefits from such activities, and while he said that he thought with time and practice he would get better at it, he had not at that point come to terms with how his beliefs would need to shift in order to support such future activities.

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed the importance of a number of factors in how composition emerges in the classroom in relation to beliefs and how those beliefs came to be. In particular, relationships from early childhood through college, including those relationships that span family and friends to church music directors, private teachers, and faculty, are central in the establishment of beliefs about music, music education, and composition. There is also a powerful agent involved in the alignment of beliefs between the philosophy of music education, efficacy of the teacher and his beliefs about students, and perceptions of composition, with classroom pedagogical decisions. When such
alignment fails, perceptions of success and its uses in the classroom may languish. These themes and their ramifications will be discussed further in Chapter 5.
Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary & Conclusions

The journey into the study of teachers' beliefs about composition was spurred by research that appeared baffling. While believed to have many benefits, and while some teachers were reporting great success in its use, many music educators found the actual in-the-classroom inclusion of composition challenging or down right impossible. The reasons teachers gave for avoiding composition were numerous. Yet a common difficulty appeared to me to be how teachers viewed composition. It was possible that their difficulties or successes with composition were not so much related to time, or resources, as they frequently claimed, but rather was more elemental. It appeared possible that how teachers conceptualized composition and what they believed composition was, could be responsible for limiting their vision of how it might be used. If that were true, the question remained as to how teachers arrived at those beliefs.

Just as students do not come to the classroom as blank slates, teachers too, come with set interpretations and beliefs as to what it means to teach, what their students need, and what capabilities they and their students possess. As a social, cultural, and political ecosphere, the classroom can be envisioned as fertile soil in which beliefs emerge. It was the intent of this study to investigate the influences on teachers' beliefs about composition and how they may emerge in their pedagogical decision-making.

The successful inclusion of composition is more likely when teachers' core beliefs and those around composition are flexible and inclusive, and open to revision, as
observed in William and Sam. Such beliefs allow classroom approaches that adapt to students’ needs and teacher’s strengths. When more ridged beliefs and perceptions of the world and composition dominate, as observed in Mark’s case, adaptation is far more challenging. Though the road to the successful inclusion of composition appears more elusive to some teachers than others, these teachers all believed there was something of value in it. The central challenge was grounded in their ability to align beliefs about composition with their core beliefs. While this is easier for some teachers than for others due to uncertainty about the relationship of improvisation and composition, or because some may question their efficacy in relation to composition, they continue to persevere. They continue to question what their students need and how they can best help them fulfill those needs. Fulfilling the promise of composition in the classroom may be achievable if teachers find ways to create strong connections between their beliefs about composition and their definition of composition, their self-efficacy as well as their beliefs about their students' abilities, and their philosophy of music education.

The role of beliefs in these teachers was significant in their pedagogical approaches. In these examples, beliefs formed in childhood and through educational experiences influenced definitions and perceptions of composition. Mark’s definition was set within specific parameters that grounded composition in a highly structured perception of what it meant to compose, while Sam and William’s definition and perceptions of composition, while also situated within standard notation, were broader, more flexible and open to revision. Their beliefs about composition left the door open for a variety of interpretations for presenting composition, allowing for the adaptation of
instruction to students’ needs. Alternately, students’ outcomes are almost forecast when standard notional practices are bound within beliefs that make composition rigid. Under such circumstances, composition does not flex to the needs of the classroom or the needs of the students.

With the assumption that all beliefs are precursors to action and that any assertion or opinion is reflective of a belief (Rokeach, 1968), a teacher’s beliefs are strong predictors of teachers' actions. How beliefs cohere, as well as their centrality and their manner of acquisition play an important role in a teacher’s interpretation of the world. It was also assumed that beliefs are “sensible” (Latham, 2006) and are always at work in ways that, if examined closely, reflect a person's authentic beliefs. Since those beliefs formed early in life are most likely to be resistant to change, it was important to examine teachers' early biographies. It is those events and practices of the past that are, by necessity, reinterpreted and re-contextualized into present-day events (Westerlund, 2003) and act as guides that will help shed light, in this case, on the role of composition in the classroom and how it takes shape.

The case studies and cross-case analysis presented here served to highlight common and contrasting themes in these music teachers' lives. These analyses revealed influences from very early experiences from within their families and religious communities, the importance of friends and the sharing of musical ideas and experiences, as well as the type and quality of engagement with faculty in college. From these experiences emerged perspectives regarding what it meant to teach music and its relationship to composition.
While it could be said that we are the sum of our experiences, our experiences continue to accumulate and they are incorporated into our scheme or rejected and discarded, serving to reinforce those beliefs most central, most early, and most personal. They become the foundation for the very public, yet very personal act of teaching. Such beliefs form the basis of what we hold true about the world, who we are, how we are situated in the world, and who we believe our students are. The decisions that emerged from those beliefs underpin the secondary and derivative beliefs that music teachers hold in relation to their classrooms, what should be taught, and how it should be taught, as well as the efficacy of their students and themselves.

Families provided emotional and moral support, as well as musical interactions that strengthen these teachers’ familial bonds and contributed to their personal identity through music. Music was a living, breathing entity within their homes. Within those families, however, were subtle messages where what was not said was as important as what was said, as was evident in Sam and Mark’s improvisations. The message Sam received from his family made him feel his musical inventions were a good thing to do. Alternately, Mark’s improvisations were mostly ignored while his sister’s technical skills were praised as superior, which may have led him to believe that technical skills were of more value than improvisational ones.

The experiences of childhood and those musical interactions in the home and at church laid the foundation for both beliefs about music and a musical identity for participants in this study. These were significant relationships forged around music from a very early age that held a significant place in laying foundations for beliefs; those
beliefs that if reinforced, would become difficult to change, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. The strength of those relationships is also significant in the strength of the belief. Each of these participants had encounters with music that sprang from experiences embedded within their families. For various reasons, their identity became strongly tied to music through their early relationship with it. Such combinations of early experiences with those that are very personal are significant factors in the development of strong beliefs.

Support comes in many shapes and can influence and fine tune beliefs that ultimately bond relationships with music. Juxtaposed to the family’s influence are "reinforcer mentors" (Duling, 1992) such as music teachers, church music directors, and friends. In the lives of two of these participants, church music directors played a significant role in their education and love of music. These church musicians influenced classroom approaches, as well as how music was conceptualized. Private music teachers contributed a sense of structure and helped develop a larger vision for musical growth. While anecdotally school music teachers have been revered as significant role models having a large impact on burgeoning musicians, little in the way of ultimate inspiration or modeling was found in the histories of these teachers. To the contrary, it was parents and church music directors; those who were untrained in the educational teaching methods of music who nurtured the foundation for their attachment to music and beliefs about music.

As children enter school, the beliefs grounded in early childhood experiences are either challenged or reinforced. For these participants, the most influential experiences in school were those embedded in the social interactions of sharing music and musical
ideas. The peer relationship, while often composed of a series of relationships that emerge over two decades, served to reinforce, instruct, and inspire, eventually surpassing the influence of parents. The experiences with peers were interactive and took the form of peer teaching, listening to and discussing music, as well as playing and creating music together. Peers shared music, both recordings and music-making, that inspired and instructed. They tutored one another and became role models for instructional practices, contributing to the establishment of norms for classroom practices.

At the university level, while socially activated learning continued to be important, learning within the classroom, for these teachers, was as much an act of role modeling as anything else. Those things that appeared to have influenced these teachers were the more covert components or the unintended aspects of education. The types of music and the manner with which they were dealt influenced the degree of value attached to it. The university instructor’s approach in communicating and working with students was at times reflected in the interactions within these teachers’ own classrooms. In music education methods classes, the lack of guidance in presenting music outside of the sing, move, play, context left teachers with little to ground the kind of creative musical experiences such as composition, that motivate and engage students, especially as they reach middle school.

Over all, the heavy concentration on European art music and forms limited the vision of composition and ultimately, the definition of music and composition. Even when broad definitions for music and composition were given by the teacher participants, they tended to migrate into relatively standard musical forms and notation in the
European Art Music tradition. Participants recounted stories where even jazz's improvisatory component was optional, stripping it of its African, Caribbean, and South American roots, leaving it mostly with the notation and structural genetics of only its European ancestry. Other musical forms, styles, and approaches were, for the most part, missing from their musical educations throughout their time in the educational system. When they did appear, they were described as novelties, child-like, or presented generally as second rate or not serious music.

Additionally, the educational establishments around teachers have not always served them well in their quest to provide a music education that challenges and engages students. School administrations that ground their music programs and their teachers in the ensemble paradigm and leaves general music students to watch videos do a disservice to all. It reinforces an elitist perspective of music, reserving it for those who can afford instruments and embeds music in the European notational tradition to the exclusion of other traditions. When not rooted as part of the cultural microcosm of school, education cannot reach out to a diverse population and engage students in the cultures of not just other nations, but their neighbors.

It is also important to recognize that there is confusion as to the relationship between composition and improvisation. William expressed this confusion noting that some people view Orff improvisation as kiddie music and Jazz as authentic – which were beliefs expressed by Mark. This valuing of some types of improvisation over others parallels Mark’s belief that composition in standard notation was more authentic than those expressed in more organic forms. By presenting improvisation and composition as
two separate standards, in essence dissecting them and leaving them without context, the National Standards contributed to this confusion.

Moving forward, the new Core Standards for Music Education, rather than finding continuity and defining a meaningful, symbiotic relationship between improvisation and composition, have drawn even more distinction between them. Improvisation is relegated to Pre-K to fifth grade with it gradually being weaned out during fourth and fifth grades. By middle school, students are ‘generating’ musical ideas. The word compose has been removed within the general music context. It is, rather, held as an elite strand that is bound together with theory, because, as Blakeslee states in the NAfME YouTube video, “Composition, if you think about it, is applied music theory.” Reserving composition as an elite strand and attaching it firmly to standard notation, the standards have, in essence, aligned improvisation as a novice activity and composition as an authentic notation bound structure.

This confusion and the devaluing of improvisation have significant ramifications for beliefs about talent and the teach-ability of improvisation in comparison to notation. Questions arise as to what beliefs are passed on when improvisation is removed or optional in the performance of jazz – as was Mark’s experience. There are implications for the role of talent related to improvisation where either you have it or you do not. If a special talent is required for improvisation, it is therefore likely that it is then not teachable. If, alternately, notation is then envisioned as an intellectual skill that is teachable, the place of improvisation within the curriculum must then be questioned and perhaps this is what the new standards have achieved. If improvisation is not teachable
and exits in the new standards through fifth grade, it might be assumed that it is a talent that is only accessible during those years or that if it has not emerged by the end of fifth grade, it should no longer be pursued. The reasoning is difficult to imagine.

The nature of the curriculum these music educators participated in as students predisposed them to the influences of imposed gender and historical biases. Though there were a few moderating circumstances that briefly interrupted standard notational composition with exposure to 20th Century compositional techniques and jazz, the dominant influences of the European traditions prevailed. The implications for the role of females within this group of male teachers were unacknowledged and subtle. Outwardly, there was evidence of females as role models and female students were, on several occasions, held up as examples of improvisational and compositional successes. It would appear that, though other world music traditions were absent, females were viewed as being capable of carrying on the European model for composition.

Findings in this study were similar to those of Cusano's (2004) study where teachers believed that teaching about various cultures through music listening was important. They, however, focused on European Art music or Jazz, feeling uncomfortable outside those genres. Similarly, the teachers in this study, self-identified jazz musicians or having been heavily influenced by jazz during their music education, utilized musical references and approaches with which they were most familiar. While jazz is a genre with many stylistic variations, references to jazz and improvisation highlighted structural reinterpretations that minimized improvisation in favor of the reading of standard notation and the associated standard European approach. While the role of improvisation
carried weight, respectability, and stature when embedded in the historical context of the jazz tradition, it was no longer a requirement within the jazz idiom. The representation or connections of music or composition to other world traditions was, for the most part, missing, as were approaches aimed at fostering creativity. Those things that are omitted from curriculum make a statement of their own; we are less important. This parallels these teachers' own experiences in higher education where improvisation was at best, optional; where creativity was omitted; and other musical traditions were rare.

It became clear in the cross analysis that friction was likely to arise when beliefs about the purpose of music education, self-efficacy and beliefs about students, and the definition and uses for composition did not align. When such beliefs aligned, as in Sam's case, a confidence and sense of purpose arose. When beliefs were in flux, a re-examination of not just the lesson, but of how the lesson is in harmony or conflict with philosophies or other beliefs about self-efficacy and student abilities is important. If a way is not found to align them, the lessons are ineffective and unproductive. Just as in Scott's (2010) findings that efficacy beliefs related to singing could be overcome when incorporated into larger philosophical beliefs about the importance of singing, beliefs about composition, as a secondary or derivative belief, need to be linked to those more core philosophical beliefs. Though William believed creativity was not particularly one of his strengths, his belief in its importance within the context of his school’s philosophy brought about a realignment of his beliefs about the role of composition within his classroom. Mark, on the other hand, was still looking for a way to balance his beliefs.
Recommendations

There are no simple answers to the complicated interpretations of beliefs as they are applied to the classroom. It is impossible to make blanket statements about what are the best beliefs to have when it comes to the successful implementation of composition. Two people can come to the same conclusion for very different reasons and through very different beliefs. Noting what prevents the use of composition in the classroom might be the best place to start.

Composition in music is akin to learning to write utilizing language. Being capable of speech, or its corollary, performance, offers one relationship with the world. Writing or music composition asks the composer to take ownership of his ideas. The ability to connect ideas and communicate in nuanced ways is a training that binds together the mind, body, and spirit. The lack of typing skills does not make writing impossible. It simply means another tool must be found. If you don’t have a pen, use a pencil or a crayon. Similarly, not having notational skills does not mean that something meaningful cannot be said through sound. The inability to play the cello or piano does not make composition and all its benefits unattainable. What was written on parchment or written with quills, or written in old English hundreds of years ago was not deemed childish or second rate because of the tools that were used. So ultimately, the search is to identify those things that encourage or discourage the growth of original musical expression.

As case study research, this work had the ability to investigate closely the worlds of these teachers, looking at what opportunities encouraged or discouraged their musical
expression and in what direction. As such, clarity in identifying challenges for teachers was possible and pointed the way forward. It is commonly acknowledged that every human interaction leaves some kind of imprint. Within the context of music experiences, the music that fills a student’s world and how it is presented can have significant ramifications. Within the family, it can be as simple as the music playing on the radio in the car or in the kitchen, or the tune Dad whistles, or hearing Uncle Bob’s rock band. These are where musical connections are first made. This points to the importance of early childhood music education that includes all the members of the family. Such experiences help support the musical connections and beliefs associated with them at this very early stage and can help develop those bonds around the core of music. This includes educating parents and encouraging them to engage with their children in musical ways. Such interactions create ways to both strengthen family ties around music and pass down cultural traditions.

The fact that school music teachers had such little impact on these participants is surprising and curious, especially when church music directors were sighted as having notable influence. Religious music leaders generally come from a multitude of backgrounds and practices, and function within just as many environments. From musicians trained as organists and choral directors to volunteers with more passion than training in either music or education, their impact on children’s perceptions of music can be important. We need to know how prevalent this influence is on music teachers and examine the contexts and motivational forces that are being offered to children. It is important to note that the participants in this study did not remember much, if anything,
about their early school music experiences, while they did remember from that same age those musical events tied to family and their church. Because curriculum is not likely the differentiating factor, a purpose beyond a concert or a grade must be at work; perhaps one more related to environment and motivation.

The implications this study holds for teacher education and higher education curriculum are numerous. These participants’ school music teachers, along with their university music education methods teachers and classes, were specifically noted as not being significant contributors to their music experiences or the development of their teaching skills. The valuing of discussion, diversity of opinions and approaches and those things that can enrich any classroom, while valued when encountered, were frequently missing from the experiences of the participants in this study.

The need for broader musical experiences was obvious. This includes experiences that situate music-making within its natural context, giving it a reason for existing and connecting it to people’s lives. Ultimately, the teaching of and learning about music needs to be grounded in developing a feeling for the breadth of the human condition, which is the impetus for music-making. If we want music teachers to understand and teach this deep form of empathy and understanding, we must present them with a model for it and allow them to experience it. While it is clear that teachers gravitate towards that which they are good at, they must be given the opportunity to ‘get good’ as William would say, and grow their skills. Similarly, while we cannot become proficient at all the music styles of the world, foundational expertise in a variety of genres outside the European canon need to be developed.
In particular, teacher education needs to be engaging students through the application and development of musical ideas and creative skills that connect and span musical traditions and the diversity of musical approaches that can be experienced through improvisation and composition. While Mark had seen examples of student teachers experiencing more variety in their training, he questioned whether music education programs had changed so much since he had completed his bachelor’s degree. The lack of breadth in envisioning music appears to extend past methods classes, encompassing the full scope of music classes and ensembles. At its heart, the university system has created an insular structure that reinforces one perspective and compartmentalizes future music teachers, ultimately depriving them and their future students of a holistic vision for what it means to be musical and the many ways of expressing musicality.

There is also a need for future and current teachers to recognize the power of the social aspect of music. Early music experiences are reinforced and challenged as children encounter music in school and with friends. While this research revealed relatively little impact from school music experiences, the relationships with friends that were cultivated through music and school music programs were very important. A rich picture emerged that depicted learning that contributed significantly to self-identity as well as ways of interacting both with peers and with music. Music supported the development of strong bonds with both. Classrooms that ignore the power of peer-learning and communal expression are going to alienate students and deny them experiences that reach beyond pencil and paper, and into their minds and hearts. These are ultimately deep learning
opportunities where critical thinking can grow. Peer teaching was important to the musical development and love of music that emerged in the participants in this study. It brought them better understanding of both the music and their friends. The relationships that grow with music at its core are significant in the lives of students of all ages. The engagement of student learning through peer teaching could have significant implication for student retention, achievement, and life-long music-making.

It must also be noted that there are far reaching implications for curriculum development and implementation. While classroom composition aligns with core beliefs, problems arise when alignment is disrupted, causing instruction to become ineffective and unproductive. Disruption can occur when outside forces, such as expectations set by national standards or by administrations are imposed. This kind of disruption was evident in Mark's attempt. He struggled to do something that intellectually he could conceive of as having merit. But at a gut level, it was so antithetical to his beliefs that he was unable to fully embrace composition without standard notation. The result was a lesson that fell short of the goal. Successful curricular changes require teacher input, flexibility of application, and implementation of workshops that help teachers find approaches that align their beliefs with institutional policies and curriculum. Curriculum, goals, and standards that are handed down from a hierarchical leadership, when in conflict with teachers’ core beliefs, may find not only resistance, but authentic difficulty in their implementation. Failure to help teachers through these transitions may lead to job dissatisfaction and classroom instruction that is fruitless.

In this study, questions have emerged concerning how teachers envision the
relationship between improvisation and compositions, as well as the role and confusion
the National Standards have played in that confusion in light of the separation of
improvisation from composition and arranging in standards three and four. The new
standards continue to muddy the waters and inappropriately reinforce distinctions
between types of music, their value, and their relationship to composition. This is
accomplished through the compartmentalizing of improvisation as a child’s musical
approach, and by pairing composition with theory, solidifying it as an elite activity.

This study has brought to light the important role of beliefs in attempting to
implement curriculum, specifically composition; an activity that has found many
supporters but has proved difficult for many teachers to include. One likely reason for
such difficulty can be linked to the lop-sided vision of music and musical experiences
that many teachers have encountered. School music has been segregated from music
encountered in the daily course of events. Categories of popular music are demonizes
while other music is revered. Whatever is left over is ignored.

While changing people’s beliefs can be difficult and sometimes impossible,
working with teachers to help them understand the role their beliefs play in their
pedagogy is a place to begin. The hope would be to help teachers align their beliefs
about composition in ways that would open the door to this type of expression for all
students. Ultimately, children and teachers would benefit from musical experiences;
experiences beyond notation; experiences available through the inclusion and valuing of
traditions beyond the European canon. There needs to be a re-ordering of music
expectations that allow teachers to utilize broader approaches for musical expression;
approaches that span grade, ability, and ‘strand.’ The more music teachers are differentiated or specialized, the more hierarchical values of what is good and what is authentic versus what is childish are imposed. Most beneficial would be a set of core goals that focus on the development of musicality that spans chronology and geography that can be applied regardless of the student’s age or instrument. The aim is to create experiences that allow teachers to move smoothly between all kinds of music. Because as Sam said “music is music” and “it’s all about breaking down barriers.”
Appendix A

Sam’s Demographic Information, Philosophy of Education and Music Education, Definition of Music Composition and its Uses
Demographic Information for Sam
Degree: Bachelor of Science in Education, Music 1995
Master of Music, Performance, Percussion 2002
Teaching experience: 20+ - Include middle school, adjunct theory/Percussion at
community college, elementary chorus, middle school strings, general music, sub,
pt marching band.

Sam's Philosophy of Education and Music Education
The best teachers in any subject make learning exciting and interesting. Education should also make students accountable for their successes and failures, and allow the students to fail; sometimes it is the only way to truly appreciate well-deserved success. Music does this better than any other subject. You can't really grade a performance on a curve. The students played the correct notes/rhythms or they didn't.

I truly practice what I preach. I’ve been there, and done mostly everything in music. When students ask “Why do we need to know this?” or similar questions I can give them real-life reasons why learning the fundamentals and mastering them is essential. All of my varied experiences, performing, recording, writing, getting published, lets the students know I didn’t just learn this stuff in books and classrooms; I’ve done it and used it all "on the job". I love inspiring the students – my teachers paved the way for me with honesty, very high expectations and encouragement…I want to try and do the same for my students.

The more blood, sweat and tears that you put into your passion – the more you’ll get out of it! No one grades you on good intentions, especially in the entertainment field. Don’t just dream – get up and do it! No one is born able to play an instrument, compose, or sing – it just takes a lot of hard work and dedication. Good intentions aren't enough to succeed. This is rarely, if ever, taught in any other subjects.

But, there is absolutely a place for every student in music - as long as they are willing to invest the time to improving.

Sam's Definition of Music Composition
My opinion....Composition is creating something new through silence or sound. One of the biggest struggles young people have is finding out who they are. They don't really know themselves, or are afraid to let others see the 'real them'. Composition, especially in jazz band and jazz units in general music allows every student, regardless of their innate ability, to express themselves. Be it on classroom glocks, saxophone, singing, clapping, etc... it also builds a real sense of community - if we perform a song together - we are immediately a community of musicians working together simultaneously, and depending on each other. Unlike sports, there is no bench in music.

If teachers continually focus on the nuts and bolts of 'good music' and touch on the aesthetic aspects of music it will make young people a more educated audience/future consumer and not simply accept sounds coming from the radio and mass media outlets, which all too frequently champion manufactured, mundane, computer generated sounds that resemble music.
Appendix B

Sam’s First Reflection
Sam's first reflection

Think back on your experiences from early childhood to middle school and consider instances and people who have most influenced you generally and in your music. Please write about those people and instances and provide some examples of situations that affected you. Also, consider how they may be evident in your life now.

First and foremost my parents were my biggest influence. I remember Saturday mornings my dad making cartoon shaped pancakes and having Mitch Miller's chorale blasting from our family stereo. Whenever he worked around the house he always had music blasting from our ornate stereo, like John Denver, Sinatra, Robert Goulet, or Eugene Ormandy and the Philly Orch playing Strauss Waltzes and of course his favorite Herb Alpert and Tijuana Brass. My mother also played lots of records while we home during the week. Here favorites were Barry Manilow and Barbara Streisand. And since I was a child of the 70's the Bee Gees, Village People and the soundtrack to Grease were all played in regular rotation. I remember the album cover from Grease in particular, I don't know if it was because I liked the music of the pictures of Olivia Newton-John though...wonder where that album cover is now? ;-)

The stereo was actually the center of our family entertainment. I remember sitting beside the speakers in our living room more than watching TV. What did I take away from these experiences? My parents had/have an eclectic taste in music - which has obviously been transferred to me. Which probably leads me to the contention that there are just two types of music: good and bad. Do I really like listening to Mitch Miller now? no. BUT, when I do hear it it brings back the carefree days of childhood, for me, and memories of weekends hanging out with my parents. As a 'trained musician' do I like Mitch Miller - probably not. As my parents' son do I like Mitch Miller? no, I love him.

Another take-away from these early days is the sense I have that music is a communal activity. I hate iPods, ear buds, etc... for me music since my earliest days has been a group activity, be it listening and/or performing. I took piano lessons starting in 4th grade. I of course had many problems practicing my actual assignments. 1- I didn't like playing alone, 2- I always wanted to alter what Beethoven and the like had written and 'improve' it. Once I turned 'Fur Elsie' into a boogie-woogie to the dismay of my piano teacher. Did my parents care that I was altering Beethoven? No, not really. They actually didn't mind because we I reconfigured works I'd actually play piano longer than the recommended 30 minutes a day.

Beside my parents who else influenced me? in this order, Carl Stalling, John Williams and Bill Conti. My musical heroes as an elementary school student. Carl Stalling of course did most of the Bugs Bunny cartoon sound tracks, which often included classical music (my first exposure). John Williams 'Star Wars' sound track changed my life - it was and still is the coolest thing I had ever really 'experienced' in orchestral music. 1977, I was 5 years old entering kindergarten. When I finally got to see 'Star Wars' in the theater and was enveloped by the soundtrack I was hooked ion
music from then on. It had loud drums and brass, jazz in the bar, evil sounds, heroic sounds, etc. the complete package for me. Third, Bill Conti, the composer of Rocky. Being a Philadelphia area native that trumpet fanfare still makes me think anything is possible even to this day.

In my younger days I also tried numerous sports to no avail. Was I bad at sports? Not sure, I never cared enough, it all seemed so pointless (and still does). I was more interested in who was playing the National Anthem at a baseball game rather than the sporting event itself. I loved getting lost in music, I remember as an elementary/middle school student hearing the 1812 for the first time on my stereo. Wow! The images I saw in my head were better than any movie or TV show. I would actually play with my toys while the piece or similar ones were playing and used them as my soundtrack for the battles my action figures would have.

How did/does this all impact me today? I have NEVER been in tune with pop trends in music. Usually the stuff on the radio has had very little to grab my attention. Therefore, my friends and the folks I hang out with have always been similar to me musically. Technology never has, nor does it, interest me, and I think it diminishes a lot of what we, musicians, are all about. Two quotes that I have in my office tie into all of this:

*Technology is a way of organizing the universe so that man doesn't have to experience it*
Max Frisch

*Technology is so much fun but we can drown in our technology. The fog of information can drive out knowledge.*
Daniel J. Boorstin

Based on first quote: I am always stressing LIVE music to kids - and boldly tell them it is always better than a recording - because you, the audience are part of it, that is music making, not recordings. Recordings come close, but live is real. Base on second quote: It is so hard now for kids differentiate between 'good' artistic music and mass produced mind numbing sounds. I do what I can to combat it all.
Appendix C

Sam’s Second Reflection
Sam's Second Reflection

Please think about your experiences in high school and college and moments that you remember fondly or that were turning points for you. Please recount some examples and how you think those events have influenced your beliefs about education, music, and composition.

Sam responded with a piece he had written a couple of years ago.

Symphonie Fantastique, is a program symphony that was written by the French composer, Hector Berlioz, between 1830 and 1845, that tells the story of an artist gifted with a vivid imagination, who has poisoned himself, while in the depths of despair, because of unrequited love. The unifying musical theme, present in all five movements of this symphony, is referred to as the idée fixe, here on referred to in this article as “fixed idea”. The fixed idea in Berlioz’s work is the object of his affections, and the listener is continuously impacted by her exciting theme and presence throughout the piece, despite the absence of words or visual stimuli, since it is recurrent, and will not relent.

As with the theme of Berlioz’s Symphony Fantastique, there are themes that I have identified that run relentlessly through my own life, most prominently the fixed idea that my musical career is not so much about the big show, as it is about the relationships and experiences that lead up to those brief moments on stage.

“Remember these times guys, they’re special, they don’t happen very often…” I heard these words backstage at the State Theatre of New Jersey, in New Brunswick, New Jersey while I was on tour doing a short series of concerts along the East Coast which included stops at Lincoln Center in New York, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. and Verizon Hall in Philadelphia. The speaker was percussionist, Sam Ruttenberg. At the time, to be quite frank, I thought he was being melodramatic. Someone was taking a picture of the various sections of the orchestra for archival purposes during intermission, and as drummers, naturally we were clowning around, throwing insults at each other and doing all of the things people generally accuse drummers of doing… things we vehemently deny. Even though I initially pushed his comments aside, later, while driving home that evening, the words echoed perpetually in my head, and have stuck with me ever since. Whether it’s because I worry about time as a musician, who is literally aware of time, or because I’m concerned with the passage of time as a father, who is watching his children grow up way too fast, Sam’s phrase has made me appreciate events in my musical past and to be attentive to the special times I’m in the midst of now, making sure I don’t take too much for granted.

A good drummer friend of mine, with whom I studied music while at the university, recently passed away. We met when I entered my first year as a music education major. Being a percussion major, I was obligated to participate in the university marching band for a few semesters, and after evaluation by the staff, I was awarded the spot of bass drum two in the battery. The drumline had at least 10 snares, 4
tenor players, 6 bass drums and a handful of cymbal players. For a listener, there’s nothing better than when a well-rehearsed marching percussion section this large is playing a cadence or just grooving in some parking lot on a fall afternoon. However, when the group is having trouble executing parts, it can be an excruciating experience for the listener, as well as the performers, and most of all, the instructors.

My friend was center-snare, and for those not familiar with marching percussion hierarchy, in orchestral terms - he was the concert master of the drumline. All of our parts at that time had been composed and arranged by WGI Hall of Fame member and DCI legend, Mark Thurston. A few times a week Mark would come to the university and teach us some new parts that he had written, demonstrate them, tell us some jokes and then move on to his next college band or drum corps obligation. This inevitably meant that the marching band staff or student leaders would work on refining the parts. As a result, my friend commonly stepped into the role of instructor even though he was in the drum line.

There were many issues plaguing the basses that day. We were hungry, annoyed because some of the guys weren’t concentrating, and frustrated with the amount of time it was talking to get this short pattern clean. Beyond that, the snares and tenor players were throwing verbal jibes in our direction (I know, hard to believe!).

Then something wonderful happened — Bubba stepped in and worked alone with the bass drummers, while the others took a break. From the minute he began working with us the entire mood changed. Genuinely caring about the bass drum line as people, he treated everyone with respect. Even if he did utter an insult it was light-hearted and used to alleviate mounting tensions. After about 15 to 20 minutes we had it down, Bubba stepped back into his spot in the snare line and we resumed practicing as an entire drum line again.

Why did I mention all of this? What does this have to do with my fixed idea? Well, I was playing drum set a few weeks ago with a music-minus one track, 19 years after the bass drum line debacle. In the middle of the track I was playing along with, there was a spot to improvise…for some reason I began playing this rhythm as the motif of my solo.

This rhythm unconsciously had held a lot of meaning for me because as I played, I returned to that parking lot at WCU, and smiled. The echo of my fixed idea resounded as I remembered a group of players who overcame a challenge, because of the laid-back but expert guidance of a young drummer named Bubba. Of course the goal of that day was getting the rhythm correct, but what I really got from that learning experience was much deeper and more meaningful than just the kinesthetic feeling.

I learned that people who are passionate about what they’re doing can have a profound, positive impact on others, particularly when they execute every action with
respect. Every time I play that sextuplet pattern now, I try to perform it with as much
feeling and passion as possible.

Sadly, Bubba is no longer with us, but those memories of the parking lot rehearsal
at West Chester University will be with me forever. The music was simply a by-product
of very positive and meaningful experiences. I really have no recollection of any specific
performance when we actually executed that difficult bass drum pattern on the grid iron,
but every time I play it, I am awestruck at the impact of learning it.

Another example of my personal fixed idea, in which the experience and
relationship was more meaningful than the end performance takes me back to high
school, the winter of my sophomore year, 1987. I had begun taking drum set lessons once
a week during lunch in the high school band room. After strengthening my reading and
rudimental chops through the Haskell W. Harr books, my teacher recommended that I get
Rick Latham’s Advanced Funk Studies drum set method. Having only played drums,
formally, for a few months at that point, the above rhythm was daunting, to say the least.
I could play it terribly slow, but could never get it to groove or move past a snail’s pace.
At that time, beyond drums and school work, I also worked at the local grocery store. I
had the coveted job of working 6:00-10:00 a few nights a week, keeping the parking lot
clean and free from run-away shopping carts. It wasn’t a bad job for a high school kid; I
was outside, free to roam around the parking and pretend that I was actually working.
Unbeknown to my employer, since it was winter and I had a big coat on, I was able to
stash a pair of drumsticks inside my coat, just in case there was a drumming emergency
in the parking lot at 9:45PM on a Thursday in February. Many nights I would find myself
around the side of the building, out of view of the manger, hitting the shopping carts with
my drumsticks.

One such night I was practicing above pattern from Advanced Funk Studies,
which I had been trying to get it faster for weeks at that point. Then it happened, on that
frigid February night in a barren, windswept parking lot, I achieved funkiness! It was one
of the first times in my formative years that I had hit a proverbial wall and finally gotten
over it due to consistent practicing. Besides laying down some serious funk on that
shopping cart, I now fully grasped the concept of hard work. Of course at the time I
didn’t realize it or care about the journey, I was just happy that I could play the stinkin’
pattern! Like the memories of Bubba and the drumline in the parking lot, my own funky
shopping cart fixed idea reached well beyond the “big show”; the journey was more
valuable.

I suppose some of this wisdom can only come with age, but I am often reminded
of some musically life-changing experiences that have much more meaning now. In
youth as well as in the hustle and bustle of reaching our goals, our minds get clouded
with things that we think are really important; however, as time marches on, though we
rarely remember what the goal may have been, we most often retain lasting memories of
the journey to get there.
So, bring your cameras everywhere, be it a real camera or mental camera, jot down your memories of relationships and experiences in order to “…remember these times guys, they’re special, they don’t happen very often.”
Appendix D

Observation of Sam’s Class
Observation of Sam's Class

Students wander in and sit at desks as a recording of a jazz piano arrangement of a Mozart piece plays. Sam calls out over the talking of students, asking who knows what the piece is. Students respond with various answers as they settle down and assist in identifying who is absent from class. The discussion wanders to WWII and Swing. Sam asks why Swing was so popular and quickly builds associations between it and music in the movie *Elf*, Rock 'n Roll, and pop guitar styles. This is typical of the roller coaster feel of the class as it weaves from one style and era to another.

After an introduction to Duke Ellington that includes Ellington's struggles as a piano student and compares Ellington's life to Louis Armstrong's, Sam plays *C Jam Blues*. He focuses students' attention on the 12 bar blues progression and quickly goes on to relate it to music performed by Elvis and the Beatles. Announcing that the class in now going to improvise, he asks "How many are excited and can't wait to do it? How many are scared to death? How many are so scared they can't even raise their hand?" Sam goes on to compare improvisation to something that the students do innately saying they improvise every time they talk to their friends and "if you can improvise with your mouth you can improvise on the bells."

Before more instructions for improvising are given, Sam has them listen to *C Jam Blues* again, count out the bars, and then apply some basic terminology such as timbre, dynamics, and meter. This quickly leads to Swing's relationship to dance interjected with "Can anyone think of anything besides... it's really hot and humid in here? Let me open a window. Oh! We don't have any windows - think maximum security. Anything else?" The discussion continues with students calling out places where they might hear this type of music. The students stand and review dance steps and then dance to *C Jam Blues*. Students are very engaged for the most part and Sam encourages and tutors students as he walks around the room. Sam tells the class that one student, who is not practicing, cannot participate because he's under an exclusive contract and is not allowed to dance anywhere else.

Sam begins to play the blues progression on the piano and tells students to get the bells. The sound of students experimenting with the bells fills the room. There is no reprimand and they are not told to stop. After a few minutes Sam whistles and says "Remember - all music comes from silence first - so quiet." Students are given music for *C Jam Blues* and asked to name the first note. After reviewing the written notation for the melody students discover that there are only two notes used in the piece's melody. While one students says it is easy, Sam responds "That's why we're doing it - everyone can do it." Sam plays the progression on the keyboard and reminds them to sing and hold the mallets with their knuckles up as they play the written melody. Sam asks them why the blues is still popular. While the students responds "because you can dance to it" Sam responds "because it's easy."
Sam now instructs the students to put the mallets down and when one student is 
still playing he reminds him saying "mallets down friend". Having everyone's attention, 
Sam reinforces the ease of improvisation and again relates it to conversation. He also 
interjects a story about Thomas Edison saying he made a thousand light bulbs before he 
succeeded. "You're going to make a mistake and it will be fun. I made about ten mistakes 
when I played that last thing. Mistakes are no problem. Sometimes the greatest music 
comes out of mistakes." Students are instructed to use two notes or three notes from the 
blues scale and experiment. After having a few minutes to practice, each student then 
performs a few bars of their improvisation accompanied by the recording. Sam 
encourages each with personalized comments. The students laugh at one student's 
improvisation and Sam praises the student who is performing and the class for reacting. 
He points out that you want your audience to respond. Sam calls out "When you're 
improvising, who do you want to sound like?" Students respond "Yourself!"

As Sam winds up this portion of the lesson he emphasizes that it is important to 
"try stuff. You can't worry about making a mistake." Referring to posters of composers 
such as Bach and Mozart hanging on the wall he says "All those guys on the wall were 
improvisers. You all were composers today. You have to keep working at it. No one was 
ever famous for doing something average." Sam emphasizes that composition in just 
written down improvisation and continues with a personal story about a piece he wrote 
when his twin daughters were born. He explains that his use of two chords reflects the 
twins and again underscores the importance of experimenting. Sam went on to talk about 
how musicians he played with reacted to his composition and then concludes with a CD 
he recorded of his finished piece. The class ended with an encore of students playing C 
Jam Blues, this time changing the dynamic level to soft on the repeat.
Appendix E

Transcript of Interview with Sam
Interview Transcript

Sam

M: We're recording - So anything you say can and will be used...

S: OK.....

M: So ... your classroom holds so much potential

S: oh yeah –

M: well... all music classrooms do - but kids in music classrooms can feel disconnected.

S: right - yeah - because they're not actively involved in music-making... because they on the sidelines - or even further than the sidelines.

M: yeah - interesting stuff. This was so much fun to watch. It really was. So we started talking before.. you talked a little bit about your daughters and about that being the impetus for you to kind of experiment with music more and think of it more outside the box - outside the constraints of harmony and notation and all that kind of stuff that we tend to really get imbedded in [right] a lot of times. So when you put this lesson together - are there other ways you considered putting it together or ways you would never consider offering composition in the classroom?

S: ahhmmm... interesting. I'm dealing with, as we said before, I'm dealing with such a wide range of ability levels, I have to make it interesting to every kid in the class. I try... every minute, I have to have everyone engaged. The girl in the front row is a great cello player and she's in my jazz band by audition - trumpet. There's a girl in the back - who I don't know how she knows how to operate a CD player. (Chuckles) So.. it's like I can't go too far in one direction uhm - because I'll lose the girl in the back but I also can't get so simple and go so slow that the girl in the front gets bored. SO I try to keep it moving and I try to use as many different disciplines and a lot of um.. antidotal stuff in the class to get everyone involved because they can all get involved in my daughters - the story [uhm, ok] - a dad - the kid - ok

M: Universal themes -

S: Yes - I try to do that a lot. And then I'll slip in some actual music theory or something. Like this quarter we're doing treble clef -and - I've had flash cards and different things, little silly games just to get them all in treble clef. Some of them are still doing F,A,C,E - face - OK - which is fine because it's better than they were a month ago. The girl in the front - I could put viola clef up and she'd be able to transpose it on the French horn or something - she's great. She's ridiculous. She's such a good musician.
M: Better her than me.

S: Yeah - I'm like... She's ridiculous. Really good. So would I have done it differently? Probably not, because I tried to segment it into little things - I try to have music playing when they come in the class. I don't want it to be like every other class. I don't want it to be like - get your books out. Start these problems. And I try to be as laid back as I can because we're talking about music. I want them to like coming to the class first of all. I don't want to be a dictator in the front of the room going "this is good music. Your stuff is crap." You know - I try not to do that. Sometimes we'll have discussions because they'll say "Do you like Justin Beiber?" And my honest answer would be "No. He's abominable". But I'll never say that because I know they like him. I say "well - some of his stuff is very dance-able - has a good beat. and uhh.. ya know - I prefer other things." But I also try not to relegate their music to like the bottom. So - I don't think I could have done that lesson differently because I would have lost all of them. Umm - the kid in the second row who played the minor 2nd in his scale thing and he said it was good - umm... he was the kids who came into the class a month ago and just hated everything. Absolutely.

M: Yuh, I noticed that really you had excellent participation. The kids really did [S: umhm - right] they were engaged

S: Right - right - and I try to have fun with it and whatever. The kids that I know I can really dig into, like the kid in the back - that kid - that kid - he's a pain in the neck and he knows he's a pain in the neck - so I can dig into him. But the little blonde-haired girl who sat in the wrong seat - the fact that she hit the bells - that was an A+ for me because I would have lost all of them. Umm - the kid in the second row who played the minor 2nd in his scale thing and he said it was good - umm... he was the kids who came into the class a month ago and just hated everything. Absolutely.

M: oh, no. That's fine.

S: But the world of ipods gets me so upset because of the ear buds because everyone just listens to their own music and there's no sense of a community doing the music. And I
think what got me involved - excited about music was high school when I played with a band. I took piano lessons forever by myself.

M: I loved that when you wrote about... and this I think was helpful to me in understanding that communal context and why some kids don't want to practice. Might not want to ... And... uhm... [S: uhum] it makes all the sense [S: right] in the world - so maybe for some teachers the question is how can I bring them into that context

S: right - and the silly dancing was my attempt at reaching the masses that way. "Look. We're all having fun together with the music. And it happens to be swing and jazz. But we're all doing music together. We're moving. Alright? And I tell them the beginning of the year that music for me is supposed to move us. Either physically, emotionally, or spiritually, or something. If it doesn't do that I don't think the music's done its job. Like muzak - nothing's going on there. It's dead - it's dead sound to me. But that music - they were all dancing to Duke Ellington and they're what? 13 years old. And I think that is my job - to get them excited about that stuff. So maybe the next wedding, or bat mitzvah or confirmation party they go to with their family, a swing tune will come on and one of the kids will go "oh wait. We did this. It's called a rock-step. And all of a sudden - because that's what music is to me. It's bringing everything together and its a communal activity. That's why I stopped taking piano lessons. Once I joined the band - I'm like - This is where it's at.

M: So include composition then? What ..?

S: Because I don't think there's any difference. I think it's all... I think it's synonymous. Mozart wrote a minuet but the purpose was for us to dance to it, or whatever. And the composition part of it I think a lot of times I'm trying to get them to understand why - to make educated decisions about why music is good or why its bad, maybe... at a very base level. Umm... and again to answer your question from the other room - what is composition? In my younger days I would approach composition from the architectural components. And in college especially - "this is a triad. This is a seventh." And we talked about was architecture. And all of a sudden I had a great professor that kind of twisted my impression of what composing is. 'Cause he was great - he had a doctorate in composition and all that - real brainy stuff. He's "this is this and this is this. Alright." This is about 4 weeks into theory 1. He goes "we're gonna listen to a piece by Mozart" - and he gave us an excerpt. He goes "analyze that for me". We're looking at it. He goes "alright. What's the key - the tonal center?" It's like e minor. Ok. "How many chords are in this piece?" And after looking at it, it was basically like - well, it's modal. It e minor and then it goes to C major kind of. Then it kind of goes to a minor but it's kind of modal. He goes "Right. Let's look at another piece" and he pulled out Eleanor Rigby and it was the same exact tonal center. And he goes "Which one of those is better?" And there was an argument and it was great. But by the end of the argument everyone agreed that neither one was better. Eleanor Rigby spoke to that person more so than Mozart spoke to that person. Mozart and the Beatles used the same tonal center and did the architecture
matter? He said "You can't always start from the architecture and get to the piece. Sometimes you have to listen to the piece and say "that's great" and it happens to have 1 chord. So he went the other way also. He said you have to look at music both ways.

M: Top down and bottom up

S: Right. Exactly. He said I could show you very complex pieces that, architecturally, are master pieces, but you wouldn't want to listen to them. Then he said - you look at the Beatles, its very simple. And then the next day, which was really cool, he brought the Beatles up again just to start a little controversy. He said "Somebody give me some adjectives to describe the Beatles." And someone said "It's easy. It's really easy. It's ridiculous" He goes "yes, it is. In the next 10 minutes I would like you all to write a piece using 1 chord. Go." And of course, it was all garbage. It was like.. Ah!. So he said "Was it really easy?" He said "The art is they did it with those few elements. That is incredibly difficult."

M: Yeah - it's like Schoenberg - the more rules you put into it [S: Right!] the harder it is to create something [exactly!] well people say it's too rule bound [S: right] but it forces you to do something.

S: That's right. So that and I use Eleanor Rigby when we do guitar because the same bunch of kids in about 2 weeks - we're gonna switch, we have guitars. We have 2 rooms because we got the bells last year, and we have no textbooks or anything. They don't give us money for anything. So everything we do - like those listening journals - I dumbed them down from a project my buddy was doing in college. He had - he was a grad assistant at ZZZ University and he used to say " we're doing this, this, and this and analyzing this" and I said "Really?" We could do that here to get them talking about music. So we start every class with a listening journal. 'Cuz they come in - they like the regularity of it. They know they're gonna sit down and alright, ok, we're gonna listen to a piece. And then we dive into our stuff. Um, so I try to do that. But this group will go to guitars. One of the first songs we learn is Eleanor Rigby. It's simple. E minor is nothing. Then C is just one finger. So by the end of the day they're playing a Beatles song. And they have instant success and they're like "Where can I buy a guitar?". And I always preface it with "now this is basic. If you want to get really good, there's a lot of work. But anyone can play if you put the time in." And I kind of approach guitar the same way as I did the swing. I just want them to like it and hopefully spawn some, ya know, love of music that way. So the composition part, uhm... to answer your question, if we get to Eleanor Rigby, I can show them - "How simple is that song?" "Like it's really simple" "Right, but is it a good song?" "Yes" I'm like - you don't need - it doesn't have to be difficult to be good." So I always try - I always - I kind of do everything. I'm like talking about the composition - I talk about Michael Jackson. Like - "Name me a Michael Jackson song" - and we'll write 5 Michael Jackson songs. I'll say "What do they all have in common?" And some kid goes "They're all about the same speed." "Right" "What are the lyrics about?" And inevitably they go "Well, I'm not really sure." I don't know about
an illegitimate child - ya know - Billie Jean. I don't mention that, but do the lyrics matter? [yeah] Ya know - and then they're like "no" I said "right". So let's listen to Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. And then I can get into scat singing. I said "Do the lyrics matter?" And they're like "no". What emotion is Ella feeling? They're like well she's obviously happy. Well does she need words? No. I'm like - so I'm trying to get that misconception that improvising is doing whatever you want. And the other thing - I'm trying to break down that wall between "there's you and there's musicians and composers". There's no difference. I'm like - so that in a nutshell - that's why I bring composition into it.. into all the lessons.

M: To help break down that wall.

S: To break the wall. To basically answer your question in one sentence. It's to break down the wall between them at their desks and composers' faces up on the wall. There's no difference. [pause] So there. I answered my own question. I had to talk myself all the way to the end.

M: Well that's why we do this.

S: Right - and that was improvisation. We started simple and eventually I got to the point.

M: Hmm. Neat. I'm glad you told me about that college experience because that's one of the other things I wanted to talk to you about. You talked a lot about your family influences growing up. What about your early general music experiences?

S: I didn't have any. I didn't have - I didn't go to a music class until I was in college.

M: So you had no...

S: My parents gave me piano lessons. They provided piano lessons but I went to parochial school. We had nothing. Absolutely zero. One year there was a music teacher in for a few weeks - nah, I didn't have anything, at all. And I think for my personal story, when I got to West Chester, it was very frightening for my parents for me to go into music. My dad's from South Philly, the army got him out of S. Philly. He went to college. He got a marketing degree. My mom's from W. Philly. She got a teaching degree - ya know. And it was like - work hard, work hard. My grandfather was a long shoreman. And, ya know, all of a sudden now - I'm in high school and "what do you want to do with your life?" "I want to be a musician." They're like... next.

M: Where did that come from?

S: How 'bout a real job. Ya know - I heard that speech so many times. And I enrolled at XXX University as a communications major. Because I was very good at English. Like if I had a second - it was English and Communications... writing and stuff. So like, do that,
yeah, alright, alright. Whatever. SO that was miserable. I hated XXX University. Got out of there after a year and a half. Then my parents are like - "you have to get a college degree". What else do you like. But like music was forbidden. So I'm finally like... "well, I like computers". I'll do computers. So I went to computer programming school. I went to college for computer science. Bored. OK? The pivotal moment in my life is this girl I knew died from cancer. And I stopped going to school. I just dropped out. My parents didn't know it. And then the end of the semester - they're like - you failed all your classes. My father's going to kill me... old army guy. And finally they said "What do you want to do?" I said "I want to be a musician. I've told you this forever." And they're like - and my mother - she was like "okay - how do you get into college? How do you do this? [umhm]

So we went and I auditioned at YYY University and it was like I was a para-trouper. I hit the ground and I never stopped running once I got there. Uh... you know - I was eating this stuff up. So the first - like, in retrospect, my early life - I didn't have much of a musical education, but I think it made me so hungry for it that when I got to college - people were like "I hate aural training. I hate theory." I'm like - how can you hate theory? This is incredible. You put a 7th above the root and it has that tension like it was,,,"

Everything was brand new to me.

M: So any of your formal musical training came from like private piano lessons...

S: That was it. Yeah.

M: You mentioned something about drumming.

S: Yeah, the drumming. The fact that I went to parochial school - the band director had private guys coming in to teach all the specialties. So it wasn't like a regular public high school where you can do anything. He's a woodwind guy and he's great. But he's so good at that that he didn't even touch the drums or anything else. He said "I don't do that". So he brought in [someone from the outside] who had played with Sinatra in Atlantic City and all these guys. So as a sophomore, freshman in high school, I'm getting lessons with this guy who's played with Sinatra, toured with Frankie Avalon, and here I come in with this minimal piano knowledge. It took me two and a half years to realize who I was studying with. It was like a happy accident. 'Cuz once - by my junior year I was like "where did you have a gig?" He's like - "With Sinatra". I'm like - "with THE Frank Sinatra?" He's like "yeah". I'm like "Really?" and then I think the beginning of my sophomore year when I got a clue. I'm like - "this is special". Other guys I know over in [another local high school] - their drum teacher didn't do a gig with Sinatra. So it was all these accidents in my life that pushed me to go that way. And that's why when I'm here I keep thinking of when I started at West Chester. Every general music class I try to be excited. And I'm like - because I didn't have this in 7th grade. I never had these opportunities. So I'm in their face about everything. I'm like - "Come on - this is fun. This is fun people - let's go, let's go." And I think that's why I'm pretty passionate about it. Because I never had that chance. And I want them to have that chance.
M: Neat - this is really interesting. I think the one thing I still have a question mark about is - we talked about other ways, um, that you might have presented your lesson. And I think maybe what I'm looking for is "what ways would you NEVER consider, or would you completely go "doing composition THAT WAY"

S: The one thing I would never tell them... especially at this level, is that they're wrong and you can't do that. Umm... for a number of reasons. I don't want them to feel like they've failed. And even me personally, as a 41 year old person, the minute someone tells me I can't do something, I'm like - "oh, yeah?" I have - (sound like knee jerk reaction) So for composition - I had great composition teachers and I had some composition teachers that I'm glad I don't have them anymore. And a story I can think about with my daughter - we took them out of their preschool for this reason. They went to this preschool and they were coloring pictures of something. It was at a Catholic Church and it could have been Mary and the holy family or something - and they were like 3. My daughter colored the face of one of the people on the thing red. She was 3 - and my daughter's very vocal - and she brought the paper home and she said "ya know what that - Miss Nancy - I think that was her name - Miss Nancy said you don't ever paint someone's face red." And we went "Why not?" "She said it's wrong." Well my daughter at 3 years old was intuitive enough to go "You're wrong". She - ya know - they were inhibiting their creativity and you tell a 3 year old they can't paint someone's face red.

M: Maybe they're mad.

S: Right! Who knows what it is! Ya know. And that school ... it was very like "no! You will paint someone's face with these colors and you will do in the lines" and I'm like "but no - you don't". And most of my composition teachers like my - the greatest composition teacher was ------. I don't know if know him. Alright. He's at YYY University - the head of the department. He was young when I was there. He wasn't the head of the department. And he would have these conferences with us and we'd write stuff. And his stuff has been played by the Philly orchestra, the Atlanta Symphony - he could really be like (in snooty voice) "well, yes" [chuckle] I brought my stuff in and we'd play it and he'd go like "yeah, that's cool. Did you ever think of this?" And I'd go "No" and I'd try it and he goes "what do you think of it?" I go "I don't like it" He goes "Ah.. then don't put it in". He goes "What about this?" I'm like "Oh, I like that." Very conversational and we were exactly the same level. He wasn't Dr. ---- - he was Bob. And we were basically hanging like me and my buddies did in high school - just trying stuff out. So to answer your question I would never tell them they're wrong. I might suggest something else... "hey - did you think of this?" "Cuz when they were doing their improv stuff, a couple of them hit like a - I don't know - an E natural or something that was wacky. I said "Try a Bb" But I didn't say "No! That's absolutely wrong!" because, especially you know as a jazz musician - there are no wrong notes. It's just how do you get out of the corner you just painted yourself into. Sometimes that's where the magic happens. You're like "Really? Awww... look how got out of that problem. Ummm... and for me - like the jazz - classical - it's all the same. There is no difference in genre. It's just music to me. Mozart and Charlie Parker
are exactly the same to me. They're both composers and I guarantee that if Mozart was here he would have dug jazz. And you read the books about him - he probably would have been "I don't have to write this crap down? Awesome! Record it! Let's go! Let's go!" Ya know? So for me, that's the other thing I try to do too. I tell them there's only 2 types of music for me; good and bad. I'm like - there's good Rock. There's good jazz. There's bad rock. There's bad jazz. I say - so you know, we could talk about Mozart and Bach and Duke Ellington all in the same breath - because I think everything in school is too compartmentalized. 'Cuz I'm like you don't just learn math in math class. And if you do, you're gonna have problems. Ya know, you don't just learn language arts in language arts class.

M: So when you did your music education methods classes, um, did you - there are 2 parts to this question - one - is, um, did you do things about - did you discuss composition and ways to present it or were there philosophies or anything that you learned there that either embraced or rejected going "no - I don't think so"?

S: One of the things I remember sticking out like a sore thumb is one of the professors said "never ever play pop music in your school music program". And as an undergraduate I thought to myself "you're an idiot". And I kept my mouth shut. As I did in all my education classes because my opinion didn't matter. "Okay, ma'am. I won't do that. It's evil." Um, but that I hated because I'm not a fan of Bieber. I'm not a fan of One Direction. In my 6th grade band we're playing 6 pieces on Thursday night for our concert. We're doing a One Direction song. It's the dessert at the end of the dinner for them. I don't practice it. I don't even address anything in the piece. It works itself out. They have fun. I spend most of the rehearsal on the stuff I want to do like the classical and the marches and stuff. And then [inaudible] One Direction. So that was one thing in the education classes related to composition - like she said "Only play classical music. Only play this because they're not getting it." I'm thinking to myself "Yes, they're not getting it. But your approach is wrong." They're gonna be like "Forget it." Even mentioning One Direction gets me a little closer to them. The fact that I know One Direction exists... you know - I can't go "It's all Mahler." They're clueless. So that I hate it. That was one thing that stuck with me and I look at her as a great teacher because I never do that. I'm like - that was a good lesson because I'll disregard everything you say and I will never do that to my students. Um, things that I embraced - I'm trying to think from education methods classes. From a nuts and bolts standpoint, um being organized - that was something they really drove into me. And a couple of the guys that led the ed department said keep it moving. Keep moving. Don't get stuck on one thing and it's not a performance and you have to keep going. If this kid hits all the wrong notes - whatever. Keep going to the next thing because if you spend 12 minutes on their execution of C Jam Blues on the glockenspiels, it's done. Ya know, I'm like - that's close enough. Alright - they all rested when they should have rested. It's really a quarter note rest and I was swingin' it - but whatever. I'm like - "let's just keep going, all right?" So that was one of the things in the ed classes that helped me a lot. Just to keep moving, because when I student taught I was
pretty good at my pacing, but a couple of professors were like "You spent too long on that." It doesn't matter.

M: Pacing is always a problem in the beginning. [S: yeah] It's trying... it's knowing how much to explain and it just ...[S: right] keep going.

S: Let's go. Let's go. Let's go. And that was one thing I had to overcome myself. Because I was kind of like, 'cause I'm a band guy - and I was coming out of a concert band world. And there I am with 3rd graders playing, ya know, xylophones. And like - "no, no, no. You should do this." Like - the grip. I want them all to have their knuckles up. Some of them were like this. Whatever. I explained it. Some of them are holding them like this. If I see it I like "knuckles up." Whatever. Ya know. In the beginning days, long ago, I might have been like "You must hold your mallets like this children. This is how a percussionist -. Who cares? It doesn't matter for this. That's not the point of that class. You know - I'll keep doing it. Composition wise - I don't remember any specific composition - um - instruction in elementary or middle school methods. I remember them saying you have to do world culture type stuff. All right... how would you do a lesson about the music of Brazil? It wasn't specifically Brazilian composition, but how would you do Brazil? How would you do West Africa? So it was a blanket thing and composition was part of it. But no one ever said how you teach composition. I'm trying to think. Ya know - dissonance and consonance maybe was mentioned as a tool, as tension and release. But I don't remember any specific methods classes where they said how would you teach composition to a 7th grade class.

M: Do you ever, and this is not necessarily directly related, but it helps me with a frame of reference. Do you ever do any kind of composition or improvisation stuff with your instrumentalist ensembles?

S: With the Jazz Band we do - a lot, because it's jazz. So the charts we have - it's the head, the arranger's arrangement, and then the open section. And I'll just let them blow if they want to blow. I don't make everyone do it. I'll say "Who wants to improvise?" Some of them improvise and I'll let them go for a while. And then what I'll do is like I hear a lot of stuff that doesn't sound good. But what I will do is tell them what DID sound good. I'll say - there's this flute player. She was in my 7th grade music class. She's in the jazz band and she's in concert band. In the midst of my 7th grade music class one day she says "Can I come and see you at lunch?" I'm like - "sure" and she's very reserved. I say "What's up?" She came and saw me and she's a scribbled piece of paper. She goes "I started writing a composition. I started writing a tune. Could you look at it?" I'm like "That's great." So I kind of play it on the piano - what she wrote. I said "Is this what it's supposed to sound like?" She like "no". I said "What's it supposed to sound like? Sing it to me." So then came for about a month at lunch every day and we had two pieces down. And then she would improvise. And her composition was built on improvisation she was doing on flute. She comes into the jazz band and we're playing Iron Man and there's an open section in Iron Man. It's fast and she said she wanted to improvise on flute. I'm like
"Great!" So she was doing a lot of [very low sounds] and they're rocking out. And I didn't say "That sounds awful." I said "If you play higher we'll hear you." I said "so player higher notes." And she was like "Really?" She started playing really high and then she made a mistake and went [high trill kind of sound]. I said "That was cool. Do it again." And she was "What?" And we got her trilling way high up over this rockin' thing. So like, that's how I got her to improvise in jazz band. Because I said "That's a cool thing." In our regular lessons, the kids that aren't in jazz - we're doing this flute group - we're doing La vie en rose - just for the heck of it, I just printed it out and put it in a comfortable key for the flutes and I said "Let's play this melody." And then they played the melody and I said now this is a jazz tune. We're supposed to improvise. [gasping sound] I said "Listen, I'm just gonna stay on an F. There's no chords. Just staying on an F." And with all 4 girls at the end of the lesson they got it a little bit about improvisation. I said "What note would sound absolutely boring with an F chord?" And they're like "F." I said "Play it." And they were like "Yeah, it's pretty boring." I said "What note would sound better?" They were like "Maybe an A would be more interesting." I'm like "Yeah, it's a little more interesting." I said "What note would be hideous?" and somebody said an F sharp. I said "Cool - play it." They're all like "eww, eewww, F sharp." I said "But look at the cool thing. What note is it real close to?" Some girl goes "An F." I said "I want you to hold the F sharp and at some moment go to the F." And she did it and all of them went "Wow. That was cool." So that was concert band stuff. So I try to do that and I call it improvisation but it's really active composing I think. It's composing on the spot. I said and if you like it, write it down. And that's what that girl Adina - that girl flute player from the class did. She started writing down her improvisations. So I try to get them to keep doing that in everything - every ensemble.

M: Cool. Very nice. I'm gonna leave it with that.

S: OK
Appendix F

Sam’s Final Clarification Questions
Sam - Final clarification questions.

1. I know you said you are a 'jazz guy' - but have your compositional experiences ever reached into other traditions - like gamelan, Native American traditions, etc.?
   a. If so - were they presented similarly to the lesson I observed?
   b. If not - what has prevented you from incorporating these traditions?

   Hard question to answer succinctly. Why? It seems like most forms of composition infiltrate every other form in some way. How can you discuss Rococo period pieces by Mozart, et, al.. and not mention Turkish and Gypsy influences? Or Italian opera/ classical and not mention Italian folk tunes? Or Aaron Copland, considered 'classical' but drew much of his influences from American folk songs. Mozart even infused the 'learned style' of Bach's counterpoint into his symphonies. So to give you an answer: no. I have never specifically segregated musical styles from each other, I can't. or me, they are all related and have influences on similar and remote genres.

2. Since your own k-12 experience didn't really offer compositional experiences, and your music education classes in college didn't address the topic, what prompted you to include it and can you identify approximately when you started including it?

   Being a life-long tinkerer, I always wanted to get into the guts of things. Many destroyed tape decks and small motors may still be somewhere in my parents' house, from me trying to 'fix' them. Since my youngest days I loved music, but also wanted to know 'why' I like it or what made a piece 'good'. Back to Star Wars - as a five year old I love it... but actually did wonder why it worked. Somewhere along the way in my youth I realized it was more or less cowboy gun fightin' music transposed over top of outer space scenes.

   Another reason I am drawn to discuss, show compositional techniques, architecture, etc... if I know what is inside a thing, I'll remember the work. If you know what is behind the selection "Nessun Dorma", the motive of the protagonist, why is it a slow crescendo? Why mostly strings under the tenor, etc... the piece will actually have more meaning to the performer and audience. If you equate this to people and interacting and teaching them it is all the same. If little Billy is in your class today and he's withdrawn, wouldn't it be helpful if you knew his new puppy just got run over by a car? If you only see/ hear the surface you don't fully understand them, thus cannot adequately connect with them. It is the same with music, in my opinion.

3. You mentioned the challenges of working with so many ability levels. Can you think of any other challenges that might prevent you from incorporating composition?

   No, not really. At some level, no matter how basic, compositional techniques can be introduced to anyone. Simple one... have them listen to "Hava Nagila", major or minor? Happy or sad? Happy! How can a minor piece be happy? Etc...
4. You mention that you just got the bells. Did you include composition before you got the bells and if so, how did you approach it? Did you do it without instruments or use other instruments?

A little tougher without instruments. But yes, I always included, via discussion, actions (i.e. Dalcroze type things... etc...)

5. Is there anything you would like to add or anything you really want me to walk away understand about what you believe about the usefulness of composition - how you see it fitting into a music classroom - its benefits for students - or anything else?

I honestly don't know how you can teach music without a thirst for compositional techniques. How can you write a novel without understanding metaphor, simile, antonyms, commas, periods, etc... the guts of writing. Same with music, for me. There were tons of composers alive in 1790 - why does Mozart still get airplay and Salieri doesn't? It has to do with the content and structure of his music. The Great Wall of China still stands, we still study Shakespeare, we still listen to Mozart, Duke Ellington, etc... - why? They built their masterpieces correctly. If musicians don't know what 'good' music is, it will not continue.
Appendix G

William’s Demographic Information, Philosophy of Education and Music Education, Definition of Music Composition and its Uses
Demographic Information for William

Degree: Bachelor of Music in Education  
Master of Music, Performance (Wind Conducting) 1999
Teaching experience: 14 years, high school assistant band director, high school band  
director, special education teacher, middle school instrumental and general music  
teacher

William's Philosophy of Education and Music Education

Every student is capable of making music, and it’s our job as music educators to  
find music with which our students can connect in a meaningful way.

William also noted in his final responses "I heard a great quote the other day: “Getting  
good at anything improves your ability to get good at things”. I think that’s something I  
try to use in my teaching...I want kids to learn about music, but I also want them to learn  
to think. Being able to think is maybe the single most important thing we can learn how  
to do. So maybe we should add that to my philosophy...I want my students to learn how  
to think, and I try to do that by helping them think about music, both as a listener and a  
musician."

William's definition of music composition and uses

Music Composition is the act of intentionally organizing sounds to create  
music. I try to use it to foster creativity, but more frequently it is also used to assess  
students’ understanding of topics we’ve covered (like certain rhythm patterns, scales,  
chords, etc.). So it’s useful as an assessment tool as well as a means to an end.
Appendix H

William’s First Reflection
William's first reflection

Think back on your experiences from early childhood to middle school and consider instances and people who have most influenced you generally and in your music. Please write about those people and instances and provide some examples of situations that affected you. Also, consider how they may be evident in your life now.

I labored about the order these folks are presented in my writing because it felt wrong for my dad not to be first on the list…but the truth is, when I first read your prompt, the person that jumped to mind first wasn’t my dad, it was a church music director. He was my first piano teacher and also played the organ and directed the choirs at my church. I was a member of those choirs from 3rd grade until 8th grade, and vividly remember the repertoire we sang as well as some of the things I learned from him about music (for example, the meaning of a tempo, and how Codas and DC or DS signs work). Though I’m not a deeply religious or spiritual person today, I know a great deal about the teachings of the Christian church, mostly due to the lyrics and lessons learned in John’s choir loft. I’m sure that on more than one occasion I’ve made the right decision in my life because of words I learned as a member of his choir.

John was quite a character, his rehearsal room filled with stuffed animals (mostly monkeys), gorilla costumes, toys, and countless wonders that I now know were probably found mostly in highway rest stop gift shops. He took on a different persona when working with kids (“Uncle Igor”), and had invisible imaginary friends who used to help him solve rehearsal problems…for example, he’d stop in the middle of a piece, get really quiet and say “what was that, Yak? You think the children should sing louder at the refrain? What a wonderful idea! I’ll tell them!”…or other such gimmicks to keep us engaged (Yak lived inside the piano until one day when he grew too large, and a new stuffed snake appeared in the rehearsal room…I’ll always remember when we finally got to see Yak!)

John gave me my first paying gig, playing Timpani for John Rutter’s Gloria with the combined choirs from all the local churches. It was this gig that made me realize I might be able to make a living while making music, and that was all it took to get me hooked. His energy, enthusiasm, creativity, musicianship, and support definitely got me moving in the right direction, and he is without a doubt the single most influential person on my early musical development.

While I don’t have any imaginary friends in the band room, I do sometimes stop in the middle of a piece and say things like “Mary, did I hear you say earlier that we should take a bigger breath at measure 71? Because I think that’s a great idea. Let’s try it everyone”…definitely the influence of my dear “Uncle Igor”!

Another early influence on me was my dad, who was my first drum teacher. He had played in middle and high school, but sold his drums to buy furniture when he
married my mom. After 15 years of not playing at all, when I started to show an interest, he took me to the music store and bought two pairs of sticks, two practice pads, and a method book called “Buddy Rich’s Modern Interpretation of Snare Drum Rudiments”. He also got me playing along with the records at his house, so my early play-alongs were to the music of Barry Manilow, Neil Diamond, The Pete Fountain Orchestra, and Smoky Robinson.

Playing along with records in my dad’s basement had a profound effect on me musically in that it taught me how to listen, what the drummer should be doing at any given time, and it also laid the foundation for how I would spend most of my free time through high school…playing the drums either with other musicians or with recordings.

I almost never practiced with a metronome, but instead I would put on the radio and play my exercises at the tempo of whatever song came on. This was my dad’s idea, and something I still suggest to students today (in certain instances).

I also still play along with that same Pete Fountain record…it was given to my dad as a gift in the late 1950s, and I still have the LP today. It is one of my prized possessions, and it features my absolute favorite drummer, who many great musicians have never heard of…the great Jack Sperling. Sperling was a skilled player, and extremely tasteful, who played in the Henry Mancini Orchestra as well as lots of LA Sessions in the 40s, 50s, and 60s. He can be heard on film on TV shows from that era, but never gained the fame that comes from being in a famous touring act or playing on a hit single. Regardless, there are lots of aspects of my own playing that are directly influenced by Jack Sperling, who I grew to know of because of my dad’s influence.

As far as school band teachers go, I remember them all, but I had a lot of them. I had nine different band directors in eight years between 5th grade and my sophomore year of college. I learned something from each of them, to be sure, but because of the limited exposure and lack of continuity, I didn’t have the same deep connection with any of them that I had with John or (obviously) my dad.

The other major sources of influence on me were the slightly older drummers in my school music program. Dave, who was two years older than me, was the other drummer in the middle school jazz band. My job in 7th grade was to play along with him exactly, and do whatever he did on each song. There are still times today when I’ll play a pattern and think to myself, that’s a Dave pattern.

Dr. Smith from the nearby university music department was my private percussion teacher from 7th grade through my freshman year of college. She picked me up after I’d gotten as far as my dad could take me, and she was a great teacher. She was very organized, she had a great sense of humor, and an excellent method to get her students from point A to point B in their work. I learned about structure and discipline from her, and I definitely still use some of her colloquialisms in my teaching (“clear as
mud", “are you willing to bet your drum set on that?”, “If I call you at 3:00 in the morning will you be able to play it just like that?”).
Appendix I

William’s Second Reflection
William's Second Reflection

Please think about your experiences in high school and college and moments that you remember fondly or that were turning points for you. Please recount some examples and how you think those events have influenced your beliefs about education, music, and composition.

This is a much more difficult reflection for me...I’m not sure why but I couldn’t find many crystal-clear turning point moments, but below is what I came up with.

1. It’s important to show students what they know, what they need to know, and how much there is to learn

I remember my first summer band experience right before I started high school. I was looking at snare drum music for the marching band, and it was far and away the most complicated thing I’d ever seen. It included just about every permutation of sixteenth and eighth notes that you can find in duple meter, and the guy next to me (a senior) read it with confidence on the first try. I was amazed that someone could read such sophisticated stuff with such ease, and it definitely made me realize that there was a lot more to learn. Then, if we fast forward to my freshman year of college, I had just about the exact same experience, except this time it wasn’t reading more sophisticated rhythms, it was sheer speed. Once again, I hadn’t realized what I didn’t know until someone else showed me. It was around then that I realized that there was a whole lot more to learn about music than I (or probably anyone) could possibly learn in a year, or two, or four. In retrospect, it made me see the importance of showing my students where they were going, and what was still in front of them yet to be learned.

2. There’s a LOT of music in the world, and it’s worth it to hear as much as you can.

2a. Not every strong musician has the same strengths...and not every musician fits into a single mold.

The same high school kid who read those summer band rhythms so beautifully became a bit of a role model for me. His name was Ed, and he is still one of the most musically thirsty people I’ve ever met. He is always listening to something new, trying to learn more music, and in general just loves the process of taking in music. He would make mixed tapes for me (this was the mid-80s), and they’d be pretty eclectic...hip hop, classic rock, 70s prog rock, contemporary (at that time) artists, folk, just about anything made after Bob Dylan plugged in at Newport. Ed turned me on to a lot of different artists, and we had a lot of fun sharing ideas, showing each other different beats, patterns, and grooves we’d learned, and making music together. I’m not sure if that counts as a turning point, but Ed was always inspiring me to learn more and more about music and musicians.
Ed never went to college, and drives a laundry truck for a living…but he also is highly in demand as a drummer in the New England music scene. He plays in one of the most popular wedding bands in the northeast, and subs/sits in/works with a lot of local and regional artists. He has perfect pitch…of course…and is proof that you don’t need a formal education to make music and enjoy it at a high level. During his senior year of high school, he auditioned for the music department at the local university and was turned down because he wasn’t a “well-rounded musician” (meaning he didn’t know enough about Western Art Music or music theory). I was shocked that someone with as much knowledge of music as Ed would be considered “unacceptable”. I think of him often when I encounter a student who has high musical intelligence but in a different area of expertise than the “norm”. He still speaks with bitterness about the rejection from 25 years ago…I wonder how different Ed’s life would be today if they’d let him in. I’m sure he’d have been among their strongest students.

I would definitely say that Ed’s thirst for music influenced my beliefs because I realized that there was an almost infinite amount of music to be heard, and I’d only begun to scratch the surface. This sentiment definitely influenced me, and to this day I try to share as much music as possible with my students, particularly things they probably wouldn’t find on their own. This is getting much more fun (and easier) in this age of internet access.

3. There is always another level of correctness/precision that can be attained, and each musician must be responsible to their own part as well as their role in the ensemble. (I learn this again every time I practice or rehearse, but it began as a freshman in college)

One afternoon while walking to class, a classmate passed his headphones over to me so I could hear what he was listening to. It was a CD of the Empire Brass, and I’d never heard anything like it…the balance, intonation, blend, and ensemble “tightness” were at a level I’d never noticed before. I’d heard. Again, it opened my eyes to what was really possible in music, and made me start to pay more careful attention to what was being asked of me as a performer, particularly in terms of how my part fit into the overall musical structure.

3b. The overall effect of a piece of music is much more powerful than the effect of an individual part of the music (this seems obvious, but we all had to learn it somehow!)

That same year, the university's Wind Ensemble premiered two works. In both cases, we had the opportunity to work with the composers, and they were present for the recording sessions as well. It was interesting to hear their comments to the conductor and the musicians, but I think most of it went over my head. I was working as hard as I could to play the right notes the right way at the right time, and I don’t think I had any idea what was really going on around me. When I first listened to the CD after it was
released, I was amazed at how different it sounded compared to what I heard while I was playing my parts…*the whole was so much greater than the sum of the parts, and I’d completely missed it while being immersed in my own responsibilities.*

4. **Music is more than just traditional sounds from traditional instruments.**

   In 11th grade, we played a piece of music called “Crystals” by Thomas Duffy, who at the time was on the music faculty at Yale. He came to work with us, and it was a lot of fun. The percussionists got to make some cool sounds…water gong, crystal glasses, and other non-standard effects. It was really cool to make music on “unusual stuff”. I try to program things like that as much as possible so my students can also have the experience of making interesting and unique sounds beyond what they would expect or imagine.

5. **In jazz/pop music, it’s likely that there is a consistent harmonic pattern happening even if the melody differs, for example during solos.**

   The summer before I transferred to a new university, I took part in a jazz camp at a nearby arts center. There were improv classes, lessons, clinics, and a big band. At one point in one of the improv classes, the rhythm section was playing and a student was trying to improvise on the changes to “Take the A-train”. During the solo, one of the players got lost in the form and missed a section change, so the instructor (the late Boysie Lowery), told him to sing the tune in his head. It hit me…holy cow, even when no one is playing the melody, the melody still exists through the chord changes! (As a drummer, this had never dawned on me before…again, I didn’t even know what I didn’t know)

   These are the biggest moments related to composition and education that I think shaped my understanding of, and beliefs about, music and music education. I could probably continue to rack my brain and find some others, but as you know we are always learning and there are so many little moments like these…but these stand out in my memory as the most prominent.
Appendix J

Observation of William’s Class
Observation of William's Class

Students in this school all must participate in either band or chorus, and may select to take both classes. This class is made up of ten seventh grade students who participate in band but not chorus. On those days when chorus meets, these students have a general music class.

The composition project they are undertaking was started the previous class. They discussed what composers do and students were asked to come up with 5 rhythmic ideas and 5 melodic ideas for this class meeting. This class picks up from that point.

Students wandered in and began exploring the drums in the back of the classroom. As they find their seats, William explains that he is the visitor they had talked about previously. He then goes on to ask who had brought their musical ideas.

William compares having a musical idea to having an idea for a story. The example he uses is Stephen King who comes up with the idea to write a story about a town that gets isolated from the rest of the world. How does the town get isolated? A dome drops down on it. What would that mean?

So how do we take a few notes of a musical idea make it into more? A student responds that you can add other things around a melody. "But what if you don't have a melody?" William asks. Returning to the Steven King writing analogy, he suggests that you can't just start randomly moving words around.

Using the six note tonal example that one student has created, William writes it on a staff on a smart board, plays it on the keyboard, and then applies a variety of rhythms. "That's my idea" he announces. He then poses the question "What do I do next? So if we are going to try to change them around, what do we do?" One student says they need to be changed in a 'sensible way'. William responds that he likes the word sensible and that it isn't a word heard often in middle school.

William goes on to explain that he doesn't care if they remember the technical terms, but that they may help them remember the ideas. He asks what it means to augment something. A student responds that it is when something is added on. William then goes on to explain and demonstrate each note of the musical idea in half notes instead of in the quarter notes originally used to note it. The discussion progresses next to diminution. He then demonstrates the three statements of the idea, along with changing the octave in which it is performed. He also suggests to students that any of these ideas could be layered one on top of the other. To do that, they would need to play around and see how the ideas fit.

Then he asks what else they could do. A student suggests syncopation and they go on to define it. William again demonstrates on the piano, comparing and contrasting
rhythmic ideas. Further prodding results in ideas to change articulation or dynamics. These, William describes as the 'salt and pepper' and returns to the Steven King analogy saying that once the storyline is worked out, the author can go back to the 'salt and pepper' to develop the characters. Such an example would be deciding that a character will have a Texas accent, or walk with a limp. Such salt and pepper as dynamics and articulation come later in the piece.

William moves on to question students about what they know about a sequence. After some confusion with sequins, William relates it to transposition. He then writes an example on a new staff, in a new color, and they begin to develop the sequence in a descending pattern, naming the pitches in solfege. The students are actively engaged as William plays the original and then the sequence they've developed. A student then points out that the original musical idea already possessed a sequence. William confirms that the student is correct and admits being a little embarrassed that he had not seen that. They continue developing the sequence further, naming each note in solfege as William writes it on the smart board and then plays the results.

Next William suggests they could take it and invert it. He writes the original one on the staff (starting on mi) and asks "If we leap upward (instead of going down a third) where would we be?" They get slightly side-tracked by making the new staff and the notes different colors from the original. The colors actually highlight the differences in the two themes very well. They then continue to name the notes that result from the inverted intervals in solfege. William then plays the resulting theme and contrasts it to the original. He also plays them at the same time and suggests they can take the inversion and do all the things they did with the original idea. Retrograde is then explored and is also demonstrated on the keyboard.

William moves on to musical phrases and previous discussions about questions and answers. He demonstrates the arch of the line in Twinkle Twinkle and asks "How much can you say in six syllables?" A student comes back with "I like pizza pie" and he proceeds to sing the words with the musical idea. But he asks - what would go with it? He adds some repeated notes to the beginning of each of the sets of three notes.

Time is running short and students did not get to actually work on their pieces. The class has gotten a little restless, especially since a class has just noisily gone down the hall to recess. William works to recap quickly the options for expanding and adding to their musical ideas. He reinforces that they are still in the brainstorming phase and that they should take one of their ideas and 'push them around' and apply some of the devises and bring them when they meet again next week. He apologizes for them not having time to work on them in class that day 'but as usual, I'm long-winded.'
Appendix K

Transcript of Interview with William
M: This is the official "the recorder is going." I have your permission to record?

W: Yes.

M: Thank you. I've been reading through all the stuff you sent me, your philosophy of music education, reflections, all this kind of stuff. Getting to see the lesson helps fill out the picture of your concept and your beliefs about composition and hopefully a little bit about how all of these things developed. So I'm looking at what you believe about composition, where that might have come from, and how it might be evident in how you teach. I'm looking at a number of teachers and looking at how those pictures come together. There won't be any great universal themes coming out but to look at how people put this kind of information together in the context of composition. Research shows there are a lot of teachers who have a lot of trouble with composition. As one of the standards, a lot of teachers have struggled with this. There is so much variety in it it isn't funny. That's what I'm trying to figure out. So I have a few questions all ready and we're going to draw on the lesson.

W: Okay

M: So back to childhood. No stuffed animals, I see.

W: Oh, no, no. I think that's funny that you say that. Well the little pipe cleaner guy is kind of falling apart but...

M: I have a flying monkey on the shelf in my office.

W: That's great.

M: Was your mom musical? You talked about your dad.

W: My mom was not a musician. She was like a baton twirler in the school marching band. She loved to sing but she didn't ever sing in the choir or anything like that. So she was supportive. She was really creative. But she didn't play an instrument and she didn't have any formal training or anything like that. She was a dancer. So that was her creative outlet.

M: There is a lot of musicality in that.

W: And I lived with my mom. My parents were divorced. My mom had custody so I'd see my dad Wednesday nights and every other weekend.
M: That helps with the picture.

W: Anyway.

M: Other siblings?

W: Yeah, I have an older sister.

M: Musical?

W: No. In fact, most decidedly not musical.

M: Really?

W: Always sings happy birthday in roughly a different key. Sometime she'll be like a parallel fifth away from everyone else and she's not.

M: A little Ivesian?

W: Yeah. She's really [laughing] Both her kids so are very musical, which I think is cool.

M: How does she feel about that?

W: She loves it. When we were kids I would get home from school and go right to the drums and she did not love that. Now she has a kid who is a 9th grade and he comes home and goes right to the drums. She texted me "It's just like having you back. But this time I don't mind." You know she's like my mom. Very supportive of it.

M: Do you think the experiences you had in music growing up were like the other kids that were around you.? Did you feel different musically?

W: Yeah. Yeah kind of because well, because my mom was so supportive. She drove me to XXX to the symphony every week where I was taking lessons. I was among the few kids in my school who we're doing that. So that made me feel like this isn't what happens for every student. And of course, my dad, being a drummer, not everyone was studying with their dad. But I don't, I'm not sure, in a way yeah. I did feel there were kids who were far more musical than I was - kids I looked up to every step of the way who seemed to get it faster or do it better, so...

M: Interesting. You talked about singing in the church choir a lot of years. What about your school music experiences in elementary and middle school? Did you sing in the choir in school?
W: I sang in choir during the years that we had to sing in choir. But then, I don't remember. It was probably 5th grade when you did your instrument that was the same time. I don't really remember singing after 4th grade.

M: But everybody in your school had to do that?
W: I think so. I remember my music teacher and I remember the songs we sang and I remember her classroom. I don't really remember when... But then I also remember, like in 3rd grade we did a musical. Everyone had a part in the musical and some people sang more than others. I was Thumper. It was Bambi and I was Thumper. I was like a first billing or whatever you call it. But...

M: You had a lead.
W: I was a lead but I had my own solo at one point. That was cool. And I remember something similar in 4th grade but it wasn't a big thing like Bambi. It was - I don't remember what it was called but in 5th grade I played drums in the play. They had a couple kids playing instruments. And I didn't sing in 5th, 6th, 7th was middle school. Eighth was middle school. My senior year in high school I went back and sang again. But that was more of a scheduling and credit thing. I couldn't do band because I needed some other class. So I sang instead.

M: As a kid did you ever make up songs? Were you one of those kids that liked to make up songs?
W: I had stuff in my head but never... like songs - no because I'm so not, I want to say literate. I can read and stuff but the text is such, I don't know the words to anything. My wife and I listen to the same piece of music and I come away with the harmony and she comes away with the message of the words. It's crazy. At this point I'm like embarrassed buy it. It takes me forever to learn the lyrics to a song. My kids are like just words... boom. So no I never made up songs. But I always had music in my head. A beat or a tune.

M: Humming?
W: Humming. I can remember walking home one day thinking if I only knew how to write music, that would be really cool to write down. But I didn't.

M: And today all you have to do is just record it. Yeah. Just push a button.
W: Yeah imagine. . . just imagine how cool that would have been. Yeah. How Cool that would have been . So that happened.

M: So it was going on in your head.
W: All the time.

M: All the time?

W: All the time. But like I said; never any words. Never any complete things.

M: Yah, well it can existing without words.

W: Yeah. You're right.

M: Do you think this is pretty typical of how you introduce composition or use composition or are there other ways that you've done?

W: Yeah. With this group, with the 7th graders here, they have all had general music all the way through and they've been singing in choir all the way through and playing instruments since 5th grade' so they can all read, they can all sing and they understand solfege syllables at some level.

M: That was amazing.

W: How cool was that?

M: Actually I may steal some of these ideas for my intro to music course.

W: Awesome. Last year we did this thing in the lab using Garage Band. It was cool because they could instantly click and drag loops and some of them recorded their own sounds. We had it set up where they could only use a certain number of loops. They had to play something on the keyboard and they had to record some other sound. It could be there instrument or there voice or whatever. So it was composition in the sense that they were starting with an empty sound file and they were filling it up. But it wasn't creating a melody, stuff like that. Some of the kids, and I felt like I would say to my wife - we have some really good producers. They would combine sounds in a really interesting way. And they would add this beat and that effect and it was really, really cool. So I guess by definition they were creating a composition. They were organizing sounds but they weren't starting with a blank piece of paper. Unlike the Stephen King analogy, I use that because everyone's heard of him, first you have an idea. That idea came to me over the summer. So this is the first attempt at this process.

M: What age are these guys?

W: Seventh grade.

M: So the Garage Band thing you did before with 6th graders?
W: No. That was last year's 7th graders.

M: Oh, that was last year 7th graders. So how are you feeling when you compare the two approaches?

W: I hear their thoughts more this way. I feel like they're engaging more in the act of creation where over there they all had their own headphones, they all have their own keyboard. And like in class piano, I have headphones. I just turn up each track to see what it sounds like. And then at the end of the chunk, they all email me a file and I listen to it on my own. So this suits me better in terms of interactions with them and having an educational relationship with them. And I think they're learning more about the creative process. I think with that, they were all engaged very easily. They had a flashy result at the end and "Look mom and dad. This is my two minutes Garage Band file." I think we'll probably do that with this group later in the year. But after you have some ideas developed, now let's go put them in the program. Play it and then they can add a second track and add the second thing as opposed to just getting there.

M: So I'm trying to break this down educationally. What are the differences that you're seeing? One gives them a slicker finished product. What do you think they got out of the Garage Band? What do you think students got out of it? What did you get out of it?

W: I think they learned how to assembled pieces and make choices about what pieces match and what pieces don't - and make choices about understanding what is a transition and what's your focal point. If I've got six things happening what's the loudest things that I want to hear. So they got out of it this the idea of a focal point, supporting musical ideas...

M: Texture?

W: Texture... I was going to say consonants and dissonance because a lot of those Garage Band files, there might be a major sounding guitar part and if you drop some minor sounding other thing on top. Is that what I wanted or something doesn't sound right? They got to fit a lot of pieces into a lot of holes and see what worked and what didn't. But again, here they are manipulating single pitches. I think that's probably a better place to start.

M: So here you're getting more discussion. They're more community oriented. And then so your thought is to start with this... talk about it... work through the issues together, and then reinforce maybe later or take another perspective later with Garage Band, which is a more solitary kind of event.

W: Yeah. For sure.
M: That kind of leads into and partially answers the next question which is what do you think was valuable for your students in this lesson? What was valuable?

W: Today or the lesson on the whole?

M: Whichever. What do you think they're going to walk away with educationally?

W: I want them to be able to hear a piece of music and have an idea of what's happening. We started with *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*. Here's what's happening. Here's a little memorable thing and its simple, but it's doing this. This music theory is happening to you while you hear it. You know what I mean? You're being manipulated by this, by physics and stuff. So I want them to understand that. I want them to understand that when they hear for example, a Beethoven symphony, when they hear ba, ba, ba, bum...

M: Which is a good example of using 3 notes or repeating motives.

W: Right. That's like, here's what he started with and look at all this stuff that came from it. He didn't sit down one day and say I've got all these 50 ideas. I'm going to throw down 50 pages right now. Stephen King doesn't right chapters at a time. He starts with this one thought and now I'm going to expand it make it into I finished product. And I want them to understand that that's the same process. Because I think when you feel that way you're more likely to try to be creative.

M: So I go back to the word process.

W: Alright. Yeah. And I'm definitely a process oriented person. As much as I love music and being an artist and sort of being creative, I don't think that creativity is one of my strengths. If I wasn't a music teacher I'd be a math teacher and I would be formula and format and process and pattern and you do this to get that. I think that probably might be a weakness in my lesson. There's no room to just say "That sounds beautiful. Go with it." I'm not good at that. Anyway...

M: So you like process.

W: Yeah. I need it.

M: And this is really about process.

W: Right. I want them to understand the process of composition from "here's an idea".

M: That's creative.

W: It is creative. For sure. You have to have created something to start the process. Then along the way other things may come to you. Like I said, it may be your fifth alteration of
your original idea that is the one that you stick with that makes you say that's going to be my piece.

M: Revision.


M: So go to the opposite side of this. What kind of approach would you just right off. You would never use it with these guys? Is there anything that you think "No. That wouldn't be right and that would not work."

W: Well I'm thinking of like - I have lots of bad ideas in my head. Give everybody a piece of blank paper and your instrument and go compose. You know. Go make a piece of music. But to me the bad idea in that is that you haven't given them a starting point. Ninth grade English isn't go write a novel. First you have to read a bunch of novels. Then you have to write a sentence and a paragraph. So forth. Now we're back to process. I feel like I think the only thing for me that wouldn't work would be to give them... that sounds funny. Lots of things wouldn't work. But to me the biggest danger would be to give them more than they're ready to understand. We're going to talk about composition during this unit so you're going to compose something.

M: So you have to judge different classes - different abilities? I'm talking about your comment that what you wouldn't do is give them more than they can handle. So what would be an example of more than they can handle?

W: Well just like that.

M: Just here's a blank piece of paper?

W: Right. Right. This group, since there are only 10 of them and they're all, one of the cool things about this school is that these kids have all been together for so long they're comfortable. They don't mind yelling out answers and having ideas in a small class setting like that, which is an amazing way to learn how to think. You know, I don't know if the same approach would work in a public school setting where you've got 30 kids, many of whom don't really want to be there. So in that setting it might be more conducive to - here's a piece of paper with some notes on it. You can use eighth notes. You can use these pitches. Assemble them in some way. So just giving them more, like, I don't know if it was in English class, the word bank.

M: All the answers are here. Arrange the parts. Here are the parts.

W: Right.
M: Which is kind of like the Garage Band. Garage Band gives you parts and you just have to stick them together some way. You have to make artistic judgment. Or creative musical judgments of what you think achieves your purpose.

W: Right. Exactly. And I wouldn't give these kids a word bank because I don't want to leash them. I don't want some five over two, 13 16th notes in a measure. Don't worry about that yet. Let's just let it flow. Because if there's too much, "I can't do that. Rats. I can't do that." But then again if there's not enough, not scaffolding.

M: Parameters?

W: Parameters. Exactly. If there aren't enough parameters, a blank piece of paper is a scary thing. You get paralyzed by the freedom.

M: It's a tough balance to strike.

W: Yeah. But I know these kids from last year and it’s this kind of activity for them. You can do it. You can say you have 15 minutes now you're free to create. And they go to an instrument, piano, or a lot of them worked on the marimbas because they can quickly put down the mallets and right stuff. For 15 minutes I just walked around and said "Well what are you doing? That's kind of interesting. Oh. You're using e-flat there. Neat. That's cool." And when I'm working with those kids, these kids are still enjoying.

M: Have you found a difference in engagement level between the Garage Band - the band lab and this?

W: Yeah, I have. There were kids in the lab who were really into it and there were other kids in the lab who, you put a computer in front of them and they start doing other things. Nothing inappropriate, but just being off task. Whereas in here they're making music or they're not. So they made music.

M: Interesting.

W: Yeah.

M: This relates to your philosophy of music education which I have here somewhere.

W: Probably very short..

M: Where'd it go? I've got your definition of composition. "The act of intentionally organizing sounds to create music to try to foster creativity but more frequently is used to assess students understanding of topics we've covered. So it's useful as an assessment tool as well as a means to an end." So how would you relate what you're doing here to that definition of composition?
W: Okay. I'm sort of trying to get away from that sort of as an assessment tool. You know I'm not looking to see how well they know the B flat scale. This is definitely I want them to understand the creative process. That's probably a shift that's sort of come about through working here. Walking down the hallways you see the artwork. It's pretty awesome. There's some pretty neat stuff and the kids are encouraged to be creative and so there we go. I can remember lessons that where - "Okay... well I have to hit the composition standard this month so I'm going to give them a worksheet with some parameters and they assembled the pieces and then I can check off - Yep. We did composition and if every measure has for beats worth of material and we stay in the right key then they understand what they're doing."

M: You have success.

W: Good for me. I taught the kids composition. But that's not teaching them composition. Its using it as a tool to assess how well they know quarter notes and half notes and reading the staff. It almost becomes more of a notation...

M: Exercise?

W: Right. Like assessment of their notation skills. ...

M: Rather than...

W: Rather than an opportunity to be creative and compose. If you're composing, I don't remember the wording of the standard, compose in a variety of styles, and I guess if you do that assignment then you've done that. I think, and I understand why it's not this way, improvisation and composition are pretty closely related. I wish there was a way to jam those standards together because when you improvise you are composing. Right?

M: It depends on who you ask.

W: It does.

M: It does. That's why it's an issue. Teachers' perceptions of composition - is it or isn't it. Part of what I've been finding here is some people think it is, some people think it isn't - and what makes people believe those things?

W: I wonder how much of that is when we think of improvising we think of the tenor sax and jazz and a ton of notes and all that stuff. But when you're doing fourth grade general music, they improvise on Orff instruments and they improvise on their knees and that's improvisation too. I can't help but think at some point someone Beethoven was sitting at the piano improvising and goes "Ah! That's the one. I'll develop it." So maybe it's the first step in composition. But again, pencil and paper, 30 kids, you're not improvising - your pushing lead around on a piece of paper and its not... I don't know.
M: So how did you come up with these approaches to composition?

W: I don't know. I really don't.

M: You didn't learn that in music education methods classes?

W: No I don't remember studying composition at all. Like at all. I remember taking classes with Professor X and Mark was a composition major, probably my closest friend as an undergrad - talking to him, working on stuff that he was working on, like writing a piece for marimba. So he would ask questions. Having Professor X for a couple of theory classes was cool because I remember him saying as a composer, if you repeat a couple of measures you double your money. He's just trying to make the point but he's kind of telling the truth. So I'm thinking - he's showing us this Bach, and this Beethoven through the eyes of a guy who creates music. So then I think I try to look at those things the same way. I'm not analyzing it just to analyze it but I want to see how they did it. So in my theory classes, even all the way back to when I first started teaching, we would talk about how it had been done. I guess that's just sort of where it went.

M: An interest for you? Did it hold a specific interest? Or...

W: The process... the patterns and the process. Look at all the patterns in the Bach! This is math. I love it. The process part was awesome. But again I'm paralyzed with fear by the thought of being asked to compose a piece of music. Like if you said "Hey - we're going to commission you to do the new school song" - you got the wrong guy. I'll arrange it. Give me a melody and I'll process it. But the idea of having to start with a blank page and come up with the melody for the school song - shaking with fear to think about that. Absolutely shaking. I don't know if that's good. But yeah - no. I don't have any designs on becoming a composer.

M: So you didn't really do any kind of composing or inventive stuff when you were in high school or..?

W: I tried. I tried to write a piece of music in high school. I was listening to a lot of Frank Zappa at the time. It was just way over my head. I was so like I'm going to write something in the style of whatever... the Black Page number two. It was just way over my head on the theory level. So I just basically... That note sounds good. What should come next. And I'd play all 11 other possible notes and make a choice and then 4th and so forth and so on. No. I won't do that. Forget it. Orchestration project as an undergrad and having to do a counter melody... I never felt like my compositional ideas were... I was never happy with them. No. No, I'm not.

M: So in your other teaching - when you were teaching high school band and stuff, did you ever do any composition with them?
W: Like in the theory class we would do kind of like this. Not starting with 'come up with an idea' but - 'let's take this melody apart and see what the composer did'. I taught AP music theory for a while and so we had to go through all the different devices. But we did it from an analysis stand point. This is what the composer has done.

M: So it was deconstruction?

W: Yeah. Yes, exactly. But never like lessons on composition. I was definitely, like I said I was someone who was checking it off. Yes. I can tell my vice principal I hit the standard using this worksheet and my vice principal is a history teacher and won't know the difference - that I didn't teach them how to compose. I just had them compose something and assessed it. I wish I didn't say that on tape but I did. That's what I did.

M: All the names are changed.

W: I know. I know, I'm half joking when I say but. . I know. But its...

M: It's not the first time I've heard that so...

W: I'm sure. I'm sure. This whole process for me is like "Holy cow. I never really did teach about composition. I talked about how to compose."

M: Again, it depends on your definition composition.

W: Right. Because at the same time we had a jazz band where everyone was improvising.

M: So then you've got the question "is that composing"?

W: Right. To me it was. To me that was... I'm knocking off two standards. But again I hear you on that and I can definitely see how when you're composing you're going through this other development process that doesn't happen when you improvise.

M: You talked about a wonderful experience you had - was it in high school -where you played unusual percussion instrument?

W: Oh the Snakes piece with the water gong and all that stuff? And the composer was the conductor.

M: So what impression did that leave with you and do you ever think about that when you think about composition?

W: Oh yeah. That was definitely eye opening. Making music by dipping a gong underwater... That's neat. And sort of opens your eyes to what's possible. Then he had everyone shake their keys like rattlesnakes so it was definitely eye-opening. "Oh, that's
music too". Something that the previous teacher did here and I will try to continue to do it, is take the kids outside and have them listen, like walk around campus and what do you hear - write down what you hear.

M: Sound walks.

W: Yeah. Talk about those sounds and could you use them in a piece of music. How would you use them? Could you put a piece of music together using those sounds?

M: So is that competition?

W: Yeah. Sure. Absolutely. That's the thing that the other music teacher here, the 5th and 6th grade band teacher, she does a lot of that type of work. So all these kids that you saw today have done that with her in the past. And I think that is composition.

M: Well that was a wonderful experience when I read about it. It's really neat especially having that experience before college. To have that questioning going on about whether that is really music. How do you make music with that? I bet it was very unusual to have that experience.

W: Yeah. My high school program was pretty deep - pretty engaging. We had lots of guest conductors and stuff like that. People coming in and more than one composer coming to interact with us. The guy from Yale was the one who really hit me because of the unusual instruments and sounds. They were like measured in seconds. Do this for 5 seconds. This was the first time I'd seen the score with sort of alternate notation... or something.

M: Graphic notation?

W: Graphic notation. Exactly. That was neat.

M: Do you ever use graphic notation with students?

W: No, I haven't. I know that the 5th and 6th graders, when they do that soundscape or they'll do like a flow chart with 5 seconds of this and its blue and it's this high and then it just louder and sounds more aggressive so they make it orange. In music history in college we had to do something similar to that. Analyzing a piece and it played in real time as the bubbles you could click on it.

M: The local university developed it. They developed a lot of that early software.

W: Yeah right. So they do that when they put their sounds from outside together. So that's done, but again it's done in 5th and 6th grade.
M: Okay. What relationship do you see between your general life beliefs and you beliefs about music education?

W: That's deep. That's deep. I don't know...

M: So what do you bring, what is that symbiotic relationship between life in general teaching music?

W: In my head I hear why do you think music is important.

M: Maybe.

W: Maybe. To me it’s important because it helped me to find myself at an early age. I wasn't really athletic and I was kind of quiet and shy. I was the youngest kid in my grade so I was the last to tie my shoes and all. So being kind of okay at the drums made me feel like I could survive. I don't mean that like in a negative way like I never had thoughts of choosing not to survive. But I found myself first as a musician. So I'm pretty grateful to music for that. I definitely learned a lot about how to think, and how to manage my time, and all those non- musical things because of having to do them in music. So I see the value it gave to me as a whole person.

M: So do you think that is also something that students in your class find?

W: Yes. Definitely. Definitely. Plus the idea of thinking about something in real time. Here's your math test you have to the end of class. Maybe it takes you 30 seconds to do the first problems but number 11 you have to think about but. But I can zoom right through number 11 but number 15 takes me the rest of class. So we're both doing the work and we both have the same amount of time. But we're allowed to stretch when we need to and contract when we don't. Whereas in an ensemble, everyone's thinking in real time and everyone is solving problems simultaneously, listening and reacting. Whether or not you ever choose to be an ensemble, the ability to think and react in real time is huge. So that's - I think that's part of it. I don't want to say I don't know but I'm not sure I do know. Music has played such a huge role in my life and whether or not it plays the same kind of role to them, I think they should know something about it when they walk out of here - or whatever school they walk out of.
Appendix L

Final Clarification Questions for William
William - Final clarification questions.

1. Can you conceive of any way that your anxiety about composition may play a part in how you address composition in the classroom?

I’m sure it does on some level...I think that I may downplay or even gloss over the creative side of things because it’s such an area of need for me. I have often said that if I could change one thing about myself, I’d like to be a more creative/independent thinker, and creativity is one of those “hard to teach” things anyway, so my anxiety definitely affects my approach. When I think about teaching composition, I think about all the things that happen after the “idea”, and that’s definitely what we talk about most. In fact, if it weren’t for Stephen King’s book *On Writing*, I’m not sure I’d even be able to talk about the creative part as much as I do (which isn’t much). How do you teach someone to be creative?

2. You talked about your love of process, and your affinity for analytic process and structure became particularly evident as you spoke. Does this love of process and structure emerge in other parts of your life as well? If so, where? And while you referred to learning structure and discipline from the teacher who came after your father, was it something you think you learned or was reinforced anywhere else in particular?

Oh yes, process and routine are all over my life in every possible way. I wake and prepare for work the same way every single day, I eat the same breakfast, I put my wallet and keys in the same place...routine keeps me going. If I get out of my routine I invariably miss or forget something. I even load my instruments into my van the same way every time, too...which means I actually prefer when people don’t help me (it’s nice that they offer, but in the long run it slows me down because I either have to tell them how to load/carry, or suffer the discomfort of knowing it wasn’t “done right”). I think this may be a form of insanity, by the way! Routine makes me feel comfortable, and the process of finding the most efficient routine is very interesting to me. Spontaneity terrifies me in every aspect of my life, except for when I’m making music.

I remember that my dad also had some mild OCD tendencies, but he died before I even recognized that in myself, so I’m not sure how much of it I inherited from him. There was a lot of chaos in my personal life as a kid, and I was once told by a counselor that it was likely that routines I could control were my way of feeling as though I was actually in control of something in my life. Of course that’s less true now that I’m an adult, but having a routine is part of my routine, so why would I stop? Anyway, I like patterns and routines a lot, and I like having a format to follow.

3. Here is the philosophy of music education you wrote last Spring.

_Every student is capable of making music, and it’s our job as music educators to find music with which our students can connect in a meaningful way._
a. Can you talk more about "finding music with which our students can connect in a meaningful way"? How do you judge 'meaningful way'?

Bernstein used the Beatles' “And I Love Her” to teach form during one of his Young People’s Concerts, and then he went on to talk about Sonata-Allegro Form as it relates to Mozart’s Jupiter Symphony. In the 60s used the Beatles to teach Mozart, and the kids in the audience really seemed to connect with both (when we show that video, our kids get it even today). That’s finding a meaningful connection.

I determine “meaningful connection” by familiarity and the ability to recreate or recognize some part of the music in some way without too much help. If you can play the rhythms or hum the bass line, you are more likely to then hear and understand other things that are happening. If you already know the piece, it is much easier to look at the parts of it as parts of something. It might not be that the student already knows the piece, but that they recognize something about it, like a tonal pattern or a rhythm. Anything they can identify later is in some way meaningful.

When we’re told that “2+2=4”, we can regurgitate that fact by rote, but once we connect that phrase with two pairs of actual things, we can truly learn the lesson. So in a Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences kind of way, if we find music that our students can grasp on one level, we can use it to teach them about music on a different level. Then, once they’ve gained some new understanding based on that one piece, we can introduce a new piece with the same concept, and hopefully the students will get it.

We’re supposed to be music teachers, not repertoire teachers, right? So when we’re teaching some musical concept, say major tonality, we can’t just choose that same piece we always use for major tonality...we have to find music that our students will already know about so they can then relate it to major tonality. In music theory class, we got a list of tunes that included all the melodic intervals so we could start to recognize and identify the intervals. “Happy Birthday” for Major Second (because everyone in the US knows it). The piece of music already has meaning, so we can use it to teach a concept. Once we hear that Major Second in “Happy Birthday”, we can then start to recognize it in other places.

However, if our students never hear anything in class that already has meaning to them, they will have a much harder time making connections and learning concepts.

Remember the old Adam West “Batman” TV Show? I know you know the theme song (na na na na na na-BAT MAN!). Did you ever think of that tune as a 12-bar blues? It’s a great starting point teaching the 12-bar form, and then introducing some other blues tunes by other artists.

b. What role do you envision for composition in achieving this? In other words, how do you see composition as contributing to this philosophy?
For me, learning to create my own grooves and ideas on drum set didn’t happen until I’d done a lot of copying of my favorite drummers’ ideas. Along those lines, most of my composition assignments include parameters, so instead of saying “Write a melody”, I might say, “Write a four-measure melody in the style of ________”, or “use the chord progression from ‘Happy Birthday’ to write your own melody”, or maybe “develop a set of rhythmic variations based on the first four measures of ________”. Basically, “take what you already know and understand, and use it to do something more”.

4. You explained that your definition of composition has evolved since you wrote this last Spring:

Music Composition is the act of intentionally organizing sounds to create music. I try to use it to foster creativity, but more frequently it is also used to assess students’ understanding of topics we’ve covered (like certain rhythm patterns, scales, chords, etc.). So it’s useful as an assessment tool as well as a means to an end.

a. While you said your new circumstances have contributed to changes in your perspective of composition, can you identify anything in particular that provoked these changes?

I can’t think of any one thing...just the shifting nature of life, and constantly adapting to what it seems the students need or the curriculum requires. I will say that at my school creativity is encouraged more, which probably has something to do with it.

5. You described yourself as not being a deeply religious person or spiritual person, but rather you are process and structure oriented. How else would you describe yourself?

I think that I tend to be boring and predictable in my real life, but hopefully not in music. I’m insecure about a lot of things. I want to be good at things but I tend to spread myself too thin. I get paralyzed by my thoughts sometimes, and that’s frustrating. I think too much when I shouldn’t, and sometimes I don’t think enough when I should be thinking carefully. And as you can tell, I talk and write way too much! Every year I make it my goal to choose my words carefully and be more economical with my communication. You can see how well that works.

6. In your reflections you frequently mentioned the importance of listening; listening to others when you play and listening to a variety of music. Does this play a role in your approach to teaching? If so, how would you describe its role?

Yes, listening to music and also listening to what the class or the lesson needs. In the case of the latter, it might be some other form of assessment, but the idea of taking a pulse and reacting to the situation is important to me. (my focus on listening is somewhat ironic because I am losing my hearing...so maybe we should just call it “gathering information”)

Anyway, I try to ask a lot of “listen and tell me” questions in my classes.

7. When and why did you decide to become a music teacher?

This is embarrassing...I majored in Music Ed because my parents said it was the only way they’d let me major in music. I mostly approached it as “learn as much as I can and apply to it a performance career” until I was student teaching. I really, really, really loved my first student teaching placement, and it was extremely gratifying to work with the kids and see them learn and improve. I actually decided to follow through and become a music teacher because of that experience. In retrospect, I wish I had taken some of the required classes a little more seriously!

8. Is there anything you would like to add or clarify? Or is there anything you want to be sure I walk away understanding?

I heard a great quote the other day: “Getting good at anything improves your ability to get good at things”. I think that’s something I try to use in my teaching...I want kids to learn about music, but I also want them to learn to think. Being able to think is maybe the single most important thing we can learn how to do. So maybe we should add that to my philosophy...I want my students to learn how to think, and I try to do that by helping them think about music, both as a listener and a musician.
Appendix M

Mark’s Demographic Information, Philosophy of Education and Music Education, Definition of Music Composition and its Uses
Demographic Information for Mark

Degree: undergraduate degree in music education, concentration on trumpet
        Master's degree in music education - May 2013
Teaching experience: 8 years - beginner band, middle school band and general music.

Mark's Philosophy of Education and Music Education

        I believe there are three critical verbs in k-12 music education: creating, performing and listening. The nature of the class, performance based vs general music setting or other, should guide the emphasis, but all three verbs should somehow be included though, with a variety of musical experiences.

Mark's definition of composition and uses

        Musical composition is when musical ideas (rhythm, style, melody, harmony, etc.) are written down so that they can be reproduced later, as close to the composers original intent as possible. This definition is viewing a musical composition as a fixed object, depending on the time period of style, genre or other circumstances, music made be thought of as an action, something to be interacted with.
Appendix N

Mark’s First Reflection
Mark's First Reflection

Think back on your experiences from early childhood to middle school and consider instances and people who have most influenced you generally and in your music. Please write about those people and instances and provide some examples of situations that affected you. Also, consider how they may be evident in your life now.

I believe the biggest moment that has affected my life in music is learning piano. I don't really remember any of my first lessons, but somehow John, my teacher, must have allowed me to learn the way that was best for me. I can remember very early on not being glued to the page, wanting to play what was in my head vs. what the music said to play. I never stopped playing piano from that day on, but I would never become a pianist either, as I would just consider myself "one who can play the piano". There is a difference in my mind. Growing up, I would always just go to the piano and play, and just make stuff up. I could read music but the music in my head was far more exciting to play. Other things I remember about growing up at an early age, was singing the hymns in church. I never sang the melody, in fact my friend Nick and I would try to sing a different harmony to every hymn. The only other thing I can remember growing up was when my trumpet teacher in 7th grade, 2 years after I had started playing, notice my teeth pointed out a little near the center of my mouth, making it difficult to play. He had me move it to the side, where my mouth piece could rest on the flat part of my tooth, and since then I have been able to play trumpet with much more range. Until then, I was the subject of the other trumpet player's jokes!
Appendix O

Mark’s Second Reflection
Mark's Second Reflection

*Please think about your experiences in high school and college and moments that you remember fondly or that were turning points for you. Please recount some examples and how you think those events have influenced your beliefs about education, music, and composition.*

When I was in high school, fortunately for me I was able to "play high notes" on the trumpet, which most people could not do. This skill set me apart from the other players, and gave me joy out of playing the trumpet, and the band director would also give me cooler parts to play. I also like to figure out what notes would fit in the chord so I could play a high note, or harmonize on top. I remember being told by an older student if you play a high D whenever everyone else played an A, it would sound good. This was the first time I ever thought of music theory and my trumpet going together. While I did take another year of piano lessons in high school, no one ever encourage me to compose music except when I took a theory class my senior year. I wrote a three part arrangement to "Silent Night". At the time I was also discovering reading chords from pop music books like the Beatles and Chicago. I don't really remember how I learned this theory, but most likely tinkering on the piano with a few things I learned from theory class. One thing that has really influenced how I teach now was that I was never really expected to learn rhythms. I am not really sure how I got by, since I was also in leadership positions. I could read simple "on the beat" rhythms, but not much more than that. My lack of reading skills influenced me since I consider it my weakness, and I make sure my students know how to read rhythms. Despite this, I still look back at high school with fond memories.

In college, through various classes like harmony and arranging, we were asked to arrange music. However, past that, if your major wasn't composition, you were not expected to be creative through music like in improvisation or composition, unless you were in jazz band. And even in jazz band it was up to you if you wanted to improvise. About halfway through my first year in college, and on my own I started writing what I call my "pop" songs, and some of my best memories were recording them or collaborating with friends who would sing and play with me. Looking back, there was no reason for our music professors to take the time to encourage us to create music, and even now I wonder how you can fit it all in. For me, I composed, and now arrange despite anyone's thoughts or encouragement. My concerns as a music educator now are the people who don't have the motivation or won't ever try to do it themselves. How do I guide them? I feel I know the way in improvisation, but I would be driving blind if I were to attempt teaching composition since I myself was never taught.
Appendix P

Observation of Mark’s Class
Observation of Mark's Class

Students have just finished lunch and file into a small band room. Mark takes attendance on an pad as the music to Sounds of Silence plays, accompanied by a power point slide presentation displaying the words. Students sit quietly with worksheets when the teachers asks what historically significant event happened when this music was popular. He reminds them that this is question four on their sheets. Students call out events such as the assassination of Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. peace prize, the passage of civil rights legislation.

Next question on the sheet - what is the form? It becomes clear that the students have talked about other pieces of music such as Hey Jude and Man in the Mirror in relation to the same questions. Mark reminds the students to consider repetition. Students are quiet and engaged.

Mark says "I won't ask you to sing" but says he will embarrass himself by singing for them. He proceeds to quickly half hum - half singing so as to review the tune quickly for students. He highlights the text as students decide on the applicable form. This form is then compared to the forms of several other songs they have studied. Concluding that the form is AAA, he notes that "People love repeating stuff."

On to question number seven. What is the mood? Students are apparently choosing vocabulary words from the sheet and begin calling out responses such as lonely, haunting, sad, and depressing. The teacher asks "Is it major or minor?" While students believe it is minor, they are told they will find out later.

Mark proceeds with a review of form using letters on the whiteboard and a chart at the back of the room that depicts form using shapes. He then demonstrates a 'dance' that he has created. It starts with one particular move, changes to another, and then returns to the first. He asks the class what the form would be. They laugh and quickly identify it as ABA.

Students are told they were going to do something they have never done before and Mark proceeds to assign them to groups. He instructs them to compose a dance or a chant, or a rap to demonstrate a form. He tells them they have five minutes and he will check in to see if they are ready at that point Time is kept with a large digital timer on the wall. Mark moves through the classroom observing groups and checks in to offer guidance. Even though the type of activity and group work setting were new for these students, they all appeared to be engaged and remained on task for the most part.

As the class came back together, Mark reminded them that just like "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" what happens when students perform their pieces should not be talked about out side of class. The underlying message was that in doing
this project, students may move or make sounds that might be embarrassing and other students should not poke fun or tell tales about them.

The first group felt awkward and lost. They were unable to work the plan they had constructed. After several minutes of failed attempts, Mark told them they could try again later. The second group was somewhat more successful. The first two members of the group managed to perform enough to give a general idea of what they had in mind. However, the third person could not bring himself to move. Mark asked the class what the form was. While students responded AB, the teacher said he thought it was ABC since the last person did nothing. Nothing, in this instance, was different (and something), so it was still part of the form.

As time came to a close, all the groups had not yet performed. Mark said they would finish up tomorrow and they could "patch 'em up".
Appendix Q

Transcript of Interview with Mark
ME: Alright. So the official notification is the recorder is now going and I have your permission to record?

M: Yes.

ME: Great. Thank you. What I'd like to do is I'd like to start by going back and talking a little bit more about some of the things you talked about in your childhood. Your early piano lessons; whose idea was it?

M: I don't remember. I think it was just expected that I play the piano, although my older brother didn't. My older sister played the piano and organ and flute. Everyone in the family other than my older brother for some reason, was very musical. I have an older sister. She actually was at one point playing the organ for some serviced and we really loved our minister of music. He was actually from either Germany or Austria. He was born during World War II. But he was my piano teacher. So I think it was just expected that I'd learn it. I didn't even really think about why. I just went and did it.

ME: Were your parents musical? Did they play?

M: My dad sang in the choir and he also - we did these like musicals a lot and he would usually get some kind of lead roll.

ME: In church?

M: Yes. And my mom played the clarinet and then I have two - a younger brother and a younger sister. They were too young during that early part.

ME: So you had a really musical environment.

M: Yeah. My sister probably, although she's really not doing a lot with music, she was probably the most musical. She played the organ and piano as well.

ME: Now you said you liked to make up stuff.

M: Yeah. I don't know if it's just a lack of not wanting to practice what he gave me to practice, but I would just sit and make stuff up. From day one I felt like it should go like this instead. I was very not into what was on the page in front of me. I just wanted to go with what was in my head.

ME: So would you consider that a form of composition?
M: I would probably call it that. I might call it like a little kid doing it. "a little song."
Yeah. But really I think of it more as improvisation because I'm making it up in the moment and it can't be recreated, which is kind of how I feel like the difference between the two are. But we can philosophically talk about that.

ME: So you see a difference between composition as an entity and improvisation because improvisation is more of something that happens in the moment and it isn't necessarily reproducible.

M: Yeah. I mean exactly how it sounded originally, yeah. There's this idea of having a fixed piece and then there's an idea of having a fixed peace and you can mess with it a little bit. I like to take this and mess with it a little too. It's hard to like... as we get into the Romantic period - that's when it all started. Like "Hey - we don't want you to..." I think it was really as people that were showing off. The composers didn't want people messing with their stuff and going crazy. They wanted to have this - whatever the melodic material was - we want you to stick with it because I wrote that and that's what I want you to do.

ME: Well, Bach's congregation didn't like him doing his crazy cadenzas. The story is they had him arrested. He was just being too out there for the congregation.

M: I just recently read something by Bradford Marsalis. He said jazz guys, we don't spend enough time with the melody. But I think there's a place when sometimes you just need to stick to the page and that's what you do and other times where the moment suggests that you want to go outside of the page and improvise. It really depends on the time and place.

ME: So your piano teacher didn't mind you doing this. What did your parents think of it?

M: I don't remember any kind of encouragement or discouragement. I mean I don't remember anyone saying...

ME: It was a non-issue?

M: Yeah. It was like "Are you practicing? Yes. So okay, great." Or, "Does it sound good when you play?" There were five of us. I was the middle child so I was the one that was neglected. (chuckle) That's how I see it.

ME: Ah, I was the baby of the family. Enough said. So you had other friends, I'm sure you said that in high school you formed a band and that kind of stuff. When you were in elementary school did you feel like you your experience with music and messing around with it the way you did was typical? Did other kids do that too, early on, that you knew?
M: Well, in like a school setting the only thing I remember about music class was a big guy moving a xylophone into our classroom. I don't remember anything from music class but that. I can't remember anything. I mean we might, as far as I'm concerned we didn't have music class until 4th grade when I learned an instrument.

ME: Interesting. I'm hearing this from a lot of places.

M: I grew up in xxx so maybe we just had music once a week.

ME: Your definition, early on, of composition included "when music ideas are written down so they can be reproduced later". So that kind of relates to what we were talking about before - that your conception of composition is that it needs to be reproducible pretty much.

M: To some degree. Like when the kids did it they planned on doing something. They planned. They had some kind of preparation and then they did that. They held to that plan to some degree. It wasn't always perfect but it was some type of plan and they went ahead to do it. We did that same thing again which again comes pretty close to improvisation.

ME: Yeah, well it's not black and white. Nothing in education is, I don't think. But they didn't write it down. But it's still qualified as composition.

M: Yeah. I've since broadened it. I think that's hard for me because I just think of how I would compose. And you're probably going to ask this later at some point... Was anyone encouraging me to compose or did anyone teach me, teach me how to teach others? No. Absolutely not. So if I chose not to do it in the beginning of my musical career to now, no one has ever asked me to write something other than doing some arrangements in college just so you could show you could do it. There wasn't that much creativity encouraged. Stick to the page.

ME: Yeah. I'm interested. They came and finished their pieces?

M: Yeah. I had them come in and do it today.

ME: How do you think they felt about doing it?

M: Most of the kids seemed like they were at least having fun with it. And some were just like "this is embarrassing and I'm not going to do it". And I maybe would reconsider the guidelines but I'm not really sure if I want to implement too many guidelines because like for example some people did it for like just a couple seconds. They like just repeat it twice and go on to the next one. And in my mind again, I have this vision of how I'm composing a song and things like that. You didn't do it long enough it needs to be longer but I didn't tell them that. And I don't think I could exactly tell them it needs to be four seconds. That's too tough to set those parameters. But they had fun and the goal was for
them really to understand what form is through composition, just so that I know what
they know. I always felt that teaching form in general was a little bit tricky. I feel like
they're getting it. And the more I teach form and do the listening questions where they
answer all these questions about the song, the more I teach it the more I'm comfortable
with it. That was my first time teaching it and the only reason I knew how to do that
was because I saw student teachers do it. They came in. I had like the 379 education class
came in and taught that exact same lesson. So I stole it.

ME: Interesting. We learn things from our students all the time.

M: That's one of the reasons I do that.

ME: So you must have thought there was something interesting about it when you saw
them do it.

M: Yeah. I said "I'm going to try that".

ME: Besides students understanding form a little bit better, do you think there's anything
else they got out of it?

M: I want to hope so. But I'm not exactly really sure if they did. I think it was just fun.
Some of the kids clearly had a little more talent than other kids. They were able to do
certain things and had ideas. But for me composing in a large setting like that, it’s still
difficult to think that's composing. I know that in some aspects it is. But like they're sitting in
a room full of people, 22 kids, which is very lucky to have that small a group anyway.
And they're asked to like compose something to show. I don't know. It's still hard for me
to like except that even though I know that in some ways it is composition.

ME: Because your background was just really, when you compose you need notation.
Am I going the right direction with that?

M: Yes. That's exactly, that's exactly what it is. In my mind, I sit in front of the computer
in front of Sibelius and... or I sit at the piano and get some ideas and then once I have
something hashed out... But that's, you have to start somewhere. And maybe if I get
comfortable doing that maybe I'd get better doing it and maybe I could possibly take it
even further. Not sure if I finished answering that question.

ME: No you're fine. You're doing great.

M: When I did my Master’s degree when I did my last meeting when I had to talk in front
of all the professors, the one thing they said was I always kind of would jet off for a little
while and I would always come back. But you need to not jet off so much. Just try to
stay. .
ME: Well, you're lucky. I'm not real concerned about it because sometimes it's those other related ideas that can add to the picture. So I'm not so concerned about it. I'm reading through my notes to make sure I get everything I need. You had this great experience of making stuff up numerous times in your background. So that was kind of like your foundation into what you think is real composition that's more structurally based. So I find that really interesting that you found your way through this through improvisation.

M: And there was no one encouraging me. I just sat and did it because I wanted to. There was no music teacher that said "hey if you do this..." unless I don't remember it. But I don't remember anyone, [gave the whistling song example of what he remembered] or any other teacher. But there was no encouragement at all.

ME: I remember the swoosh you're bushy tail squirrel song. And my father had a song from elementary school that he remembered that he sang to me. It's funny. There's usually one thing that sticks with us from those early times. So what way would you never consider doing composition? What do you think would just automatically write that one off? "No... I'm not going there."

M: I'm not sure I understand.

ME: Well, you went with the movement and form. So of all the ways there are that you could have considered having them compose, is there anything that pops to mind that you'd say "I'd never do that with this class"?

M: I don't think I would ever ask them to sit at a computer and compose something, as far as like with notation. Now I know there's lots of software programs like where you take free compose ideas and snap them together. So maybe they could possibly do something like that if I had the technology. But I don't think I would ever have them writing notes whatever because I'd need to teach them as far as the way I do it, teach them everything about how to write notation and an instrument to do it through. Technically, I guess you could sing and things like that. But I just don't know if I would have them do notation. At least you're speaking specifically about general music.

ME: Yes. So you kind of take that and put it aside and then say well that's not something.

M: Although I don't know if this is something that's possible right now, there is a program with Note Flight which is a cloud-based notation program. They have like another component that goes with it now that will actually teach you how to compose. I don't know anything about it yet, how it teaches or what kind of prerequisite knowledge you need in order to use the program.

ME: What's the name of the program?
M: Note Flight. And I don't know what the, note flight isn't by itself. There's something else like Sound Innovations or something like that. It offers an online course and basically for like $200 we can get 99 passwords and accounts you can set up. As far as band goes I've done that before. I haven't actually bought the account but I encourage kids and took the band down to the computer lab. It's cloud-based so you don't have to worry about installing the software.

ME: So you did that with the band kids because they already have the foundational knowledge?

M: Yes. Exactly.

ME: How long have you been teaching general music class?

M: I guess this is my 5th year here. I taught two years of it before I got here. No one, and this is kind of important I think, no one ever really taught me how to teach general music either. There was one class I took that I really don't remember much about. We had books.

ME: The elementary general methods?

M: Yeah. Exactly. But I feel like now a days they do some pretty... I think that's where my student teachers are coming in now knowing how to do stuff because they're actually going through it and taking it a little more seriously whereas I just either didn't take it seriously or it wasn't something that was... so I mean when I first started teaching, I was told "Don't worry about it because you need to focus on the band and make the band sound great. So why don't you go rent some videos musicals from the music store or whatever." Show the movies and figure it out..

ME: All that does is state what the administration believed and the administration's expectations.

M: So basically what I was doing was, I started going with all these big books that are out. I don't remember what they're called. Whatever they are - trying to find something. I finally came up with something. I don't know how. I was going to let them listen to popular music and then I was going to come up with these questions and have them learn to talk about music by listening to it. Every day we would do a listening. We would listen to that song for 3 or 4 days and answer the questions. And I still do it that way now and expand it from there - I ask more questions and I feel more comfortable doing it. I kind of just made my own..

ME: That's kind of a structure you've developed?
M: Yeah. Well I was on my own and then I took a class to put it into the official document... Understanding by Design or whatever it is. Either way, it's all something I came up with because I don't think we need to be teaching - not that kids don't want to learn about Beethoven. Kids need to learn about music, and that doesn't necessarily mean Beethoven... however we can get them to learn about it. Whatever we can do to do that. It doesn't have to be Mozart.

ME: Yeah. I have another question related to your philosophy of music education. It said you believe that there are three critical verbs in music education; creating, performing, and listening. Can you talk to me a little bit about how you incorporate those three things into this general music class?

M: I consider general music is not a performing in class. Although it doesn't mean they don't do any type of performing. We do clapping. We do very, very little singing. I do the whole improvisation lesson with them where they get to come up and play on the keyboard with like the eb minor blues in the background so they can just play the top keys and everyone sounds great. Or we play something in C major with the bottom keys. And it really does, and I'm not just saying this, some of these kids when they get up there sound like professional jazz musicians... improvising for years. And you're like "Wow!" And some kids come up there and don't know what they're doing. But you can get an idea of what's in there head a little bit just by having them come up. I've been doing this 5 years now and it's a marking period thing. So I had 28 classes come through here and no one has ever come up and been completely foolish and not knowing what to do. There are those three but we're mainly listening. There's a little bit of performing. And then the creating part which would be improvisation. They're a circle. They're all connected. Which I'll just take this moment to just say this now. I think there is that line. Like you have these kids that want to perform and the kids that maybe aren't interested in music. But I heard this quote recently that bothers me so I bring it up now - that only 20 percent of secondary school children from like 6th grade through 12th grade are in music. And it's like this big members only club. We don't have enough of this music class that's not for performing because you know why? Because no one went through it themselves. We're all performers; clarinet players and flute and flautists and we never sat in a general music class. So we might not have these ideas to come up with this stuff. Because we've never seen it so we have to just invent it from the start and that's scary.

ME: Well, one of the reasons I selected middle school for my project here is because unlike elementary school where there's they are these methods; there's the Orff Method and the Kodaly Method, when you get to middle school those things go away and what is it that's going on in middle school? How are we coming up with some kind of perspective? This is kind of that bridge time period. I actually did teach a High School general music class when I taught in Pennsylvania. And I developed concepts and I taught general music in middle school too and had to really go find those things for myself. And it makes you kind of dig deep into yourself and into thinking about what
these kids need. What do I want to bring these students? So it really does relate. Can you talk to me a little bit more about the improvisation?

M: Basically it's rather simple. It's Jamie Abersall. It's from there Major Minor CD and it's the E flat minor blues track 3 and literally, you just skoot the keyboards up. I improvise myself first. I'm just hitting all the top keys. It's not a big deal. It sounds good - whatever. Then I say who thinks they can do it. You always have somebody who's like, whatever - I don't care. .

ME: They all seemed engaged. What a wonderful group.

M: Then I'd have someone come out and I'm like alright. This is how this is going to work. Only hit the top row. I tell everyone how to hold the stick. That's less important for this lesson, but I say alright, only hit the top row. I don't want everyone to know yet. So they go up and they start playing and sometimes they play super. Most of the time they don't play any wrong notes because...

ME: You can't. It's pentatonic.

M: It's pentatonic scale, exactly. But then more and more people do it. Then I let out the secret that this is what it is. No one can mess up. Then everybody wants to do it. I don't make them do it. Not everyone wants to do it still. I don't make them do it. And then I break it up a little more. I say who wants to do this C major. It goes slower on the CD and they do the bottom. They have some fun. They trade fours. I actually don't even tell them they need to trade fours. Actually, it just happens. They trade fours. They trade eights without even knowing it. And also say I'll stand in the back right next to somebody and say "Ready? They're gonna switch now." And they'll say "How did you know this was going to happen?" I'm like "magic." I say in music there are these phrases, were talking about form a little bit too now, but that's how it just happens. Music happens that way. It's basically how I do it for 2-3 days..

ME: So what is it, when, as you were trying to decide what to do with this lesson, you said that you had seen some, a class from university come and do something like this. Was there anything in particular that drew you to this concept this idea other than it looks like you're good thing to try and it's a good opportunity to do it?

M: Yes. That exactly. I mean honestly. Again, it's still in my head, it's hard to get out of that mode that composition is a serious thing. Yep. It really was like, what am I going to do? She wants me to teach a composition lessons with a general music class. What am I going to do? You didn't want improvisation and that really wasn't quite - well then you could have - I guess I could have. But again, I'm still thinking that wasn't my definition.
ME: Your definition. That's right. That wasn't your definition. And that's exactly right. I wanted you to try to make this what you thought came closest to your perceptions. So it's not about my perceptions. Yeah.

M: Yeah. So I wasn't sure what to do and then all the sudden it dawned on me they did that and I might try it. That's a good idea. It's one of the reasons to have them come.

ME: There you go. You get some good ideas and get to pick their brains some more. I have one other question. Maybe we can talk a little bit about your college experience and your grad, I don't know if you did any composition in your master’s program.

M: No.

ME: Your masters was in music ed?

M: Yes. Although my final paper, I did compose the music we did for that concert. I did an arrangement. Yep. I did an arrangements of While My Guitar Gently Weeps and In The End the students improvised during the While My Guitar Gently Weeps. Actually, she did a really awesome job. Then we had the improvisation during The End. We had drum solos instead of the Ringo solo and then In The End - are you familiar with the Beatles Abbey Road? That very last part with the guitars are going back and forth, they did that. So we had two players do it for a few minutes each. They played and traded fours. Then I had another group come up and do In The End. [he sings to demonstrate] So I did all that but it wasn't part of the actual project. It was just part of the means to an end which was I wanted the kids to improvise which was my whole Master's, my whole project, inventing this improvisation in the classroom in the concert band setting because I felt like kids need to improvise and that felt like one way. It was also a great way for me to evaluate them, their skills; to get to hear them play, to evaluate if they have any concept of timing, harmony, just what are your ideas. It was an explosion, especially to the piano. All of a sudden everyone wanted to play the piano. They were just making up stuff and improvising. And now they talk about it all the time. In fact, it was the coolest thing. One day, actually that young lady, she dropped her clarinet on the floor and it made a sound. Then, I forget what happened next, but all of a sudden the whole class, we went into this improvisation like for the whole class. It was like doot doot doot. And then the next thing you know it was "Do that again" and she did it again. There was like, it was just some awesome experience this whole teaching improvisation took. The seventh grade class is just a little bit smaller but I've definitely figured out a way you can teach improvisation to a larger class too. There's a way to do that. So I don't know if I answer too much, but.

ME: No this is...

M: It was very exciting.
ME: This helps me to understand your differentiation between composition and improvisation and how you conceptualize it.

M: But as far as did I need to compose something? No. I probably could have used another piece and inserted improvisation into it. And then in undergrad, and as far as compositions, we didn't do anything other than having to arrange something. Like I did an arrangement of *I Write the Songs* my senior year for concert band. It's not awful. It's not great either. Then I had to do like a string quartet. I had to do a percussion ensemble piece. But I think that, I guess that's a fairly good amount we had to do.

ME: But it was always within that structured setting, with the expectation of your writing with a goal?

M: Yes.

ME: And with criteria and it had to fit within the normal confines of standard notation?

M: Yup.

ME: That really does help. I'm really glad you told me about that final project.

M: Yes. There's actually a YouTube video I manage to blur all the faces out because I'm very paranoid about having pictures of kids out there on videos. But it's out there on YouTube. I can send it.

ME: That'd be wonderful. I'd really like that.

M: I don't know how great the band sounded, but the improvisations always were good.

ME: They're learning.

M: It was tough because *While My Guitar Gently Weeps* is in a minor G. Minor key. But then it goes into a major key of was it the relative key? No, the parallel key. So the key of C minor becomes the key of C major. Kids just aren't used to playing in that key and there's no way that. So there's a couple sections where it goes into major. It's like whoa... The kids all of a sudden have to play in the key of C which isn't as comfortable for them. But they got through. Instrument tendencies came out a little bit of playing flat or sharp. But I'm being paranoid.

ME: What a wonderful learning experience and they obviously hooked into something beyond the notation on the page.

M: I always tell that to the kids. Music is not black notes on white paper. Music is all around us.
Appendix R

Final Clarification Questions for Mark
Mark - Final clarification questions.

1. You spoke so admiringly of your sister. Did she like to experiment at the keyboard too, or did she do any composing? Did your parents ever do any experimenting or composing? Did you church music director?

I am not aware of any one of them experimenting, composing or improvising.

2. I need to understand your Master's project/thesis with improvisation in the band class. Can you compare it to the improvisation unit you do in the general music class? Are their purposes the same? How do the processes and types of learning compare?

In general music setting, the purpose is to get the students improvising without any prior (purposeful) prior knowledge. Technically, any music the general music student listened to prior to the moment performing, could be prior knowledge. In my unit for band class, I had to develop their technical ability on their selected instruments, help them to develop musical ideas within the musical context, the ability to express those ideas on their instrument (from the mind to the instrument). The purposes are only different in that in the band class my goal is to make them better musicians, improvisation being the one of the means to that end. In the general music setting I am just trying to give them as many musical experiences as possible. The processes are similar but I believe the band students are more aware of the function of the creations.

3. Can you explain what you believe improvisation offers students and how it contributes to the class?

Improvisation offers students the opportunity to be creative using the more of the elements of music (harmony, melody, rhythm, dynamics, etc). A tradition performance ensemble only offers a small bit of creativity. You could say tradition ensemble members have some control over how they play something, but not over what they play. In my improvisation unit they were in control over most of the elements.

4. Can you identify what might have contributed to your kind of gut feelings that composition is a formal, notational kind of event even though you may intellectually understand composition has the potential to be something more flexible? Does this question make sense? It appears clear that there was a kind of inner struggle that emerged related to composition as a formal structure vs. composition as more 'improvisational'. Do you have some concept of what has contributed to your being pulled back to composition as that formal structure?

I guess the best way to answer this is I would say before my definition of composition was a means to create something consumable that is, will someone want to buy this and listen to it, or perform it. The music I compose and improvisation that the students do in
band, could be consumable. The purpose of composition in the classroom is for educational reasons. However, I prefer not to say that the later does have value, just not in the market place. I hope that makes sense. There may be a better word for "consumable". This conversation could go a lot of ways.

5. During our interview you wanted it to be really clear that you had little guidance when it came to learning what to do with a middle school general music class and that there was little expectation that you yourself were expected to compose in college. Is there anything else you think is really important that you would like to make sure I understand?

I do not believe so……..

6. What relationship do you see between your beliefs in general and your beliefs about music education?

We can standardize testing, copy curriculum, or adopt common standards if we want to try and give students all over the United States the same opportunities, but at the start of every day it's the teacher standing at the door way, a teacher that makes the biggest difference, a teacher that cannot be standardized, copied or adopted. This applies to music education and music in general as well, as no two people will have the same musical experience.
References


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Curriculum Vitae

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Dissertation
A Qualitative Study of Music Teachers’ Beliefs About the Teaching of Composition. This work investigates the role beliefs in play in teachers’ use of composition in the classroom and how those beliefs were developed. Dissertation supervisor: Dr. Manny Brand. Dissertation Readers: Dr. Richard Bunbury, Dr. André de Quadros.

Workshops
- Picture This – Performing Pictures
- It’s Not Supposed to Hurt When You Sing
- The Knee Bone’s Connected to the Vocal Folds
- Just for Women: Finding Your Voice, Finding Yourself
- Musical Fun for Life-Long Musical Learning
- You Teach What You Believe: How beliefs impact our pedagogy

Poster Session
A Response to Teachers’ Difficulties Incorporating Composition into the Music Classroom: A Theoretical Model Based on R. Murray Schafer’s Approach to Teaching. MENC Eastern Division Conference 2011

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