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# Peer mentoring in modern band

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS

Dissertation

**PEER MENTORING IN MODERN BAND**

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

2021

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## **Dedication**

This paper is dedicated to my wife, Kelly and our children, Catherine and Matthew. Thank you for all your support through long nights of writing and long days of re-writing! I would not be who I am without you. While this degree is a wonderful accomplishment, being a husband and father means so much more. I love you all!

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## **PEER MENTORING IN MODERN BAND**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this investigation was to examine a single modern band to discover how an ensemble director/facilitator implemented peer mentoring and other student-centered pedagogical approaches. Observations of an urban high school modern band were conducted over the course of five months of rehearsals with a summative performance. Participants included 12 high school students, one primary educator, and one student teacher. Qualitative data were collected through artifacts and observations as well as group, individual student, and individual teacher interviews. Data were coded and analyzed, revealing emergent themes.

The facilitator encouraged students to share their knowledge, opinions, and suggestions for direction through peer mentoring. Students in the ensemble claimed there existed significant social aspects of participation and found interactions within to be a formative part of their school experience. Findings include substantial engagement in peer mentoring, social bonding through modern band, and the sharing of knowledge between students in a relaxed atmosphere in which student agency, autonomy, and democratic decision-making were key tenets. Data analysis revealed musical and social benefits with a facilitator who championed student-centered pedagogy within a relaxed environment. Modeling was found to be a key tenet of learning and communication and

critique between peers were more easily understood and better received as compared to that from their facilitator. Peer mentoring opportunities seemed to be reliant upon music that was familiar to students presented in a manner that left room for subjective interpretation and reliance upon peers' understanding. Peer mentoring was also identified as a definitive component of modern band instruction in addition to its benefit within the ensemble for students musically and socially.

Pedagogical suggestions for music education include increased autonomy and student agency in all classrooms; the provision of pathways for teachers to develop facilitation and peer mentoring skills; frequent opportunities for performance; careful consideration of student proximity for peer mentoring; and finding balance between traditional and nonformal teaching methods. Other implications for the profession include implementation of facilitation in all ensembles; careful repertoire decision-making; the development of student leaders; avoiding false representations of popular music ensembles; and encouragement of socializing in modern band ensembles.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Learning in school music ensembles has historically been teacher-centered and teacher-driven (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Freire & Freire, 1997; Williams, 2007).

Conductor-directed ensembles and classroom instruction in education often revolve around passing knowledge from teacher to student (Freire & Freire, 1997; Jorgensen, 1997; Resnick, 1987). Because of this, students are infrequently given opportunities to share their knowledge with each other in ensemble settings (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Bathurst & Ladkin, 2012; Gilbert, 2016).

Although an emphasis has historically been placed upon knowledge transfer from teacher to student with students discouraged in some cases from bringing their own acquired knowledge into the classroom (Resnick, 1987), students do learn from each other when given the opportunity to engage with their peers and operate as agents of their own learning (Cleaver & Ballantyne, 2014; Harrington, 2016). An instructional technique that provides opportunities for students to share their knowledge with each other is peer mentoring (Alexander & Dorow, 1983; Goodrich, 2007, 2016, 2020; Scruggs, 2008). In many music contexts, peers learn from each other without a formal director. Students learn from their peers in ways that may not be possible with a single disseminator of information. For example, more knowledgeable students in a group can help guide the less knowledgeable students in the learning process both musically and socially (Bryson, 2016; Darrow, 2005; Goodrich, 2007, 2016, 2018; Green 2006, 2008).

As Dewey (1933) stated, “The teacher is a guide and director; he steers the boat but the energy that propels it must come from those who are learning” (p. 36). Many

music teachers are disinclined to approach shared leadership in these ways due, in part, to a lack of experience and training in such contexts (Campbell, 1991). According to Rodriguez (2009), a redefinition of a teacher's role is needed if student-centered learning is to exist on any level within an educational setting. This type of redefinition could allow for the integration of peer-to-peer learning and mentoring which can address the problematic model of singularly directed knowledge transmission. When students are given the opportunity to mentor and direct ensembles, they become increasingly encouraged and retain ownership of their learning (Harris, 2017). Further research is needed to explore how students learn and what they can learn from each other. In the next section, I discuss peer mentoring to provide a context for the reader with how students can share their knowledge with this instructional technique.

### **Peer Mentoring**

Mentoring, in general, “refers to a process whereby an experienced individual transmits knowledge to a protégé” (Blechman, 1992, p. 161). When the transmission of knowledge comes between peers, it is referred to as peer mentoring. Smith (2017) further defined peer mentoring as “a learning partnership between a more experienced and a less experienced individual” (p. 43). This type of instructional context exists when a teacher adapts their role from the primary source of knowledge to that of a facilitator who encourages the transmission of knowledge between students. In this context, students can share knowledge with each other via peer mentoring and the roles, responsibilities, and characteristics of teachers and students become less delineated (Cremata, 2017). As the teacher becomes more of a guide and facilitator, the learning environment shifts in focus

from being solely teacher-centered to a blend of teacher and student contributions much like in findings by Goodrich (2021) who noted the fluidity of roles of a facilitator of learning to help promote student interest in double-reed instruments. Students in a peer learning context play a more active and participatory role in their learning as compared to the typical, more passive role within a classroom (Topping et al., 2017). Dewey (1933) referred to the teacher in such contexts as a guide who sets the direction of a metaphorical ship and the students as the ones who provide the energy needed to propel the vessel. This type of learning environment “promotes democratic, autonomous, diverse, differentiated, collaborative and inclusive learning” (Cremata, 2017, p. 76).

Scholars argue that peer mentoring has academic benefits (Greenwood et al., 1984; Hall et al., 1982) and can also aid in the development of problem-solving and decision-making skills (Scruggs, 2008). Peer mentoring has also been shown to be a contributor to successful ensemble performances in various contexts and genres including concert band (Hebert, 2005), popular music, and jazz ensembles (Fay, 2013; Goodrich, 2007, 2018; Woody, 2007). Scholars also argue that students do possess knowledge of their own and engagement in peer mentoring may add valuable contributions to the music classroom and ensemble rehearsal learning environments (Hebert, 2005).

While peer mentoring may seem to have an inherent and implied hierarchy of roles, and for mentoring to exist, one peer must have knowledge in an area that another does not, peer mentoring in this study is more closely defined as existing with fluidity along a continuum of formal and informal designations. Formal and informal peer mentoring are not to be confused or conflated with formal and informal learning. Formal

peer mentoring implies a definitive mentor and mentee while informal peer mentoring is more organic, reciprocal, and less defined. Goodrich et al. (2014) noted this more reciprocal type of peer mentoring, identifying it as a type of comentoring. Peer mentoring can exist hierarchically and non-hierarchically, but these roles do not embody mutual exclusivity. In addition, reciprocal peer mentoring can be informal and formal in structure as well.

a mentor embodies the role of the more knowledgeable, and a mentee, the less knowledgeable. During peer mentoring, learning occurs for both parties. While one participant may be referred to as the mentor, they are not excluded from learning. The mentor may gain skills not directly related to what they are passing on to the mentee, akin to leadership, communication, and team building.

Peer mentoring occurs both formally and informally, notably through both verbal and non-verbal knowledge transfer. Verbal knowledge transfer refers to a context where a specific skill or topic may be discussed aurally between peers. In music education, verbal knowledge transfer between peers could be exemplified, for instance, by one student telling another which note is correct on a musical score or the correct way to play a note on the clarinet. Non-verbal knowledge transfer could be demonstrated by what students may internalize without the presence of a conscious effort towards instruction by a peer. Modeling and imitation are examples of non-verbal transfer where, in music education, students may observe their peers' playing technique or internalize stylistic interpretations by listening to another student's performance of a piece. As peers with more experience and knowledge model the ways in which the less experienced are to act, perform, or

behave, other avenues of less structured peer mentoring occur as well without the formal establishment of a mentor and mentee (Goodrich, 2007; Green, 2002b, 2008).

Drawing from the work of Healy (1997), peer mentoring in this study is defined as an educational method of knowledge transfer between students of similar age in which they aid and contribute to the learning of their peers. Peer mentoring encompasses any learning situation where academic and social learning takes place between peers with the nonformal guidance of a facilitator.

### ***Leadership***

A salient component of peer mentoring is the development of leadership skills (Koenig, 2001; Scruggs, 2008). Leadership inheres in peer mentoring. Students need to possess the skills to guide peers because, as Shieh (2008) and Bathurst and Ladkin (2012) argued, developing students as leaders amongst their peers has great musical potential within the music classroom and ensemble space, serves as a great motivator to students, and has the ability to help the social skills of those involved (Kovačević, 2016). Rush and Lautzenheiser (2006) found that ensemble directors have an important role in helping their students develop as decision-makers so they are not unprepared for future leadership roles. Students may benefit from a context rich with peer mentoring/learning as it can “help them develop new roles and new interests in order to keep fresh and energized over the lifespan of their professional career” (Chichester & Dennie, 2010, p. 237). Writing about students in a program in higher popular music education (HPME) in Australia, Lebler (2008) noted that peers typically provide most of the feedback and reflection for each other during popular music rehearsals and studies. Furthermore, the author argued

that “although popular music has been embraced as a content area within the formal education system, these associated informal learning practices are rarely adopted” (p. 195).

Despite these stated benefits, peer mentoring is often not used in ensemble learning. Bathurst and Ladkin (2012) noted that directors often structure their ensemble rehearsals in a controlling and rigid fashion where they struggle to share leadership with the students in their ensembles. Both ensemble instructors and their members recognize that the “default to an individual leader is engrained deeply in our collective psyche” (p. 115).

### **Informal Learning and Peer Mentoring**

Informal learning tends to exist where there is a lack of clearly defined leadership structure and peers who learn from each other (Green & Walmsley, 2006). According to Folkestad (2006), four areas identify learning as informal or formal: (1) the situation or where the learning takes place, (2) the learning style or characteristics, (3) ownership or who retains decision-making authority, and (4) intentionality or a choice between “learning how to play or towards playing” (p. 142).

Formal learning, for example, may involve a teacher making all the learning decisions in a classroom. In a music ensemble rehearsal, the teacher may be the sole decider regarding music repertoire choice, instrument determination, and stylistic interpretation. The teacher in a formal learning setting may be the only deciding voice for what every student is taught. Informal learning can be classified as learning that occurs outside of the traditional ensemble model (e.g., concert band), where democratic

decision-making, learning by ear, and modeling, can be found.

Peer mentoring and informal learning share many components including shared decision-making and knowledge transfer between peers (Campbell, 2001; Green, 2002b, 2006, 2008; Reid & Duke, 2015; Shah, 2006). These significant aspects of both peer mentoring and informal learning exist as potential counter-narratives to singularly directed educational frameworks. Furthermore, in this study, peer mentoring was not only seen as an instructional technique to encourage academic learning, but also one that encouraged positive socializing between mentors and mentees.

### **Modern Band**

Modern band is a school-based ensemble and approach to music education that uses contextually based popular music and is meant to remain student-centered, inclusive, and culturally responsive to the students (Powell & Burstein, 2017). The term student-centered is a complex and challenging term complete with many definitions. As the term has evolved, it has taken on many characteristics and has become a catch-all for many initiatives and pedagogical approaches. In this study, student-centered is most closely aligned with the definition presented by The Glossary of Educational Reform (2020) where it was stated that:

*student-centered* typically refers to forms of instruction that, for example, give students opportunities to lead learning activities, participate more actively in discussions, design their own learning projects, explore topics that interest them, and generally contribute to the design of their own course of study. (para. 5)

Modern band programs utilize popular music as their main canon and the instrumentation is made up of, but not limited to, guitar, bass, drums, keyboard, ukulele, music technology, and vocals. Modern band programs exist mainly in public schools

throughout the United States in K–12 contexts. Students can study modern band at various university-level institutions throughout the United States as well. K–12 students are given opportunities to participate in a modern band program if their district supports a teacher and their integration of the curriculum. The ensemble format of modern band is a relatively new structure and began to emerge as an area of study in 2017 (Byo, 2017; Powell & Burstein, 2017; Powell et al., 2017; Randles, 2017). As stated by Wish (2019), “This student-centered approach to music education teaches children to play the popular musical styles that they know and love, including rock, reggae, hip-hop, pop and also how to improvise and compose their own original music” (para. 1). With structural characteristics that include learning by doing and an emphasis on peer interactions with the teacher as a facilitator, modern band embodies aspects of peer mentoring and informal learning.

### **Rationale**

This study is intended to contribute to the body of literature regarding peer mentoring. The need for research regarding peer mentoring and how students share knowledge can be grouped into three areas of justification: personal, practical, and theoretical. I have personal reasons to pursue this study, there are practical reasons to help teachers utilize peer mentoring in their classroom, and this study will add to the body of literature that portrays teachers as facilitators who encourage students taking an active role in their learning and sharing knowledge between themselves.

### ***Personal Justification***

Over the twelve years that I facilitated a modern band in an urban public school,



the students and I enjoyed musical and social success. Some groups of students in that ensemble had previously embraced peer mentoring while others had not. In my time with students, I witnessed the ways in which students benefited socially from the relationships that were built within the ensemble through peer mentoring when I, as their teacher, embraced the idea that students could share knowledge between themselves. As an ancillary benefit, I grew as a music educator from the interaction within the ensemble as I learned how to facilitate learning for students in a modern band. I developed my instructional skills while teaching in an environment inclusive of peer mentoring and students who shared in the teaching process. This study is, in part, an attempt to codify what I saw and heard during that period, albeit in another setting.

As Cremata (2017) posited, there are varied benefits to the instructor of a group taking on a more active participatory and facilitative approach. Facilitation in the context of popular music education presents an opportunity to diversify the learning experience for students and differentiate the methods in which knowledge is transmitted. Cremata (2017) reinforced the notion that these attributes are also characteristics of well-rounded students who may “become productive members of society who not only maintain our traditions but also extend possibilities to new horizons” (p. 76). I have seen how peer mentoring in a modern band ensemble can lead students to become more involved in decision-making as compared to ensembles in which teachers implemented a more traditional (to school settings) style of unidirectional knowledge transmission from teacher to student. Consequently, my intentions for this study began with the following objectives: 1) to explore how and what students learn through peer mentoring; 2) to gain

insights into how knowledge transfer occurs between peers within the specific context of modern band; and 3) to explore how socializing plays a role in student learning.

### ***Practical Justification***

Music teachers face limited instructional time and resources in their classrooms (Schieb, 2003). Through this study, I aim to address this problem by investigating the sharing of knowledge between peers and how students can aid in the instructional process. Through this type of facilitation, all parties in the ensemble may contribute to student and ensemble success both musically and socially. Accordingly, researchers have noted how peer mentoring can aid with increases in self-esteem, attitude, behavior, and musical advancement (Dennison, 2000; Goodrich, 2007, 2016).

There exists a need for studies where researchers examine peer mentoring in a setting where the director takes on a facilitative role to supply a context for peers to share knowledge between themselves in popular music ensembles within traditional school settings. With the determination of how they share knowledge, students may benefit from the tutelage not only of their instructor but their peers as well. Instructors, in turn, may learn from their students' contributions, enhancing the knowledge sharing for all involved.

For teachers to consider using peer mentoring in their school ensembles, research is needed to understand how teachers can best incorporate this instructional practice (Green, 2002a, 2008). According to Green (2008), teachers reflected positively when they were able to better understand how to make the most out of peer learning and interaction within informal ensemble settings and according to Pitts (2005), the ability to

rehearse and socialize with friends is a strong motivator for students to participate in music creation. It follows, therefore, that teachers might see more positive results with learning and participation if they have a clearer understanding of how their students benefit both socially and musically (ensemble cohesion and musicality) from participation in an environment rich with peer mentoring (Paris, 2012). Using this research focused on peer mentoring, teachers may refine their techniques in the instruction and facilitation of popular music ensembles akin to modern band. Knowledge for teachers concerning how to empower their students to help each other could become an invaluable resource for instructors who wish to expand the informational and experiential influences in their classrooms.

### ***Theoretical Justification***

This study will be viewed through the lens of peer mentoring, notably with students sharing knowledge within the context of the teacher acting as a facilitator. This study is related to and informed by Dewey (1933, 1938) who considered this type of progressive education a more apt approach for young learners. Dewey believed that the school environment was as much a space for learning content as it was for social interaction. He posited that real-life situations should be present in the learning that happened within school settings which stood in contrast to the approach of traditional educators. As the classroom is a social endeavor, Dewey felt that students should be more involved in constructing their own experiences where learning was less teacher-directed and had more personal meaning for each individual student.

Through an approach of teacher as facilitator, students play a large part in

constructing knowledge within the classroom space via collaboration with their peers (Cremata & Powell, 2017). When a teacher is acting as a facilitator, students are more engaged and active in educational decision-making (Rogoff et al., 1996). This type of facilitation encourages democratic and inclusive learning (Cremata, 2017) with an increase of enrichment due to perspective augmentation. Through this lens, the teacher as facilitator, much like in a study by Cremata and Powell (2017) does “not restrict students to prescribed creative boundaries” (p. 308) and provides students with “sufficient freedoms enabling independent and collaborative explorations, inclusive spaces for creativities, various kinds of engaging experiential learning, and the opportunity for student-centered inspirations” (p. 310).

In recent years, following the work of Green (2001, 2002b, 2006, 2010), the study of popular music education has been on the rise. The *Journal of Popular Music Education* (Smith & Powell, 2017), the *Bloomsbury Handbook of Popular Music Education* (Moir et al., 2019), and the *Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music Education* (Smith et al., 2017) are examples of the increase in access to scholarly research in the field. With the expansion of interest in popular music education, there exists a need for research that expands on music teachers acting less as director or conductor and more as facilitator. With this study, set in the context of modern band, I aim to identify the musical and social learning among students engaged in peer mentoring. I also continue to build on the work that has been done prior, further advocating for the role of the teacher to evolve towards facilitation to help develop students who think democratically and inclusively.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore how students in one modern band engaged in peer mentoring and shared knowledge with each other in the learning process. During this study, I sought to understand how sharing knowledge contributes to student growth as musicians, if at all, and what role the teacher played in this process.

The following research questions guided the study throughout the course of my investigation: (1) In what ways, if any, do the participants mentor each other in the context of a modern band?; (2) How does peer mentoring play a role, if at all, in the overall musical growth of students in a modern band?; (3) In what other ways, if any, does peer mentoring affect the participants of a modern band?; and (4) What role does the facilitator play in creating an environment that nurtures peer mentoring and the sharing of knowledge between students?

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I review previous studies conducted about peer mentoring in addition to studies about informal learning and facilitation of music ensembles in order to contextualize my investigation. This chapter is organized into the following categories: studies on peer mentoring in music, studies on informal learning, studies on teacher as facilitator, popular music in schools, and modern band. As an educator and researcher, I hold the epistemological belief that peer mentoring and the utilization of nonformal learning strategies benefits students both musically and socially. While there exists a large amount of literature advocating for the inclusion of nonformal learning methods like peer mentoring, there are also those that challenge the approach, several of which I explore throughout this chapter.

### **Peer Mentoring**

Peer mentoring may be viewed, according to McDaugall and Beattie (1997) as a mutual involvement of contemporaries or colleagues rather than hierarchal dissemination of knowledge from one to another. There exist many definitions of the term peer mentoring (Budge, 2006) and it has been researched and studied in a multitude of contexts. It has been shown to have a positive impact on dropout prevention (Bhaeman & Knopp, 1988; Wells, 1990) as well as school behavior (Greenwood et al., 1988). Peer mentoring benefits have been extensively documented in the medical field as well (Altonji et al., 2019; Baum, 2018; Lopez et al., 2010; Van Voorhees et al., 2019) where researchers (Overeem et al., 2010) have noted an increase in mutual respect for participants through its implementation. Peer mentoring has been utilized to prevent gang

violence (Sheehan et al., 1999), increase professional and personal development (Bennion, 2004), measure teaching anxiety (Williams, 1990), and improve experiences of law students (Finlay-Jones & Ross, 2006). Peer mentoring can be defined as nurturing the development of another with less experience (Diale & Fritz, 2007) but also as a type of reciprocal and constant type of mutual practice (McGuire & Reger, 2003). Freire (Freire et al., 1997) framed mentoring by saying:

The fundamental task of the mentor is a liberatory task. It is not to encourage the mentor's goals and aspirations and dreams to be reproduced in the mentees, the students, but to give rise to the possibility that the students become the owners of their own history. This is how I understand the need that teachers have to transcend their merely instructive task and to assume the ethical posture of a mentor who truly believes in the total autonomy, freedom, and development of those he or she mentors. (p. 324)

### **Studies on Peer Mentoring in Music**

In a learning environment where the teacher may be defined as more of a facilitator of instruction, peer mentoring becomes a necessary component of learning. The way that peers formally and informally mentor each other can impact them both musically and socially (Whitener, 2016). The relationships and bonds that are built become strong and significant within formal and informal settings. Students may benefit from participation within modern band on a social and musical level when peer interaction and mentoring are optimized.

This study's concentration on how students interact and learn from each other has a deep reliance on the principles and best practices behind peer mentoring. In this part of the review of the literature, I focus on peer learning and mentoring as it applies to musical contexts and music education.

### *Effects on Musical Learning*

Recently, researchers have engaged in studies on the beneficial effects of peer mentoring and subsequent student leadership (Caswell, 2005; Goodrich, 2007, 2018; Reid & Duke, 2015; Sheldon, 2001) as well as the success of onboarding new music educators (Draves & Koops, 2011). There are many different types of both formal (pre-determined mentor and mentee status between students) and informal (organic and reciprocal) peer mentoring in the context of music education (Goodrich, 2018). Parties such as students, doctoral candidates, tenure-seeking educators, doctoral advisors, and varieties of other academics take part in formal and informal settings of peer mentoring (Austin, 2018).

Apart from the formal instruction that students receive in classrooms, learning (in music and other subjects) exists in other contexts (Reid & Duke, 2015; Resnick, 1987). Goodrich (2007) found that with systematic and structural support, peers were able to mentor each other musically within a high school jazz ensemble. Members of the ensemble mentored each other both formally and informally during both in-school and after-school rehearsals, ranging from helping with quick tasks to more structured leadership. In similar studies, Goodrich found musical benefit from the utilization of peer mentoring in a university-level jazz ensemble (2016) as well as within a similar group in a high school context (2005). Goodrich concluded that peer mentoring was an important part of the learning process in both studies. The salient theme between the two studies was that peer mentoring aided in the learning process, and music teachers should aim to integrate it more into their classrooms.



Discussion of peer learning is necessary within studies on how popular music is implemented in educational settings. Lebler (2008) posited that peer mentoring is a crucial part of the implementation of popular music within classrooms, though it is not always included as a practice within the formal learning education system even when popular music is embraced<sup>1</sup>. Lebler found that learning popular music is rarely possible with an expert or teacher in a leadership role and stands in contrast to the traditional roles of teacher and student found in classical and jazz mediums. Lebler (2008) noted that peers typically provide most of the feedback and reflection for each other during popular music rehearsals and studies and posited that while popular music education has been included in the curricula of many institutions, the way in which it is delivered is still lagging behind. For instance, if a school system merely recognizes popular music as something to be introduced to students, the methods behind learning it may not be the most authentic.

Peer mentoring is also beneficial in classically-based ensembles. Hopkins et al. (2017) found peer mentoring opportunities to be tied to musical benefits in an El Sistema-inspired after-school string program. Educators in the study encouraged peer mentoring through three main avenues: enabling students to take turns as the leading player in their string sections, “using inquiry to encourage musical decision-making among the students,” (p. 248) and pairing up higher-achieving students with those that were in need of the most assistance. These types of musical benefits serve to highlight the varying

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<sup>1</sup> Although Lebler (2008) wrote about the context of higher education in Australia, his work is salient here as it addressed learning of popular music in an institutional setting.

ways that peer mentoring can occur within various ensembles. Through the encouragement of multiple leaders within the group, peers have a chance to feel empowered to convey information and advice to each other.

Other studies conducted within music classrooms provided positive evidence regarding peer learning and musical development. Alexander and Dorow (1983) found statistically significant positive correlations between peer mentoring/learning and an increase in accuracy based on a series of tests that measured pitch and rhythm precision. Other studies conducted within music classrooms provided positive evidence regarding peer learning (Johnson, 2017; Whitener, 2016). Johnson (2017) determined that peer-assisted interaction worked for peers not only with similar musical abilities but also with those who have contrasting skill levels. Whitener (2016) established that when students were encouraged to exist and interact cooperatively rather than competitively within band classes, they became more musically, socially, and psychologically adept than students in traditional teacher-centric classrooms.

Goodrich (2018) completed a comprehensive review of research in K–12 peer mentoring and peer learning in music classrooms. Throughout Goodrich’s review, the functions of both the students, teachers, as well as their reciprocal roles were thoroughly reviewed. Goodrich examined the literature with concentrated sections on student leadership as well as the fixed and reciprocal roles that students and teachers play in peer learning/mentoring. Goodrich found there to be primary themes prevalent in the peer mentoring literature throughout the field of music education. Those were “the role of music teachers, the role of students as they learn from each other, and the role of

socialization” (Goodrich, 2018, p. 1). Goodrich implicated future educators to more greatly consider the role that students play in their own learning and help guide them through the process of peer mentoring (Goodrich, 2018).

### ***Effects on Social Learning***

Peer mentoring can influence student growth and social development as it has been shown to improve relationships between peers (Draves, 2017; Jackson & Price, 2019; Wells, 1990), self-esteem (Sprinthall et al., 1992), and overall social health (Dennison, 2000). According to Szego (2002), “music transmission and learning are fundamentally social achievements, even music makers who claim to be self-taught engage in cognitive, kinetic, and affective operations that are informed by their participation in broader spheres of human culture” (p. 707).

Draves (2017) found that peer mentoring played a significant role for student teachers in a small cohort. Specifically, the student teachers in the study found that peer mentoring benefitted their professional growth and offered substantial support through the process of student teaching. This growth was in part a product of these peers sharing ideas and knowledge between themselves. This aligns with studies by other researchers that have found positive benefits for pre-service music teachers involved in peer mentoring (Bullough et al., 2003; Goodnough et al., 2009).

Taylor (2016) concluded that peer mentoring, in both formal and informal manifestations within an international school in Kuala Lumpur, had a positive effect on musical skills and noted that students helped each other to develop socially. Taylor claimed that both the mentor and the mentee benefited in various ways, including the

mentor's development of leadership skills. Webb (2015) attested to similar benefits found for the mentor/tutor in a study involving orchestral string teachers. These findings parallel the type of social learning that can occur with peer mentoring outlined by Goodrich (2007).

The social benefits of peer mentoring surface in many additional contexts within music education as well. Peer mentoring was found to help educators interact with each other regarding how they both received and provided critique in a music methods class (Goodrich et al., 2018). Goodrich (2020) also demonstrated that peer mentoring can create a safe space and provide resiliency for LGBTQIA+ students within music classrooms and Goodwine (2019) found that peer mentoring played a significant role in the persistence of African American students in undergraduate music programs. With other students of color, Liou et al. (2015) found that mentoring was a crucial part of success in undergraduate programs. Jellison et al. (2015) found positive correlations between knowledge transmission and peer mentoring in an inclusive music classroom and VanWeelden et al. (2016) found similar results in choral ensembles where peer mentoring aided in the individual music instruction for students with disabilities. Foster (2014) concluded parallel results in a post-secondary piano lab where it was found that through reciprocal peer mentoring, students responded positively regarding relationship building, personal gains, and overall social interaction. Foster noted that "themes included interdependent relationships and social bonding, enhanced efficacy, successful mentoring without training, and personal satisfaction in helping others," (p. v) concluding that peer mentoring was an effective and useful tool in this setting.

### *Critiques of Peer Mentoring*

Scholars have also levied critiques of peer mentoring. Though Johnson (2015) noted that peer-assisted learning “offers the opportunity for students to refine their knowledge by encountering what they do not know” (p. 34), he also argued that students may be lacking in necessary content knowledge to effectively lead others. Furthermore, Johnson noted that establishing peer mentoring in large ensembles at the secondary level may be overwhelming to most educators. A solution to this, according to Goodrich (2018), lies with the director of the ensemble who can help steer students through the process of peer mentoring. In a separate study, Johnson (2013) also noted that when students engaged in peer mentoring, the loose structure of the interactions tended to impede the productivity of rehearsals and promoted sarcasm from students. Similarly, Fodor (1998) found that negative humor (e.g., sarcasm) being used during peer mentoring also had a negative effect on the learning process. Goodrich (2018) called for educators to be aware of these tendencies in peer mentoring and monitor student interaction accordingly.

Other scholars have expressed larger concerns with peer mentoring. Budge (2006) concluded that much of the research that had been conducted lacked rigor and was deemed “incomplete and methodologically unsound” (p. 73). Budge noted that for peer mentoring to reach more students with greater success, a better understanding of flaws is needed, specifically in higher education. In concurrence, Jacobi (1991) posited that the lack of definition surrounding the term in method, theory, and practicality has reduced the impact and usefulness of research that has utilized peer mentoring.

### **Studies on Informal Learning**

Many researchers have explored where informal learning occurs and how knowledge is transferred in informal learning situations (Campbell, 2001; Higgins, 2012; Shah, 2006). According to Higgins (2012), formal learning occurs inside of schools and universities, while informal learning is what happens outside of these institutions without the expert guidance of an instructor or official teacher. Aspects of informal learning may occur when teachers aim to facilitate the kind of learning that normally occurs outside of educational contexts within the confines of institutional settings. These informal learning styles have been implemented in a variety of educational and institutional settings. Eraut (2004), for example, explored informal learning in adult education within the workplace, Peterson and Miller (2004) studied undergraduate psychology students engaged in small and large group informal instruction and Sun et al. (2017) investigated online informal language learning communities in China.

Without the designation of formal leaders, peers are sociologically programmed to learn from each other (Campbell, 2001; Shah, 2006). This type of sociological programming happens through participation and observation and has been studied in great length (Rogoff, 2012; Rogoff et al., 2003; Rogoff et al., 2016). In an effort to challenge the norm regarding how knowledge is transmitted, Rogoff (2012) stated that “the concept of guided participation was intended to provide a window on multiple ways that children’s learning happens out of school as well as within school” (p. 240). Rogoff et al. (2016) claimed that informal learning is largely different from formal learning in the ways that learning is structured and how information, in varying contexts, is

transmitted between members of a group. Informal learning, according to the authors, happens without the intent of disseminating information and knowledge in a structured setting. Informal learning settings “differ in extent of focus on and ways of including play, instruction, collaborative or solo activity, contribution to “real” productive goals, and connection with a larger community” (p. 1).

In settings where peer mentoring occurs, tenets of informal learning are inevitably found (Reid & Duke, 2015). In this section of the literature review, I incorporate studies that explore aspects of informal learning found in and out of the classroom but limit in-depth discussion to those within the field of music education. Examining informal learning in music often incorporates aspects of how one might learn popular music, therefore I focus this section on studies that relate to this context specifically and the tensions often present for those who teach in such settings. There may exist an inherent struggle for those trained formally to teach informally. Tobias (2015) led a songwriting and technology class that integrated both formal and informal ways of learning within discussions as an example of this type of intersection finding there to be benefits in the crossfading of learning styles such as increased awareness of various types of music and preferences as well as increased connections to their lives as musicians both at that time and in the future.

### ***Characteristics of Informal Learning in Music***

Informal learning in music has been largely defined by the work of Green (2002b, 2006, 2008, 2010). The principles behind informal learning contrast educational methods where the teacher is the sole source of knowledge. Green and Walmsley (2006) defined

the five characteristics of informal learning as: unstructured leadership, learning with peers, aural replication, student music selection, and an incorporation of composition and improvisation. As a scholar in this field prior to Green, Reber (1996) laid much of the foundation for studies formed around informal learning. Reber conceptualized an unconscious type of learning that occurs implicitly without setting forth specific effort towards the goal of acquiring knowledge.

Green's influential texts have provided a wealth of information and resources for the implementation of informal learning practices within the music classroom (Green, 2002b, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2014). Green explored how popular musicians learn outside the classroom (2002b) as well as how those types of informal learning characteristics might be applied as a type of pedagogical practice (2008). While Green (2002b) may not have intentionally meant for the publication to justify the adoption of popular music in classrooms, it has been largely applied in that manner. As a follow-up, Green (2014) also penned a method book aimed at unlocking informal learning skills within a classroom setting.

Green (2002b) established the main characteristics of informal learning in music. One salient characteristic of informal learning in music is copying recordings by ear. Green termed this type of learning as involving "purposive listening" (p. 61) where listening is done with intent. Green also found that informal learners heard and listened to songs even when distractions were present. Another characteristic of informal learning in music is group and peer learning where musicians rehearse informally and learn from each other through various exercises and predicated practices. Informal learning and



acquiring skills and technique in music are accomplished through watching, modeling, and copying peers along with aurally replicating recorded music in small and large group settings with musical peers and those more musically advanced. As Green (2002b) stated, “some of the musicians consult books and use conventional notation, tablature or chord symbols, but the written is always secondary to the aural” (p. 96).

### ***Implementations in the Classroom***

While informal learning stands in contrast to the formal practices of most educational institutions, some teachers and scholars have undertaken a blended approach within such confines (Davis, 2013; Green, 2010; Walsh & Straits, 2014). If formal learning and informal learning are theoretically at different ends of the educational spectrum, nonformal learning is considered a hybrid of the two (Mok, 2010); also coined by Smith (2013) as *hybridized*. Smith (2013) noted that as students, drummers in this case specifically, “become involved in a mixture of available learning practices and environments, the need for a dynamic view of their learning becomes increasingly apparent” (p. 28), an idea shared by Folkestad (2006). When informal learning traits are found within educational settings, scholars agree that the instructor may be more in line with a facilitator who steps in when necessary but leaves the learning process and decision-making largely in student hands (Cremata, 2017; Feichas, 2010; Higgins, 2012; Rodriguez, 2009). As informal learning practices have been adopted in school settings, problems have arisen regarding the roles of teachers trained in formal ways in formal settings who wish to adopt informal practices. This tension often results in a mismatch between how students learn music within and outside of school (Davis, 2013). Davis

(2013) implemented some of these informal techniques in an elementary music setting, highlighting some of the contextual decisions that were made to foster an environment conducive to students learning popular music in a somewhat informal way. Davis (2013) noted a large body of literature regarding the ways that music education in schools fails to match up with the ways that students learn music outside of such institutions. Though, as teachers and students navigate informal learning practices, they enter a debate that some may struggle with (Rodriguez, 2009).

Folkestad (2006) reinforced the notion that teaching practices often involve both formal and informal learning processes. Jenkins (2011) noted that there is distinction and value in environments that are inclusive of nonformal practices. While some students rooted in traditional methods may struggle at first with informal learning setups, the benefits to listening skills and musical problem solving are evident (Jones, 2015) and the use of informal learning practices in the classroom can help to differentiate teaching and diversify learning (Jenkins, 2011).

Green (2002b) and Allsup (2008) argued the need for hybrid learning within music education. Allsup (2008) critically examined many of the ways that informal learning practices are adopted in the post-Green era in the “second-wave” (p. 2) of scholarly pursuit towards informal learning and popular music in schools. Allsup (2008) argued that a structural plan must be in place if teachers are to properly utilize previous research of how popular musicians have learned their craft practically within a classroom setting. Because Green’s (2002b) text was not intended as a method book for classroom instruction of popular music education, educators may need multiple hands-on tactics for

implementation. To challenge the inclusion of informal learning practices in a school setting (Jenkins, 2011) set forth to bring about awareness of the benefits and drawbacks of its inclusion. Jenkins (2011) also noted that “informal approaches have often been subject to bandwagon over-enthusiasm, with proponents inflating their virtues beyond what the concept appears to warrant” (p. 179). Jenkins again advocated for a balance between formal and informal approaches in the music classroom in order to mitigate this concern, similar to Smith (2013) and Mok (2010).

Nonformal learning practices can also broaden the pedagogical practices a teacher can call upon. Green (2010) studied learning-by-ear within instrumental lessons in a school setting where nonformal learning was employed. Green reflected on the pedagogical implications of the study, namely that an introduction of various learning strategies and styles would help to expand and diversify the learning opportunities within the classroom. This was similarly noted by Tobias (2015) who argued for a cross-fading approach to teaching that incorporated multiple instructional techniques. This diversity can be accomplished, according to Green when teachers aim to identify the various learning styles that their students inherently possess. As Green (2010) stated, “if teachers are aware of different learning styles among their students, it could make them more open to a greater range of pedagogic approaches, and able to help a greater range of learners” (p. 61). Jaffurs (2004) supported this idea, noting that a greater level of learning and engagement could be achieved by students when informal pedagogical practices are implemented.

Jaffurs (2004) studied the type of environment created when students aimed to

learn music on their own. In the music classroom, benefits exist for a classroom that embodies diverse and differentiated learning avenues such as meeting each student's more individual needs and finding greater education gains for classrooms as a whole (Standerfer, 2011). Jaffurs (2004) also asserted that with more diverse learning styles used in the classroom through the implementation of informal learning styles, a greater level of learning and engagement could be achieved by students.

Informal learning practices, particularly learning by ear, can also have a positive impact on student musical development. Baker and Green (2013) used empirical and experimental data to confirm aural proficiencies after aspects of informal learning were implemented in the instrumental music classroom. After the experimental study had been completed, Baker and Green concluded that "playing by ear from a recording may be beneficial for children's aural development" (p. 141). McPhail (2013) noted that "an essential component of the popular musician's craft is to create music often from minimal written material, relying heavily on the ear and skills of improvisation" (p. 14). The use of informal learning techniques, specifically learning by ear, in a general music classroom yielded positive music and social results in a study by Martino (2014) as well. Martino found that both students and instructors identified instructional benefits with this type of pedagogical implementation. This type of approach was repeated with positive results when Abrahams et al. (2011) examined learning by ear tactics in five distinctive groups in a choral setting. Results included social and musical benefits in students who were tasked with learning a piece by ear, in groups, without teacher-centered direction.

### **Studies on Teacher as Facilitator**

A teacher acting as a facilitator of experiential learning is not a new concept (Marrou, 1982). Many scholars have conducted research on how facilitation works within the field of education including Oey (2017) who studied how preschoolers play socially while the teacher acts as a facilitator and Ha (2014) who examined facilitation in language and humanities classrooms. Rogers (1969) found that students, in general, were more likely to retain knowledge over a longer period of time if they were more actively participating in the knowledge they were gaining, and their teacher was leaving room for the facilitation of experiential learning. Carey (1993) investigated how teachers could become facilitators of technology for their students to increase diversity and for the roles of the teacher to become more varied and diverse.

In this section of the literature review, I concentrate on research involving facilitation as it pertains to music education settings. As defined by Cremata (2017), “The facilitator helps a group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions. Facilitators are cognizant about the use of their power, authority or control and place limitations on its uses” (p. 64). Facilitation, according to Cremata, aids in democratic and diverse learning within the music classroom. Facilitation in the music education classroom can be related to how a coach operates (Watson, 2011). A classroom coach leaves room for student autonomy and democracy while providing a background of support where needed.

Crow (2004) observed that facilitation has evolved over the last decade within education noting that early on, specifically in the 1930s, facilitation was approached more

loosely, giving way to an entirely student-driven classroom which often ended in chaos. Crow noted that in facilitation, the teacher still needs to approach the context with care and an understanding that educators still possess a wealth of knowledge and are called to vary their instruction to benefit their students most greatly.

Cremata and Powell (2017) studied student creativity and collaboration in the context of an online music making project with the teacher acting as a facilitator. Student enthusiasm and creativity were escalated when students were given the chance to construct their own learning in an environment rich with student agency<sup>2</sup> and democracy. In this setting, Cremata and Powell still found that students needed direction and guidance from their facilitator but noted increases in music creativity with “support from a music teacher who facilitated music experiences for the students, and student-to-student peer mentoring, experiential learning, and collaboration” (p. 311).

Investigating music education in prison education systems, Shieh (2010) found that democratic learning with the teacher as a facilitator aided in some learning successes. Shieh found there to be benefits in a model of education where students had agency and learning happened experientially. The author found that movement away from a traditional model opened more possibilities for learning and addressed some of the limitations therein. Facilitation, according to Dillon (2007) also leaves room for students to develop socially through the interaction of music-making with their peers, and, in that experience, there is a development of higher-order thinking skills. Empowering students

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<sup>2</sup> Since the term *student agency* widely varies (Vaughn, 2018), in this study I will adhere most closely to the following definition. Vaughn (2018) stated that agency refers to “a student’s desire, ability, and power to determine their own course of action” (p. 63).

and supporting agency, then, may more readily occur when the teacher pulls back from being the only source of expertise in the classroom (West & Cremata, 2016).

### **Popular Music in Schools**

Informal learning and peer mentoring are terms that are frequently found in studies focused on popular music education (Allsup, 2008; Rodriguez, 2009; Smith, 2013; Smith et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2018; Smith & Powell, 2017; Tobias, 2015). While it has been many years since the decree of the Tanglewood Symposium of 1967 (Choate et al., 1967), the inclusion of popular music in school curricula has only recently become more accepted in the United States (Rodriguez, 2012; Smith et al., 2018; Smith & Gramm, in press). The inclusion of popular music in schools requires the use of many informal learning techniques adapted to fit in the formal classroom. Many of these techniques for practical application of learning popular music within school settings is discussed and diagrammed by Clauhs et al. (2020).

### ***Internationally Based Studies***

Popular music has become more accepted into various international schools as well. In Finlandian educational contexts, for example, this has been evident in recent advances found within professional music schools (Väkevä, 2006). Similar to Rodriguez (2009), Väkevä admitted the recent successes for the inclusion of popular music education but noted a long road ahead for acceptance on a grander scale, citing many challenges teachers face when being previously trained in traditional genres and methods. Other hindrances for popular music's integration in school curricula may be the lack of comprehensive planning and pre-service training that teachers receive (Shah, 2006).

Ho (2014), Ross (1998), and Kertz-Welzel (2005) each found a need to re-examine teaching strategies internationally to include popular music in curricula to meet the changing needs of students. Challenges to the inclusion of popular music in Chinese education stem from national curricula that only recently deemed the genre viable for music classrooms (Ho, 2014). With the inclusion of popular music in schools, Ho (2014) posited that to bring together the music that students listen to on their own with the way they learn in schools, there must be a convergence of formal and informal learning opportunities, strategies, and contexts. Kertz-Welzel (2005) noted that while music classes are compulsory in German schools, they do not have as much of an impact as they could. Some of the reasons behind this claim were that there is minimal music activity for most students outside of school and teachers have limited understanding of the music that students most commonly enjoy. Kertz-Welzel posited that school music should be adapting toward inclusivity of popular music to exist comprehensively and remain effective. Ross (1998) argued that even though popular music has been integrated into various international curricula, it still lags in integration, adaptation, and student enjoyment/feelings of relevance. Over 20 years ago, Ross proposed that “the trouble with music in schools is that it has failed to modernise” (p. 255); this is an issue that persists in the US context.

### ***Benefits of Popular Music Inclusion***

Scholars have found an increase in student engagement with the implementation of popular music in schools (Green, 2006; Ho, 2014; Kertz-Welzel, 2005). Integrating popular music into educational settings holds the potential to bring about positive social



development in students as well (Seifried, 2006; Wells & Hakanen, 1991). Other scholars have added vitality to arguments for the legitimacy of popular music in school curricula (Byo, 2017; Giddings, 2008, 2010; Green, 2001, 2006; Lilja, 2014). Vasil (2019a) found that the integration of informal learning practices and popular music enacted change within small contexts of individual classrooms, leading to multiple facets of change in the realms of pedagogical practice, support structures, a balance of multiple approaches, and sustained inquiry. In separate studies, Vasil (2019b, 2020) also found that avenues of integration for popular music education may be closely tied to some more formally accepted pedagogical practices like those found in Orff-Schulwerk given its “nonformal teaching techniques that allow informal learning to happen in the class” (Vasil, 2019b, p. 258), especially for those more heavily steeped in other traditional frameworks of education. This was also backed up by Dorfman and Bird (2019) who considered modern band programs in Ohio and how they complemented existing Orff pedagogies.

### ***Curriculum Integration***

In recent years, scholars have called for greater integration of popular music into the curricula of formal educational institutions. Various aspects of those calls for reform have been addressed (Allsup, 2008; Hebert & Campbell, 2000; Ho, 2014). Rodriguez (2012) argued that such integration is a manifestation of change inevitable when teachers strive to “marshal . . . our best thinking regarding what to do in the classroom and why we should do it” (p. 134). Integrating popular music into extant curricula may help to accommodate the varying needs of the individuals if the process remains elastic and adaptable (Rodriguez, 2012). Tension, however, exists in the minds of students and

teachers between the more formal pedagogies of Western classical music and pedagogical approaches to the newer, sometimes more controversial popular music canon. The onus, therefore, rests on the educator/facilitator to devise a curriculum that honors and includes both (McPhail, 2013).

Isbell (2007) compiled and summarized the ways in which popular music has been integrated into school curricula since the Tanglewood Symposium. Isbell highlighted the various perspectives of both researchers and practitioners while noting specific examples of integration in various locations. Davis and Blair (2011) looked at how university students could harness informal learning tactics to better replicate an authentic learning experience of performing popular music in future classrooms. They noted how an overdependence on formal notation in existing curricula may hinder the implementation of such methods. The inclusion of popular music education curricula within formal education settings provides evidence of advancement as well as a continued struggle for justification.

### **Modern Band**

With influences of informal learning and popular music performance in education there exists a relatively new type of ensemble referred to as modern band (Wish, 2020; Zellner, 2012). As school music education evolves, Zellner (2012) stated, modern band advocates seek to add the approach as a credible peer ensemble next to concert band, marching band, orchestra, choir, and jazz band. The term modern band only recently came into existence in 2012 (Wish, 2020). As such, much of the literature which references the impact of programmatic implementation has only become available in

recent years. Modern band incorporates scaffolding and approximation as two of its key tenets. Burstein and Powell (2019) found that these two pedagogical approaches were keys to the integration of popular music education for instructors less familiar with the approach and repertoire. They stated that the approach to modern band is deeper than the instruments used and the songs that are played. For the authors, “it [modern band] is also about embracing opportunities for differentiation that work so well in popular music ensembles” (p. 46). Burstein and Powell went on to say that, “It is also about embracing different styles of teaching through popular music pedagogies and the changing role of the music educator to embrace the role of *facilitator* instead of *director*” (p. 46). As Abeles et al. (2021) examined the effectiveness of music teacher development programs, they noted that in order for teachers to begin implementation of popular music education within their classrooms, they should be “keeping in mind that the inclusion of popular music in K–12 classrooms requires a change not only in instrumentation and repertoire but also pedagogical approaches” (p. 1).

Modern band programs utilize instruments like acoustic guitars, electric guitars, drums, technology, vocals, keyboards, and bass guitars (Dorfman, 2020; Powell, 2019) and have found that students are more engaged in their learning through the performance of songs that they choose (Randles, 2018) or write themselves (Smith & Gramm, in press). Students noted being more engaged in modern band as compared to other music classes as well (Smith & Gramm, in press). While two major tenets of modern band are composition and improvisation, Randles (2018) found that teachers lacked adequate preparation and training in these areas. As more educational institutions are offering

modern band related classes, Prendergast and May (2020) found that the motivation to implement modern band classes was directly related to educators wishing to increase access and equity for their students. The researchers found that colleagues and policy did not deter implementation of modern band related curricula and that educators were surprisingly encouraging towards its implementation.

Many of the earliest references to modern band are found within a compilation on popular music education (Smith et al., 2017) but also in recently published literature including the *Journal of Popular Music Education* (Smith & Powell, 2018). The *Journal of Popular Music Education* has published much of the most recent scholarly material on the topic within an entire issue focused on topics surrounding modern band (Powell & Smith, 2020). In an early reference to modern band, Byo (2017) examined the viability and values associated with participation in modern band and found justification for the presence of modern band in school curricula arguing that if one were to reject modern band as an educationally justified medium for learning, they cannot do so based on “the values accrued and identified by its participants” (p. 1). In a study that examined particularly creative initiatives in music education, Powell et al. (2015) also examined how the implementation of modern band curriculum and teaching revitalized and expanded the offerings of music education in New York City public schools providing an additional stream of music education resources, curriculum, pedagogy, and professional development offerings to 600 schools, affecting 60,000 New York City public school students. Powell et al. (2015) stated that the main characteristics of modern band are to teach students to compose, perform, and improvise in a variety of genres and styles. The

authors also determined that students involved in modern band programs in New York City public schools had a higher rate of overall participation in music programs within their school settings as well. Clauhs and Cremata (2020) noted that curriculum chosen without the influence, perspective, and input of students is not giving proper voice to those who are learning. In the analysis of another district in New York, Clauhs and Cremata found increases in the participation of modern band class of students of marginalized and racialized populations as compared with traditional ensembles in the same district. It was found that modern band enrollment had a much more appropriate representation of the school as it included many more diverse students not typically enrolled in traditional ensembles.

According to Little Kids Rock (2018), modern band is centered around a learning approach designed to get students to “perform, improvise, and compose using the popular styles that they know and love including rock, pop, reggae, hip-hop, R&B, and other modern styles.” The term modern band was originally coined by Little Kids Rock (Wish, 2020), an organization that sought to situate the approach to learning popular music in schools as a peer to other ensembles like jazz band and choir. The approach is often incorporated inclusively with other music education approaches and has potential to engage and empower students (Dorfman & Bird, 2019). According to Smith (2018), modern band pedagogy is meant to combat the more traditionally oppressive and colonial forms of music education through curating “communities of active resistance” (p. 2). Smith (2018) noted that by training teachers in modern band pedagogical practices, students who have been more socially and economically marginalized have a greater

chance for their voices to be heard. Powell (2019) also noted that modern band programs increase the opportunities for the use of technology in the classroom and, according to educational facilitators, provides adequate opportunities to increase student agency.

Powell et al. (2017) investigated the ways that music education has historically given great preference to certain styles and has stood as a hegemonic structure that perpetuates oppression towards the less ingrained and historically dominant musical styles and genres largely unrepresented in school music education. Some educational institutions such as Musical Futures and Little Kids Rock aim to bring about change regarding these practices through the implementation of student-centered pedagogies, such as those found in modern band. Powell (2018) noted that traditional ensembles are steeped in decisions made by the directors while modern band has a particular focus on popular music that students interact with on their own and maintain a closer connection with. Smith et al. (2018) found that the integration of modern band approaches led to curricular change that brought about more student participation, eagerness for learning, and inclusivity of students who are marginalized in today's public schools, many of whom may identify with popular music genres. In order to bring about positive social change through music education, Chang (2019) argued that the more traditional ways of approaching music theory and the emphasis put on classical music has the potential to alienate young learners from music education. Chang noted that organizations like Little Kids Rock and their modern band curriculum have a chance to address these potentially systemic pitfalls.

Modern band approaches have also been studied within higher education contexts.

Dorfman and Bird (2019) found that modern band complemented existing programs and prepared pre-service teachers in more current methods that would enable them to remain flexible, learn by ear, and embrace the musical experiences that many of their future students will see as relevant. Dorfman and Bird noted that “at the university level, it is imperative to prepare future teachers to function well in the modern band atmosphere because it is a form of music making that students seek and enjoy” (p. 33). Several other music programs in the United States have also recently enacted change within their internal curriculum to better prepare their pre-service teachers for more relative, inclusive, and culturally relevant music education programs (Powell et al., 2020).

Vasil et al. (2019) found that Popular Music Pedagogies had the opportunity to help better prepare both current and preservice educators to address 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. In contrast to more traditional, teacher-focused curricula, Popular Music Pedagogies like modern band “invite students, music teachers, and music teacher educators to take risks, learning alongside one another, and address 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge and skills through engaging with the music that students choose and create” (p. 1). While there have been many accounts of the benefits of modern band’s application to higher-education contexts, Martignetti (2020) found there to still be a large disconnect between popular musicians entering into undergraduate university programs, especially those invested in rap, and curricula that do not appropriately reflect adequate preparation into the field. Hamilton and Vannatta-Hall (2020) found similar results through quantitative studies noting that most music education preparation programs are highly focused on traditional, western-classical teaching practices and repertoire. Hamilton and Vannatta-Hall determined that

the lack of inclusion of popular music pedagogies in music teacher preparation programs did not enable future educators to include a diverse scope of music learning practices once in the classroom. Dorfman (2020) assessed modern band professional development for educators at two separate universities. The author found that modern band professional development in these contexts provided effective instruction and preparation for teachers that wished to implement this type of methodology into their classrooms. These types of effective professional development were focused on active learning, collaboration, support through coaches, and relevant content.

Through modern band, student-led approaches are cultivated using informal techniques, rote-learning, and learning by ear (Clauhs, 2018). Recent statements from organizations like NAFME (Marcetti, 2019) have recognized modern band as a viable approach and have included a new modern band ensemble into their list of All-National Honor Ensembles. The publications and studies conducted in the context of modern band give credit to the ensemble's burgeoning status as a potential peer alongside already established ensembles like choir, concert band, jazz band, and orchestra. Recently, Powell (2021b) penned a compilation of relevant literature concerning modern band. Powell examined research related to modern band programs in the United States and wrote of implications for learning music in classrooms. Throughout the review of literature, Powell examined the relationship between nonformal and informal learning within modern band, student and teacher perspectives, as well as critiques and further implications for the field of music education.

The five sections of this literature review serve to contextualize peer mentoring



within the learning environment of modern band. Therefore, studies were presented on peer mentoring, informal/nonformal learning, teacher as facilitator, popular music in schools, and modern band. Studies on peer mentoring were offered to define and ground the framework that guides this study. Informal/nonformal music studies and teacher as facilitator aimed to clarify the pedagogical practices utilized throughout this study. Finally, popular music education and modern band literature were presented to outline the context in which this study took place. The musical and social benefits of implementing nonformal learning within formal educational settings through facilitation has been noted as well. While the inclusion of popular music education into school curricula has been established, programs and initiatives like modern band aim to have it be included in more student-centered ways.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

This chapter serves to describe the process that I took to prepare for, conduct, and analyze the data for this qualitative study. I describe the type of study as well as the process undertaken to select a site and the study's participants. Data collection methods, which consisted of observations, interviews, journals, and the collection of artifacts, are then articulated. The timeline of the study is also described, referencing dates as well as the number of site visits that were conducted. The ways in which the data were analyzed is explored as well as the trustworthiness and reliability of the study, speaking to my own bias as well as ethical underpinnings.

I utilized a case study method (Stake, 1995) to delve into deep nuances and complexities of how peer mentoring occurred within a modern band class. In this study, the focus was on the peer mentoring that occurred among students in this context and how students shared knowledge with each other. A case study "is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This case study was bounded as I observed one class at one site from September of 2019 to February of 2020, focusing specifically on peer mentoring. Because my research questions sought "to explain some contemporary circumstance (e.g., "how" or "why" some social phenomenon works)" (Yin, 2018, p. 4), the case study design allowed me to examine the complexities of peer mentoring and then portray these characteristics within the study. Through the use of interviews, observations, journals, and collection of artifacts used within this case study design, I hoped, as Stake (1995) noted, to come "to understand what [was] going on" (p. 46). Through data collection and analysis, I sought to encourage

students to “share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 45). Qualitative research of this type was therefore appropriate when trying to understand a complicated context that could only be understood by going to the place it was happening and observing and talking directly with those involved (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Site Selection**

In order to identify a site on which to conduct the study, I used purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) determined by criteria of availability, location, and learning environments. I sought out a context in which a facilitator of modern band supported and encouraged peer mentoring. The criteria for site selection included the prerequisites of regularly scheduled rehearsals of modern band, a facilitator who had previous experience teaching modern band, and the presence of peer mentoring in some capacity as identified by the facilitator. I decided on a high school where I aimed to study students who varied only slightly in age.

I began by communicating with music teachers, colleagues, and music supervisors in a particular region within driving distance of my home and place of work to narrow down many sites into a single site. Once I selected a site, I had three phone calls with the sponsoring teacher to determine the viability of the site to conduct my study. After a visit with the music teacher, a conversation with the school’s administration, and a brief introduction to the students who would be participating, the modern band at Washington

Ave. Arts High<sup>3</sup> was finalized as the choice for hosting the study. The ensemble was an elective for any student in 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (ages 14–18) and met during normal school hours, once per week, on Friday afternoons. Washington Ave. Arts High was located in an urban center with a highly dense population. The school had a choir, concert band, classical guitar ensemble, and jazz band program along with classes, resources, and space dedicated to music technology. At this school, modern band is a school-based ensemble opportunity for all students as an elective.

### *Participants*

The participants for this study included the group's facilitator (Dr. Anderson) and student teacher (Mr. Falcone) as well as all students in an ensemble that included those of varying experience levels in grades 9 to 12. Participants of similar age but varied experience levels were necessary as they served to enable me to address my research questions aiming to explore how students engage in and share knowledge through peer mentoring. Each participant provided consent through a form which stated the benefits, risks, and pertinent information as described by Creswell and Poth (2018) which was approved by the Boston University Institutional Review Board. Based on the ages of participants, all internal review board procedures were followed, and I obtained all appropriate consent/assent from those involved.

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<sup>3</sup> I anonymized the names of each student and adult, along with that of the school in which the study was conducted to protect participants' identities. I used pseudonyms throughout the study, as reflected in this final report.

## **Data Collection**

I collected data through a variety of methods as my aim was to provide as much detail and depth as possible within the case study design (Glesne, 2006; Thomas, 2011). The methods I used included observations (gathered using recorded audio and written field notes), individual and small-group interviews, musical artist recordings, and artifact examination (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gall et al., 2007; Stake, 1995). I followed the processes outlined by Stake (1995) when it came to appropriate observations in the field during case studies: “most researchers find they do their best work by being thoroughly prepared to concentrate on a few things, yet ready for unanticipated happenings that reveal the nature of the case” (p. 55). Prior to these more formalized tasks of data collection, I spoke with the ensemble facilitator to better understand the environment, students, and context of the school as best I could ahead of my arrival. This process helped me to identify any issues that could have arisen during my data collection, and the ways they could be addressed in advance, if possible.

## ***Observations***

Each of the observations that were made of the site depicted the context, conversations, instances of peer mentoring and sharing of knowledge, and the participation and direction given by the group’s facilitator and student teacher. I followed protocol and guidelines set forth by Creswell and Poth (2018) to adequately prepare for and transcribe my observations. Audio recordings were made of the rehearsals, but no video recordings were made during observations or interviews. While video recordings would have been possible, I did not want the group’s participants to alter their behavior

because of the presence of video recording. I transcribed field notes during the observations to capture data not present on an audio recording. During observations, I was cognizant of my physical location and presence as I sought to not distract the facilitation and peer mentoring that occurred.

### ***Interviews***

The interviews (see Appendices for a list of questions used) I conducted were semi-structured as outlined by Hancock and Algozzine (2011), leaving room for further questioning and open responses. I conducted individual interviews lasting twenty minutes each with seven ensemble members of varying ability and experience levels. Only seven ensemble members were interviewed due to scheduling constraints. These seven were not pre-determined. I also conducted a single full-ensemble interview with all student participants midway through the data collection process. Individual interviews also took place with the group's facilitator as well as the student teacher present during the observational period. The group's facilitator, Dr. Anderson, was interviewed two times and the student teacher, Mr. Falcone was interviewed once. The interviews included open-ended questions regarding peer mentoring and its facilitation to leave room for unintended conversation and the ability for each interviewee to express their own thoughts and opinions on peer mentoring.

### ***Journals***

In addition, I asked participants to keep journals noting their various interactions regarding peer mentoring as it has been established as a credible way of triangulating data and offering additional perspectives to the researcher (Bashan & Holsblat, 2017;

Janesick, 1999). The participant journals were to be completed online. Only I and the journal keeper had access to each individual journal. I hoped that the completion of these journals would provide insight into the thoughts and subjective feelings of each participant without the pressure and social anxiety that may come with conversational interviews individually and in a group setting. I thought these journals would provide insight that may not have been captured in any other way due to each participant's entries never being shared with their peers and the group. Citing a lack of interest, and potential extra time commitment, no students chose to participate in the journaling aspect of the study. While this data collection method would have added to what was collected, in no way did the collection of data suffer due to this lack of participation.

### *Artifacts*

I collected artifacts used during the observation period. These items included lyric sheets that vocalists used, chord and lead sheets, guitar chord charts, and small amounts of guitar and bass tablature. The artifacts collected also included studio recordings that were used to model for students. The artifacts listed here represented the tangible means by which the group learned and served to ensure accurate analysis after data collection had completed.

### *Timeline of Collection*

I observed the site for this study over a period of six months starting in September of 2019 and ending in February of 2020. I carried out my observations 17 times, mostly on Fridays when the group officially met. Each of the interviews that were conducted also occurred on these days. The individual and group interviews occurred prior to the

ensemble's rehearsal on Friday afternoons. These interviews were conducted in the typical rehearsal spaces that the group met in with an adult present. The individual adult interviews were conducted with only me present.

### **Data Analysis**

Once I gathered the data, I coded extensively and found emergent themes using Creswell and Poth's (2018) "data analysis spiral" (p. 185). During this process, "the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach. One enters with data of text or audiovisual materials (e.g., images, sound recordings) and exits with an account or a narrative" (p. 185). I anticipated that collecting and organizing large volumes of data would be an arduous and potentially overwhelming process. Therefore, I utilized a color-coding process in Microsoft Word to aid with the organization of data. While I considered other software options, this analytical approach enabled me to be fully immersed in the data I had collected. I kept transcriptions on my password-secured laptop and no identifying information of the participants or site was included in the transcriptions. I coded the data for emergent themes and organized them to present the findings of this study in the final report so that an audience would be able to clearly comprehend the information being presented. The coding and themes were guided by the research questions and the rationales for the study. As the data were being analyzed and subsequently coded, I was also guided by a spectrum analysis that began solely with the facilitator and ended solely with the students. As I moved along this spectrum, the roles of each were apparent on their own but hardly ever mutually exclusive. At first, I analyzed the data in relation to the facilitator and the role he played



and moved towards viewing the data in relation to the role that students played in the ensemble. This enabled me to analyze the data while understanding the inclusive and overlapping roles of facilitator and student while engaged in peer mentoring.

### **Trustworthiness and Reliability**

To provide trustworthiness to my data, collection methods, and finalized report, I included, as Stake (1995) advised, reporting of bias, external audit, peer review, and member checks. Because all studies have an inherent bias, I am reporting mine thoroughly. I believe that my role as the data-collecting researcher was appropriate due to my previous experience with modern band. I facilitated a similar ensemble in an urban environment for twelve years prior to this study. The context, pedagogy, instructional techniques, and overall feel and style between this ensemble and my own were quite similar. My experience with and awareness of student interaction, peer mentoring, and teacher facilitation aided in my perceptiveness as I observed. During my time observing the modern band at Washington Ave. Arts High, I did not exercise my opinion when it came to teaching methods or tactics and remained as unimpactful as possible in order to maintain the ensemble's integrity.

### ***Bias***

I bring to this study an inherent level of bias which I aim to identify in detail. As a previous public-school teacher, I taught modern band as part of my daily and extracurricular employment. I found that modern band was both my own and my students' preferred choice of music education. Therefore, I have a bias towards modern band in that I believe it to be a justifiable and exceptional way of reaching students using

popular music within formal educational settings. During the time of my initial enrollment in the doctoral program at Boston University, I was employed by the Jersey City Public School system in Jersey City, New Jersey. While writing this study, I then became employed by Little Kids Rock, a non-profit organization that advocates for the use of modern band in classrooms of all types for students of all ages. I was not compensated in any way by Little Kids Rock for undertaking this study nor was it a requirement of my current role in the organization. While classroom observations were made during normal business and school hours, any missed responsibilities of my role as an employee of Little Kids Rock were made up during other times. In no way did my professional role, responsibilities, or job description change as a result of conducting this study, and I was not promised (verbally or in writing) any change of status or potential benefit due to the undertaking of this study.

### ***Peer Review***

As part of my study, I requested peer reviews of my observations, data collection and transcription, data analysis, and findings. These peer reviews were completed by other students in the same doctoral program as well as doctoral level colleagues with experience in publication, authoring, and editing both qualitative and quantitative case studies.

### ***External Audit and Member Checks***

An external audit of my study was completed by Dr. Andrew Goodrich, my initial dissertation supervisor, and appropriate member checks were conducted with Dr. Anderson, the group's facilitator.

*Ethics*

In addition to following all necessary protocols from the Internal Review Board assigned to my study, I took every available precaution to make ethical decisions regarding each participant involved in the study. Each participant and their respective schools, teachers, administrators, locations, and personal details were anonymized for the sake of protecting those involved. The data which housed all participants' information and pertinent details were kept in a password protected folder within my computer, accessible only by myself. This effort was to ensure the anonymity of each minor whose parent(s) had given ascent and adult who had given consent. When written transcriptions were made of each of the audio recordings of rehearsal and interviews, each of the audio recordings were deleted to comply with Interval Review Board approved procedures.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: A PARTIAL YEAR WITH THE WASHINGTON AVE. ARTS HIGH MODERN BAND**

The following vignettes represent the development and evolution of the modern band at Washington Ave. Arts High derived from field notes and audio recordings. Indented and italicized sections represent my internal asides and interpretations of what was happening at the time. This section serves to contextualize the analysis of data in chapters five to eight. The vignette begins in October, roughly five weeks after the school year had started. The vignette ends in February, two weeks prior to the end of rehearsals for the school year. This is a presentation of data obtained solely from ensemble observations. I have chosen to present this as an extensive narrative to fully delve into both the explicit and nuanced workings of the ensemble. The intent here is to understand the ensemble as I did from an intimate observer so there is a full account which can inform later discussions. The extensive data gleaned from individual and group interviews will be found woven into the analysis found in later chapters.

### **October**

#### ***1<sup>st</sup> Visit***

It is cold during the last week of September into October when I first drive to Washington Ave. Arts High. My parking success seems to be contingent upon showing up at the right moment when another teacher or administrator in the building is off to have lunch. My first visit, along with the ones to follow, begins with ringing a security doorbell, glancing up to the camera, and letting them know that I have a standing

appointment with Dr. Anderson after which I thankfully am allowed entrance. I feel fortunate that I am “buzzed” in immediately. I proceed to walk up a flight of antique marble stairs (circa early 1900s) adorned with portraits of fallen war heroes from the city dating back to World War II. As I follow the directions for visitors, I enter through a set of double doors and meet with one of many rotating security guards. “Who do you have an appointment with?” and “Let me check your I.D.” are the obligatory phrases I hear. The school is always strict when it comes to visitors (minus the time I showed up with pizza). From there, I walk down a hallway and up two flights of stairs to the third floor. The hallway is awash with students who pay me no mind as I make my way up to the “music floor.” As a magnet school<sup>4</sup>, the resources are plentiful (technology room, recording studio, and sound-proofed practice rooms) and well suited for an arts-based high school. I pass a choir room, a recording studio, a band room, and a rehearsal space and then I wait outside of room 305.

This first visit, like each one that follows, is met with a cacophony of music and conversation inside the room and outside in the hallways as students practice individually and in small groups. I hear students talk about the news, music, their significant others, and frustrations with assignments they must complete. The commotion could be distracting to them, but students are engaged with learning the music they are listening to and the corresponding sheet music in front of them. I sit down in front of the lockers

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<sup>4</sup> A magnet school is a public school that houses special programs to which students within a particular district must apply to attend. While most public-school students attend the school closest to them geographically, magnet schools incorporate students based on programmatic interest rather than location.

across the hallway. As the previous class ends, students file out for their next class. I make my way into the room as students are conversing, packing up, hanging up guitars in the closet, and the teacher, Dr. Anderson is telling students to “get moving and get to your next class, because I’m not gonna write you a late pass.” The atmosphere is fun, but the next class is around the corner and ready to get started so Dr. Anderson ushers them along. Some students from the previous class linger, playing guitar while others wander to the drum kit and start jamming. “Let’s go!” exclaims Dr. Anderson in a final effort to clear the room.

The classroom is an oddly shaped rectangle with three practice rooms forced into it (Figure 1). The teacher’s desk sits at the back of the room, but Dr. Anderson spends little time there. The space is roughly 10’ wide by 30’ long with a smartboard behind the teacher’s desk, an unused chalkboard, and the obligatory music-themed posters on the wall; some depict classical composers and others, guitar chords.

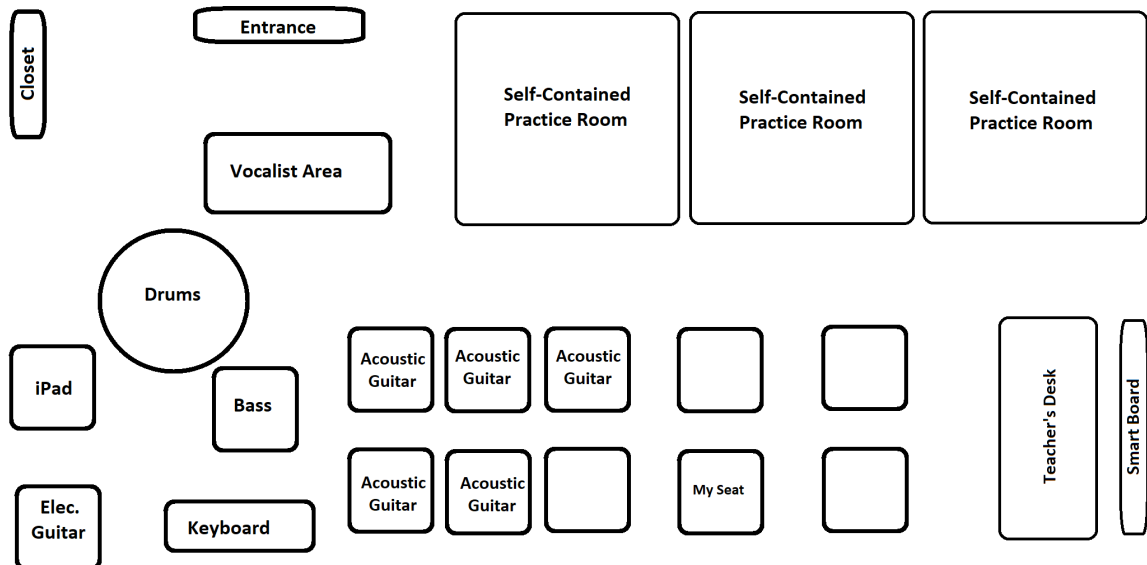


Figure 1. Classroom organization.

*I realize that these posters are a small indication of the obligation Dr. Anderson has to adorn the walls with posters and a “word wall.” While I am present, there is little reference to them as the group seems to be focused on playing music, not simply learning about it.*

While it is cold outside, the third floor is stiflingly warm. I get set up in a chair with a music stand that would be my “home” for the foreseeable future. I try not to distract the students, but my presence is observable to them. They greet me politely with “hey, Mr.” and “what’s up?” to break the awkwardness of a stranger sitting in on their ensemble.

*I am aware that students may start changing their behavior and start to look my way to understand what exactly I am writing about and how they are being perceived. I hope my presence has little effect on the group and their conduct.*

A few students give me the obligatory head-nod when they spot me. They knew I was coming based on our prior conversation, but I hope to be like a fly on the wall rather than one in the ointment. The students file into the room sporadically and get set up at their various stations. The guitarists grab guitars from a closet and chat as they get set up. Some students move around the room laughing while others get straight to playing music. No one asks where they should go or what they should be playing. This early October rehearsal starts with listening to “Californication” (Red Hot Chili Peppers, 1999)<sup>5</sup>. The classroom is boisterous as the rock song kicks into full speed and volume.

*The class seems relaxed and friendly. The atmosphere is very informal, and the students seem to be conducting themselves much like I would expect high schoolers to act. I assume that the “music floor” in the building makes sense here in that there is a bit of space in between classrooms and the noise level is quite high. I recall that the nearest classroom is a band room but across the hall with plenty of soundproofing.*

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<sup>5</sup> In-text citations for song titles will only be provided the first time a song is referenced to minimize text disruption and distraction.

The students who were listening attentively begin playing their instruments along with the tune. They talk constantly about the music and experiment with their parts. The feel is relaxed, chaotic, and messy. The students seem to be figuring out their parts and the music that is laid out in front of them. The sheet music in front of the students is simple and vague but authentic as the pages have only lyrics with guitar chords written above them. There are no breakdowns of rhythm, melody, or harmony, except some tablature depicting the introductory material for the electric guitarist. The students are listening to decipher the music. James and Dylan are on the acoustic guitars and mention to each other “that’s where that happens” and “did you see what happened there?” All students have entered the room. There are five acoustic guitar players, one keyboardist, one bass player, one drummer, an electric guitar player, and a student manipulating the iPad. Dr. Anderson is up and moving around the classroom with his guitar and Mr. Falcone, the student teacher, is seated, playing along with the acoustic guitarists. The rehearsal stops and starts for various reasons as the group and Dr. Anderson discuss a multitude of song aspects. Dr. Anderson says, “this is where the chorus comes back in” and “here comes the bridge.” Dr. Anderson asks Kenny to help another guitar player and calls groups of students to work together to figure out their parts. Jeff, on the keyboard, calls out “nope, that’s where we go to the next section” to the group while Dylan and James are sitting next to each other and talking about the song.

*I realize very quickly that Dylan and James are clearly good friends. They seem to be somewhat separated (even by just a chair) from the rest of the group and are constantly talking to each other, laughing, and helping one another. While I do not know the extent of their friendship, the social interaction is making it clear that they are close.*



Everyone enjoys the learning. Jeff lightens the mood as the class jokester which makes Dr. Anderson simultaneously laugh and become frustrated. Jeff utters, “that’s what she said” after a random comment from the acoustic guitar section.

*My assumptions about the relaxed atmosphere are only being reinforced here with the amount of joking and laughing that is happening. I know the position that Dr. Anderson is in. While running a similar ensemble, I found it hard to walk the fine line between formal disciplinarian and enjoyable educator. He seems to be doing a great job keeping the students engaged and keeping them having fun.*

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Visit**

As the group plays through their songs in October it is evident that they are becoming increasingly more engaged. The students enter the room and socialize but are very interested in the music. Some say, “Oh I love this song” and “Joan is singing it.” The group is cohesive and informal. In the subsequent rehearsal, the group starts with discussion about buying water from Dr. Anderson and Kenny walks around the room, offering gum. I politely decline. “Kenny, go grab the electric guitar for this one,” mentions Dr. Anderson. Kenny seems beyond excited here because this rehearsal is his chance to play the class’s highly coveted Gibson electric guitar. Dr. Anderson walks around at the beginning of rehearsal and makes sure he keeps the students focused by getting everyone in tune. He and I exchange pleasantries as he aims to transition his previous class out of the room and reset for the modern band. He once again says, “let’s go everyone, get to your next class.” As everyone in the arriving class gets settled with their instruments, the group tries rehearsing the song without the recording which goes somewhat well but inevitably comes to a halt when things do not go as planned.

*I think this type of learning tool (listening to the studio recordings) is commonplace for the group. The students appear to love listening to the song to*

*get ready to play it and then it serves as a good transition as they all figure out their parts. This technique seems to keep the anxiety level down for the group as no one is forced to perform anything on their own from the very beginning of rehearsal.*

The group is progressing with lots of interaction between the students and Dr. Anderson helping where needed. Dr. Anderson says, “Kenny, why don’t you take the solo on this one” to which Kenny agrees with vigor. For his guitar solo, Aaron works with Kenny as the volume seems to be disproportionate during a section where Kenny’s guitar is supposed to be much louder. While sitting at the drum kit, Aaron tells Kenny “you come back in with the chords here” and “make sure you turn up during your solo but don’t forget to turn it down when you’re done.” I come to find out that each one of these students also plays guitar in a classical guitar ensemble that meets in that same room on different days, but with all the same students. While students are helping each other learn each of their parts, Dr. Anderson calls out, “let’s take it from the solo” and helps the group tackle one of the more troublesome sections. Kenny is getting plenty of practice for his solo during this rehearsal.

*I can see Kenny’s nervousness during the solo section, but he is doing very well. I can tell he is heavily concentrating on the notes he is playing for fear of not performing well in front of his peers. I know the fear of putting a student in a forefront position and I am relieved to see him handling it well.*

For the class in general, some students are quiet and reserved while others are loud and outspoken. The rehearsal is riddled with jokes and laughing from the ensemble’s members even when they make mistakes. With perfect comedic timing, Jeff utters another “that’s what she said” and the class erupts in laughter. Dr. Anderson shakes his head with a smirk noting that he cannot be saying that in class, but his message lacks

authority as he laughs almost as much as the students. He looks at me and says, “sorry about that, I hope you won’t include that in your study.”

*As much as I think that this type of humor may not have a place in a scholarly study, the humorous aspect of the group serves to portray them in the happy, comedic, and social group they are. From other conversations, I know Jeff is not as open in other classes and I reflect that the environment may serve to provide a context for him to open up both musically and socially.*

I assure Dr. Anderson that I heard much worse in my classroom. Multiple references to the show *The Office* produced by *NBC* are made in this rehearsal and subsequent meetings. The class seems to share many bonds — social as well as musical. The group is focused yet relaxed; serious but fun; loose but committed. Dr. Anderson asks the group what they think they should work on and students say, “we need to figure out the chords” and “I think the biggest issue we’re having is with the map of the whole song.”

Joan is the sole vocalist for this song. She is somewhat shy on the microphone as it seems to be only her first or second time singing the song. She approaches the microphone for only short bursts when she feels comfortable. The other times are spent hanging back as she listens and practices softly to herself. Lauren and Aaron give her some good encouragement, so she feels positive about the experience. She works through the rhythm of the words as best she can without the recording but continues to duck in and out of the microphone’s range when she feels uncomfortable. As I sit in the back of the room, the students are interacting with each other without acknowledging my presence.

*I start to realize that the group is interacting as they most likely would. They are not looking to see what I am doing; they are focused on the task at hand and on working with each other. I empathize with Joan here in that standing up in front of a microphone for all your peers to hear you can be an anxiety-inducing*

*experience. I think that she has the skills to do extremely well, but she has yet to find her confidence in the song.*

The students do not look at me, they do not interact with me, and they do not acknowledge my presence; they are taking direction from Dr. Anderson and helping one another with parts. Jeff says to Brian, “at what point do we switch over to the next section?” The acoustic guitars are especially good at figuring things out together. Lauren is leaning over to Gabriella and talking about the chords while Dylan is pointing to James’s left hand saying “try it here” to direct him to the next chord. While Dr. Anderson tries to facilitate some learning, Jeff plays over his talking to which he gets frustrated and must correct him. Dr. Anderson says “come on, man, stop playing while I’m talking” to which he stops.

*I can tell that the students have a very open and respectful relationship with Dr. Anderson. There is a give and take but a mutual respect of authority that each has for the other. I do not think that Jeff was trying to be rude and interrupt Dr. Anderson and it was clear that it was not taken that way. For a high school student, Jeff responded very maturely to this type of correction.*

Humbly, Brian asks Dr. Anderson if they can spend the remaining time “just jamming” to which Dr. Anderson says, “Yea go ahead, thanks.” The last ten minutes of the class are spent playing “Californication” but also on various other songs that the students seem to be interested in. Aaron and Brian are jamming on a funky bass and drum sound while Dylan and James play through a riff from a song by Metallica. The class period is coming to an end and Dr. Anderson asks the group, “what song should we do next?” The group is close in many ways; they laugh with each other, talk about the music they are tasked with playing, and razz each other whenever possible.

*From my own experience as a teacher, it seems that students show each other a level of acceptance and welcome through the act of taunting and teasing. In this group, it seems to be especially true for the boys that are close in friendship. The group dynamic is playful, and no one seems to take overt offense to anything that is said. I think the students who tease each other do it in a way that would be hard to take seriously based on the wording that is used.*

To answer his question, the students say they should do “Day Tripper” (The Beatles, 1965) as well for the concert and Brian plays the opening riff seamlessly on the bass guitar. I believe he learned it ahead of time in preparation for that moment. Dr. Anderson spent much of this rehearsal walking around the room and observing what was happening. He was not conducting the group but mainly stamped his foot loudly on the floor to keep everyone in time when needed.

*I can see that he wants to direct and guide the group but does not want to micro-manage every single note and overly script how the students work through their issues with each other. He is wandering back and forth between facilitator, peer, and educator. I can see that he notices the students helping each other but at the same time, he seems to get pulled in multiple directions. As he tries to solve all the class’ problems, he is not able to cover everything. The peer mentoring that is occurring as students are helping each other seems to work well since there is only one facilitator and many students.*

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Visit**

Dr. Anderson starts this next rehearsal with “what do you guys wanna warm up with? It’s up to you.” Aaron, Brian, and Jeff talk amongst themselves and call out “Day Tripper” to get things moving. Others say “Californication” which is the song they proceed with. As I continue to watch the rehearsal unfold, more students show up late and wander in. I am sitting in the back of the room, typing feverishly, but the students pay me no mind. The students are coming back from a disruptive fire drill, so things are quite chaotic as Dr. Anderson attempts to rein the students back in. Jeff, Brian, and Aaron

are working together on some music as Jeff cracks a joke pertaining to the TV show, *The Office* to lighten the mood. Kenny and Lauren work together getting set up for the day and discussing myriad musical and non-musical topics. Lauren says to Kenny “what was our assignment from that class?” and “do you know what song we are starting with?” Lots of music happening. Dylan and Aaron are playing chords, Joan and Kenny are vocalizing some melodies, and everyone else is engaged in the songs that the group has been rehearsing. Joan is looking at her lyric sheets as it seems the recording is playing softly in the background. As I look over to Jeff and Kenny, they are hovering over their chord sheets and some guitar riffs written in tablature. Dr. Anderson calls out, “let’s get tuned up, there’s work to do” and proceeds to pass out some extra copies of the “music” as well as tuners for the guitarists who seem to be out of tune. The students are moving around loosely, and their progress towards being ready is interjected with lots of greetings like “hey,” “what’s up,” and “how ya doin?” Dr. Anderson says, “here we go, Aaron, count us off” and Aaron starts in with a click, a drum fill, and then a clear opening of the song. Lauren casually enters the room and sits to play guitar without disrupting the rehearsal.

*In the back of my mind, I know that she was late to the class, but I admire the smooth entrance she made without disrupting the rehearsal. In a way, I assume that Dr. Anderson is aware that she arrived late but chose not to publicly address it or bring attention to her entrance. Since the class is an elective, I think that Dr. Anderson is trying to walk the line here between keeping his students happy and being able to put on a successful show through diligent and scheduled rehearsals.*

Dr. Anderson is barely conducting or leading the group on this song. The band is getting tighter with their music and Kenny just nailed the guitar solo. His friends all shout

his praise, and he loves it! Besides his guitar solo, Kenny has been quiet and somewhat tucked away in the corner of the room on his electric guitar. I notice Dr. Anderson walking around helping the students and working with small groups like the acoustic guitar players to get them help on a strumming pattern. He says, “work with each other to figure this part out” and “can you guys work together?” Dr. Anderson lessens the physical divide between the electric and acoustic instruments by saying, “let’s get a bit closer so we can all hear each other” as he wants everyone to get closer in proximity. As this run-through closes, Dr. Anderson asks the class, “do we wanna do that again or move on to the next one?” There are now ten students in the room. Most of the group’s members are chatting amongst themselves and playing through some of the music. In an abrupt comment that cuts through the talking, Brian says, “Let’s do “Day Tripper”” and the group moves on to their next song. As the students look at the chord charts in front of them, Dr. Anderson plays the audio recording for the group to follow along with. Joan and Aaron start laughing with each other over the name of the song as Kenny, Elizabeth, and Lauren move around a bit in the room. Dylan and James are tucked away a bit during this class and are talking to each other about what parts they need help with; they help each other in various ways. I am listening to hear the conversations that are happening, and a lot are centered around how transposition works and what a capo does for a guitar. James, Kenny, and Lauren are discussing how they can simply move the main riff from the song up a string from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> and it works for the next part of the song. Dr. Anderson says, “everybody, just look at the chords, for now, let’s listen along and play through it.”

*Like I had seen in the previous song, learning from the recordings is a tool that is used in each song that the group is practicing. They rely on the recordings mainly to understand the feel and overall form, but also use it as any musician might use a metronome to force them to keep moving forward with the song's chords, rhythm, and melody.*

Dr. Anderson moves around the room, letting the students work with each other, monitoring as they play with the recording. He observes and gently interjects when the context is fitting. He is listening to what the students are playing and what they are saying to each other more than he is talking at them or talking with them. There is a lot of room left here for trial and error as the students work with each other. The chords seem to be more difficult in this song compared to the previous one. Dylan and James are talking to each other about the C# chord and are getting tripped up but continually work to get their parts figured out. The sound is messy and disjointed, but it is improving. Every time they play the song, they make fewer mistakes. This might equate to one less incorrect chord or one smoother transition between sections. These small victories seem to be paying off as the group irons out the rough parts of their knowledge. Some of the more experienced guitarists help each other while Brian, Jeff, and Aaron jam on their own. I notice Jeff, behind the keyboard, getting antsy, playing lots of random notes, and distracting the people near him. It seems there is too much downtime for him to stay completely focused. During this prescribed downtime, two of the students ask when and how to play the F# chord. Dr. Anderson chimes in and some of the other students offer suggestions as well like, "just play it as a power chord" and "you can just cover a few of the notes, the bass will get the lower part." The atmosphere here is busy but productive, hectic but intentional, and the students are intermittently talking and laughing with each other.



Inevitably, Dr. Anderson calls out, “let’s do it one more time” and has the group try it again while listening to the recording. Dylan and James are struggling with the chord changes, but other students are starting to realize the form and what comes next. As the anchor of the group, Aaron is sitting at the drum set, playing the song note for note without issue.

*Aaron’s presence in the group is a solid foundation. While the drummer can make or break any group at this level, they have a true backbone here with a drummer who can competently play in many styles, often mimicking recordings note for note. Combined with Brian, who is just as solid on the bass guitar, the group is grounded well for small issues that may occur.*

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Visit**

Each of these class periods are roughly 45 minutes and like clockwork, the next meeting is off to a delayed start. As I look up, we are already three minutes into the class, and little has started. Students are wandering in with little urgency and Dr. Anderson says, “I’m going to give you five minutes to work through some of the issues you’re having with The Beatles tune. Target your problem areas and I will be around. Feel free to help your neighbor.” Elizabeth is sitting next to the amplifier while playing the iPad but having trouble hooking it up and then with what chords to play. Dr. Anderson is sitting near her and works through the part as the other students are playing music on their own. I watch as the relaxed atmosphere leads to lots of musical discussion of what the students think of “Day Tripper” as compared to “Californication,” students saying hi to each other and asking how they are feeling, and musical practice but then they turn toward joking, unfocused playing, and general discussion. Lauren and Joan are focused

on the job at hand amidst their peers going off on tangents.

*It is clear that the group does well with time to spend helping each other both formally and informally but as too much time passes, the productivity level goes down. After roughly five minutes, I think most students in the group lose focus on what they are supposed to be doing. I think Dr. Anderson is doing his best with triaging his most problematic areas, but the other students have a threshold of downtime where it moves from peer mentoring and sharing knowledge to general socializing.*

As the group regains direction with Dr. Anderson's help, I watch as Brian and Kenny are working through the main riff in "Day Tripper," getting the rhythm down succinctly. They have turned their chairs towards each other and are playing along without talking too much. I watch as Dr. Anderson tries to pull the class back together, and he asks Aaron to lead them in once again. The sound is getting better, the feel resembles The Beatles, and the energy level is growing as the students seem to be getting their parts down. Students are talking to each other more while the music is playing, showing their increased level of comfort. Elizabeth seems to have found a very appropriate Hammond organ sound that she plays as many students look around in awe as to what is making the sound. There is new excitement in the room. The next run-through is even better as the students are getting the chords down and the form transitions become smoother. Dr. Anderson says, "okay, that's all for today, feel free to pack up." Kenny, Brian, and Aaron make their way to the door immediately and others like Dylan, James, and Lauren hang around for a few minutes to play more music, talk, and socialize with their peers.

## November

### *5<sup>th</sup> Visit*

I get seated but today is different. I have three separate interviews scheduled to occur prior to rehearsal. I speak with Dr. Anderson (the group's official instructor) and Mr. Falcone (the student teacher) individually as well as the students in a large group setting prior to rehearsal. To keep everyone relaxed and feeling loose regarding the questions I ask, I keep my distance and allow students to choose their seats. We meet in the rehearsal space and everyone is glad to be here, if for nothing other than being able to skip a class they would have been in otherwise. The interviews all go well. Students and teachers are open, and the dialogue is fruitful and engaging. My questions spark discussion, and I am eager to get back home tonight and start transcribing what I am hearing.

*After the interviews and before rehearsal, I am reflecting on how we all ate pizza, had some refreshments, and spoke in a group setting very informally with zero obligation. I am thankful that the group was so open with me. I was afraid that a large number of high school kids would be limited in their inclination to speak openly about a subject that required them to be transparent and open regarding their feelings. I was also a bit afraid that because answering my questions had zero impact on their grade or presence in the school, their answers would be extremely limited. I am relieved to know that this was not the case and students were open and forthcoming with their thoughts.*

As I sit back and type, students walk around the room getting their instruments, chairs, stands, and sheet music set up. Dr. Anderson interrupts with, "we're getting rid of two lines in "Californication."'" Almost immediately, Jeff starts playing around with different sounds on his keyboard and experimenting with the new transition. He is versatile on the keyboard. He plays melodies, chords, all while experimenting with

different sound effects. While the students are almost ready, they play different parts of “Californication.” As Kenny continues his solo practice, Jeff moves to him and helps with problematic notes. Jeff says to him, “that one part has a big bend so you need to make sure you can be heard with enough volume.” He continues to say that Kenny “should make sure you turn down when it’s over, so you don’t come off too loud, I’ll give you a cue when that’s gonna happen.”

Dr. Anderson counts off and moves around helping and encouraging students to help each other. Aaron looks around to make sure everyone is in rhythm while Jeff is talking to Brian about their parts. Dr. Anderson tells Aaron to listen to the recording, especially for the tempo. The group is getting tighter on all their parts as they talk to each other and comment on each other’s playing. Aaron is confident enough to keep the drumbeat going while he turns up Kenny’s amplifier right before his electric guitar solo. After Kenny plays the solo exceptionally well, his peers holler out congratulations and he visibly enjoys the praise.

*I am thrilled to see how the group has encouraged Kenny for his performance of the guitar solo. He has worked hard at it and put himself out there. The group seems to be extremely encouraging towards him and it is touching to see the camaraderie that is present. The look of joy and satisfaction on Kenny’s face shows me that he could not be more appreciative of the congratulations coming from his peers.*

The students are talking about chords, dynamics, and details of the form inclusive of transitions. The acoustic guitarists are working in their own group, partially removed from the electric instruments. It becomes hard to hear the acoustic instruments over the drums and electric guitar, but the students address the issue and work through it by

moving closer into a circle of chairs. As that run-through ends, Dr. Anderson says, “did you notice any problems or issues?”

*I am watching something interesting now as the group attempts the song without the recording and aims to get through the whole thing without stopping. This moment may be crucial as the group is removing the “training wheels” for themselves and embarking on their own journey with the song.*

As Mr. Falcone and Dr. Anderson play along with the group, students are progressing towards cohesiveness. Once again, Lauren arrives late to class but without disruption, grabs a guitar, sits down, and works with her neighbor to figure out where the band is playing. She leans over and asks, “which part are we on?” to which Gabriella points to a chord of the song. As the group moves on to “Day Tripper,” students continue helping each other. Dylan and James start their conversation off by discussing the problematic G#, C#, and B chord progression. James is relying on Dylan to show him the best way to play each chord and they come to a consensus of using power chords instead of full barre chords. While Dr. Anderson deals with technology and instrument problems, he allows space for the students to work together. The group starts by listening to the recording and playing along. The B chord trips up some students, but they work through variations of it on their own and with help from their facilitators, Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone. The ensemble is learning from simply watching and listening to each other as well as the recording. Kenny is watching the other guitar players to understand where the chords are changing as he is also intently listening to Brian and Aaron. The music is helping the students learn the form as they get better at playing the transitions. Joan and Lauren are trying out the tambourine part for the song. Aaron seems to be happy to help

them as the part requires a lot of dexterity and endurance.

*I am notably observing distinctive peer mentoring happening here as Aaron is a much more experienced percussionist and drummer while Lauren and Joan are learning from him. He is instructing them, giving advice, and physically demonstrating the best ways to hold the tambourine. He is mentioning to them where they “have to switch between the slower and the faster rhythms” in the song. In this case, Aaron is using much more flexible terminology rather than relying on terms like quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes.*

As I hear Brian and Aaron figure out where the F# chord happens, the other students work with each other because Dr. Anderson is helping Elizabeth with the iPad as she is unsure of how to hook it up and play the trickier chords. After a bit of downtime, Dr. Anderson says, “can we try it without the recording?” to which the students say “yes” and “ya, that’s cool.” The ensemble sounds rocky and rough around the edges, but each take sounds closer to the sound they are seeking.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Visit**

The students wander into the room in pairs, talking about their lives and making jokes. The jokes appear to be random, and the students laugh with each other. The group is in a good mood today and it is apparent that things are going well. As Jeff is asked to put his phone away, the guitar players talk about who is going to get to play the Gibson electric guitar. It is a highly coveted instrument as there is only one in the classroom.

*As I see the students clamor for a chance to play the electric guitar, I cannot help but think that more of the students should be getting a chance to share the instrument amongst the different songs. While Kenny seems to be the default electric guitar player, I can hear whispers from around the room that other students would love to get a chance to try it out.*

Dr. Anderson says, “today we’re doing both songs, so let’s get tuned up and ready to

play.” Jeff jumps right into playing the keyboard, tinkering around with various songs. He wanders seamlessly through various styles of playing, experimenting with improvisations on familiar tunes. Jeff makes everyone laugh with jokes and references to *The Office* once again, talking about the latest episode he saw the night before. I see some issue here with the rehearsal in that Brian, the group’s bass player, is absent. Everyone is concerned that he is not present, but one of his good friends, Aaron, says that they called him at lunchtime and woke him up. The group has a good laugh when they realize Aaron woke him up at lunchtime as he had slept the day away. They quickly move on, knowing he is well at home.

As Dr. Anderson sits amongst the students, he offers helpful suggestions on stylistic choices. The students are oddly quiet in the rehearsal. The group waits in anticipation for Joan as she is running late. Without her, they have no vocalist for both songs. As the students do a quick soundcheck, Aaron wanders in and sits down at the drum kit. Aaron, Jeff, and Brian are all talking to each other about some of the issues they had in a previous class but also about music they were recently listening to at home. With the downtime before the rehearsal begins, Dylan and Aaron jam on a tune and give each other comments on their playing and have a few laughs. There are a few students absent today that are usually present. Dr. Anderson does not seem to let it phase him as he is getting the group ready to play. As the group is about to get started, the students realize that it is someone’s birthday to which they volley “happy birthday!” out to the group. Brian is absent and the group is uneasy about starting without their bass player. Joan says, “I can play bass if you want” to which the group applauds her willingness to

simultaneously play bass and sing. Aaron steps over from the drum kit to help Joan since he is familiar with the bass guitar as well. After he helps her, he casually sits back down at the drum kit. After lots of interaction and musical conversations, the first official run-through of “Day Tripper” is happening about 12 minutes into the class. As Joan gets started playing the bass, Aaron preemptively announces the notes she should be playing a few beats ahead of each chord change. During the end of the chorus, Aaron says “A, G#, C#, B” to keep her aware of the chord changes. As the song ends, Dr. Anderson says, “you got it, let’s do it again” and asks Aaron to count the group off once more. The group is smaller in number and closer in proximity. Joan sits down to play the bass and sing but the vocal microphone does not stretch as far it should. For the vocals of the song to be heard, Aaron, Jeff, Lauren, and Kenny sing along with her to bolster the volume and give Joan assistance.

*In this context, I am intrigued to see the group helping each other and keeping their sound intact by going out of their prescribed roles and singing along with Joan. Dr. Anderson did not tell them to sing or exercise his authority to make Joan cover the bass part. On the contrary, the group had a problem and worked to fix it on their own with help from their peers.*

Dr. Anderson interjects with small cues regarding the form, calling out, “here comes the bridge” and “strum” to the guitarists. When the song nears the solo section, he calls out, “take it away, Kenny.” As the class works through problems, Aaron plays a key role in making helpful suggestions. He aids both his classmates that are near him and the ensemble. Student dialogue is happening regarding individual parts and the form of the song. As students engage in conversations, Dr. Anderson brings them back to task saying, “run it again.” As the group plays “Californication” once more, the form of the song



becomes solidified. The students polish their parts and work through the more complicated chords in the bridge. Kenny continues to get more comfortable with his guitar solo and he is constantly given praise for his efforts. “Californication” is almost ready for performance as the students are working on style, rather than learning the chord structure or the form.

Dr. Anderson sings loudly with the group and keeps everyone aware of their position in the song subsequently giving an aural model for Joan who is singing shyly. Kenny remembers to turn up his volume before his guitar solo as Aaron had suggested and it cuts through beautifully! Aaron seems pleased that he remembered to turn up giving him a nod of approval. As the group plays through the rest of the song, Dr. Anderson casually walks around fixing incorrect chords he observes played by the guitarists. He calls out “E major, not E minor” and “A minor, not A Major” to the guitarists. When James plays an A minor chord, Dylan turns to him saying, “it’s actually A major there.” Lauren and Joan work with each other on fixing some of their parts as others work through what is happening during the solo. I can hear Dylan and James helping each other as they continue rehearsing the song. Lauren and Joan are doing the same, encouraging each other as the songs progress. Lauren says, “that part needs to be tight otherwise it’ll be a huge mess” as the group begins the solo section. The entire group nods approvingly as her comment was very fitting for a section that was sounding inconsistent and dissimilar to the recording. As Lauren helps James with a particular chord, Dr. Anderson walks over to the guitarists to demonstrate difficult chords like an F# major. Students praise each other on their run-through since it sounded much better

than the previous one. Kenny's solo gets better each time he plays it, and Dr. Anderson moves the group on to "Day Tripper." Students talk to each other about music, play, and subsequently refine various parts. As the group runs into problems, the recording is played to model it as it is the cornerstone of the sound they are seeking. The group refers to the recording to answer their questions on parts saying, "let's just check the recording" and "can we go back and listen once more to see what they do?" Since none of the students are currently covering the tambourine part, they ask me to play along.

*I feel privileged when they ask me if I want to play the tambourine. I put down my laptop for a few minutes and play along with the group. I think the students enjoy that I am "jamming" with them on the tune. I realize that as much as I have tried, I am not longer simply a fly in the wall, but potentially somewhat integrated, albeit for a short period of time. I am excited to be able to play a bit of music with the group and participate in their excitement over the song. I am admittedly not a percussionist or a competent tambourine player, but I make my way through the part since I have always admired The Beatles and know the part well.*

James and Lauren are working together to get more familiar with their parts while Jeff experiments on the keyboard to figure out what effect to use. Dr. Anderson brings the group into discussion regarding the bridge instrumental. He asks, "how many times are we doing the repeats there?" as he includes students in the decision-making process.

With the small amount of time left in the class, the group works through "Day Tripper" but needs help. Before they start, the class jovially wishes Kenny a happy birthday and sings to him. Dr. Anderson uses a bit of time to demonstrate which beats they should accent by demonstrating on his guitar and singing as he tells them to "take it from the top." As the class ends, the students are discussing aspects of the instrumental part like the number of repeats and the growing intensity throughout. As the group packs

up, Aaron and Joan hang around for a few minutes talking about music and telling me they both play guitar very well in addition to their roles as the drummer and vocalist. The students disperse in good spirits with lots of noise and chaos.

### *7<sup>th</sup> Visit*

The group is nearing their winter concert. They have a small break to celebrate Thanksgiving coming up next week and only one rehearsal remaining before their concert. This final rehearsal in November should prove crucial. Kenny and Brian enter first and get their instruments. They are eager to play and begin warming up. Most students seem to be running even later than usual for rehearsal. Dr. Anderson says, “don’t worry about who’s here, let’s just get tuned and ready to play, we have work to do.” Kenny starts playing the lead riff to “Day Tripper” on the electric guitar and Brian joins him on bass. No words are spoken, and the pair simply starts playing and listening to and feeding off each other. Jeff (keyboard) walks in and immediately stands at the drum kit and plays a rhythm. Once the trio hits a stopping point, they all laugh at how Jeff played the drums, rather well, while standing up.

*I had no idea up to this point that Jeff also played the drums. While he is not as proficient as Aaron, he held a steady beat and even played a drum fill to guide the trio between sections. For as funny as Jeff seems to portray himself, he is an incredibly talented musician. I have seen him play guitar, keyboards, and now drums.*

Dr. Anderson corrals everyone and asks where some of the other students are as Aaron walks in and takes over the drums. Brian continues playing the riff from Californication and other students join in without direction from their peers or Dr. Anderson. Joan gets to

the microphone and begins singing. As the group stops and restarts officially, Joan has trouble finding her confidence but sings into the microphone on the parts she knows well. As Dr. Anderson asks where Elizabeth is, he also asks for the group to settle down, informing them that the concert is only a couple of weeks away noting they will “be running through both songs today to get them ready for the concert.”

The group goes over the schedule for the day and students mention songs they are interested in doing for the spring concert. I notice the students getting excited and eager to expand into new material, but Dr. Anderson says to hold up on new songs until after December 11<sup>th</sup>, the concert date. The progress of the group is noticeable since Dr. Anderson makes only minimal interjections into the group’s run-through of both songs. Dr. Anderson stands at the front of the room playing along on his guitar, making almost no comments to the group. He is constantly observing and watching but letting the students run the rehearsal on their own. Jeff and Dylan communicate with each other through body language and head nods as they make sure their parts are synchronized. The first song the group practices is “Californication” and Kenny plays the solo near perfection getting renewed praise from his peers. He is in deep concentration while playing the solo and the subsequent relief shows when it is over. He receives a few “good job” and “yea, Kenny” compliments. The group discusses the tempo of the song and overall length as they are ready to move on to “Day Tripper.” Dylan, on the acoustic guitar, exchanges glances with Jeff who is experimenting with a new organ sound for the tune. Dylan gives him a brief look of disapproval as the sound Jeff played on the keyboard is not a good fit. Through simple head nods and facial expressions, the pair

communicates with Dylan passing his opinion to Jeff on his preferred choice of sound effect. Dr. Anderson says, “before we start, everyone needs to make sure that they follow the changes” and counts them off with, “o.k. ready go” with each syllable falling on a beat of the song. Joan struggles to get enough volume near the microphone as she sings, but she is progressing compared to previous rehearsals. She is louder and her vocal presence is becoming clear now that she is more comfortable with the song.

*Joan seems to have had plenty of time to practice this song but has not capitalized on it. She has progressed but rather slowly. I am hoping that she anticipates the pending concert and uses that to propel her forward. She has the skills to perform the song but is still quite hesitant this far along into the group’s rehearsals.*

To help her, other students sing along from their seats. The only interjection made by Dr. Anderson is when he calls out “A!” when switching back to the first section. The group is fine-tuning, working through the ending and what accents they will make. Once the group comes to a consensus on how to end the song, Dr. Anderson says, “you guys cool with that?” to help move them along in the decision-making process. With the downtime in between song transitions, I hear students discussing random topics like facial hair, their favorite shows, and funny jokes they recently heard. In typical fashion, Jeff reprises his joke from *The Office* which is met with group laughter. Throughout the rest of the rehearsal, students discuss strategy when it comes to the upcoming concert. They discuss details of the show’s start-time, song order, dress code, and other logistics. The students compliment each other on their parts. Dr. Anderson leaves the students to work with each other as he helps James with the chord changes. The group is confident in playing the two songs adding comments to each other regarding their smooth playing.

The students encourage each other with “that sounded good” and “nice job with those chords” sharing what they know through various verbal and non-verbal methods of communication. The guitarists help each other and model techniques visually and aurally. With roughly half of rehearsal remaining, Dr. Anderson wants the group to move on to a new song in a slight contradiction to earlier sentiments. The group has done at least 3 complete run-throughs of each song without having to stop. This seems to be a good breaking point for the group. Potentially ahead of schedule and sooner than anticipated, Dr. Anderson says the group will be working on “All Star” (Smash Mouth, 1999) for the spring concert. They begin with listening to the song and slowly move towards playing along with the recording as the group discusses the song’s details. The group begins with attentively listening and, much like the previous songs, slowly enters into playing their parts along with the recording. The chords of the song are simple for the group and they discuss the form and their interest in playing it. There seems to be some dissension amongst the group as they are unsure of their interest in pursuing the song. Students are mumbling under their breath about not being thrilled with the song choice and asking, “who picked this one” as well as “are you a fan of this?” The group briefly tries out the verse of the song on their own but instead vamps over the simple chord progression. For a first run-through of the song without the recording, they make it through. There are many hiccups and speedbumps along the way, but the students manage. The music sounds rough, but the experience is serving as a learning tool. Through their mistakes, Dylan, James, and Kenny are learning. Dr. Anderson and many of the students use modeling to help others that are less sure of their parts. For the guitarists, visual modeling

serves best, but for the vocalist, aural modeling fits better. At the end of class, Dr. Anderson says, “we got through the verse so that was good for a first time but it’s time to go, you gotta pack up.” Dylan and James remain in the classroom for a few minutes to work through different chords as Kenny continues to practice the solo for “Californication” as he mentions that he does not own an electric guitar at home.

*I am weighing the fact that Kenny does not own an electric guitar at home. It makes more sense to me now that Kenny is so eager to keep practicing his solo on the instrument. I understand full well the great difference between an acoustic and electric guitar. The range of the solo and the requirement of bending is near impossible to fully replicate (both sound and feel) on an acoustic guitar.*

## **December**

### ***8<sup>th</sup> Visit***

After a missed rehearsal last week due to Thanksgiving break, today’s is a bit different. As the students prepare for their concert happening in five days, they are rehearsing the songs for the modern band as well as instrumental songs for their classical guitar ensemble. Dr. Anderson tells me they are diverging from their usual practicing routine due to a limited amount of time remaining for the other ensemble that each of the students are members.

*I realize each of these students is also being trained as a classical guitarist in one of Dr. Anderson’s other classes. Each of the members of the modern band is present and start off by playing a nylon-string acoustic guitar. It is clear to me now that many of these students are multi-instrumentalists and have extreme versatility.*

The formality and quietness of the rehearsal contrasts what I have witnessed in the

modern band. Dr. Anderson calls out, “let’s start with the instrumental pieces” and calls for tuning of all guitars. The chair setup of the instrumental pieces varies from where the modern band setup usually is. The students are sitting in two rows of five with their chairs in straight lines. To be unobtrusive, I move my seat to where Jeff is usually located behind the keyboard. The warmup of this class is absent of boisterous discussion as the students play through their parts and warm up. Dr. Anderson says “we’re gonna do each song one time each and then do the rock songs.” He continues by asking where Joan and other students are, but they still have a minute before the class officially starts.

This rehearsal is more sterile and less social than usual. Each student plays their own part at their seat, going through specific note passages they are about to rehearse. As Dr. Anderson relays the trajectory of the class, he says Jeff will be leading the instrumental songs after asking “does anyone want to be a guest conductor?” and “what happens if something happens to me and the students have to lead the show?”

*I am sure that Dr. Anderson was joking here, and the real reason was that he was interested in giving leadership roles to the various students in the group. Even in this more traditional ensemble, Dr. Anderson seems to be introducing some facilitation through the encouragement of student leaders.*

Students continue warming up on the acoustic guitars without much conversation or discussion of music or social topics. Students are hyper-focused on the music in front of them, sitting with good posture and quietly attentive. Jeff is established as the “guest conductor” for the rehearsal and Dr. Anderson switches seats with him assuming a participatory role. Joan arrives late and Dr. Anderson asks her to get settled, tuned, and warmed up. They get their seats figured out in preparation for the concert. This is a much more formal rehearsal compared to the modern band songs.



The instrumental songs are performed very well. The mood of the class is sobering as each student quietly plays through their part without interruption. The overall feel of the classroom at this juncture has an opposite energy level compared to the modern band rehearsals. There is a quietness surrounding the group as they do not speak much, and they listen intently to the entrances of each section with their hands down and eyes focused on the sheet music. I hear a couple of students occasionally laugh with each other, but they return to quietness very quickly. The classical guitar ensemble pieces run quickly taking roughly 12 minutes to complete.

*As a classical guitarist, I enjoy hearing the group play through pieces that are both interesting and dynamic. All the student parts seem to be melodic lines broken up throughout the range of the instrument. The various parts combined with the dynamic and rhythmic changes make for beautiful music, albeit quite different than the “rock songs” as they are affectionately referred to by Dr. Anderson.*

At the conclusion of the classical guitar ensemble pieces, Dr. Anderson announces, “okay, let’s do the rock songs!” Aaron on the drums, Kenny on the electric guitar, and Brian on the bass begin switching gears to get ready for the “rock songs.” Student attitudes change drastically and the usual cacophony of jamming, talking, laughing, and musical discussion return.

Since Elizabeth is absent, Dr. Anderson asks, “does anyone want to play the iPad for the rehearsal?” No one volunteers, so he takes the iPad and counts off the song. Dr. Anderson is seated on the ground near the back of the room where he plays the iPad through a guitar amp where Elizabeth usually sits. Joan, as the main vocalist, senses the urgency of the concert and is singing with more volume and self-confidence. She has the

lyrics memorized and is concert ready. Dr. Anderson and Aaron exchange some “rhythmic” looks during an instrumental interlude.

*While no words were uttered between them, I think these types of looks serve to affirm that things are going well for those involved and the group. Almost as a reinforcement tool for what they are thinking, the pair nods in agreement over what is happening. The non-verbal musical language happening here is reassuring of the group’s cohesiveness and concert-readiness.*

Kenny does an excellent job on the solo and his peers holler congratulations as they move to the next part of the song. The instrumentalists are all playing the chords in the correct locations and they finish “Californication” very well.

Without prompting, Brian starts playing the introductory line to “Day Tripper” on the bass. Dr. Anderson takes his cue and moves on to playing “Day Tripper” letting Aaron count it off. “What exactly did you find out?” asks one student as a joke to Joan regarding the lyrics of the song. Aaron converses with Lauren as they discuss where the tambourine comes in and chat about specific rhythms, discussing where changes occur from sixteenth notes to eighth notes and how technique makes a difference to save the strength of her arm. I have officially relegated my role as the tambourine player as Aaron demonstrates for Lauren how to hold the instrument. He mouths “hold it like this” and she complies. Dr. Anderson asks Brian, “can you do the bass when the drums come in?” As Dr. Anderson leaves room for the group to rehearse on their own, students converse with each other on various aspects of “Day Tripper” and “Californication,” commenting specifically on Kenny’s solo. With a small amount of downtime, Kenny plays an Aerosmith song and Brian joins him on bass.

*From my perspective, the group is extremely musical and well-rounded in what they can accomplish. They are often playing random songs with each other and having no trouble “jamming” as many classically trained musicians may be unable to do. They have no trouble breaking out into song and joining their peers even when the songs seem unknown to others.*

Other students comment on Brian’s playing saying it is very good. The group discusses the rhythm and tempo of the “Day Tripper” introduction riff. Dr. Anderson continues to get the iPad setup after having technical issues with it during the first run-through of both songs. In quiet conversation, Dylan and James glance at each other and quietly say “No, like this” and one corrects the other regarding what appears to be a C# chord.

The students continue rehearsing the songs while Dylan and James, as well as Lauren and Gabriella, work with and talk to each other about the song’s musical attributes mentioning tempo and dynamics. The conversations are intermixed with peers helping each other and audible laughter. Jeff makes yet another “that’s what she said” joke to which the class laughs. Students are running through each of the songs again and communicating verbally and non-verbally. Joan says to Brian, “it’s too fast” during a break in her singing as he nods affirmatively. Aaron proceeds to gently slow the tempo to better fit what Joan had relayed to Brian. During this rehearsal, Dr. Anderson talks to Jeff and Aaron about the class and their upcoming concert. He asks, “how are you guys feeling for the concert?” to which they respond, “good” and “solid.” The band continues ably without a director. The group’s cohesiveness is evident as they execute both songs well. Many of the students are visibly having fun as Joan and Lauren dance during the instrumental breaks. Joan gets ready to start singing but she almost enters ahead of the correct position. Thanks to Lauren mouthing “not yet” to help her, she holds off and

correctly enters a measure later. The final rehearsal before the concert ends with students keeping each other accountable and sharing their knowledge. Dr. Anderson is discussing the logistics surrounding the concert and what time to be ready as he sends the students off to their next subject. The class ends and the students are excited for what is to come within the week.

### ***9<sup>th</sup> Visit***

It is concert night! I try to arrive early to find a decent parking space, but traffic precludes me from doing so.

*I am thinking to myself that the vibe is starkly different in the evening and there is a sense of excitement even as I walk the two blocks towards the school. I can tell that friends and families are here to be supportive of the students that are performing, and it lessens my anxiety as I worry how the night is going to go for the students. In a small way, I am eager to see them succeed as I had many times before with my own students.*

As I enter the auditorium early, Dr. Anderson and the group are tucked away somewhere in the school getting ready to perform. When I realize that I will not be able to see them prior to their performance, I sit in the front row of the massive, antique auditorium. The stage is roughly five feet above the ground with large curtains on each side. Like many schools that were built in the mid-20th Century, this one does not disappoint with its expansive stage. While I get my audio recorder set up, the auditorium fills with people as the venue officially opens. People are quick to fill up the front rows and file in with their belongings and cameras to be in perfect position for observing the students they have come to see. The concert begins with the classical guitar ensemble comprising the same

students as the modern band, plus a few I have not seen before. After the performance of five classical ensemble works, along with a solo and duet, the group prepares the stage to play the “rock songs.” The two songs, “Californication” and “Day Tripper” are both performed very well. The songs are smoothly executed, and any small hiccups are most likely only noticeable to me, Dr. Anderson, and the students themselves. Kenny’s electric guitar is loud but works well, especially during his solo in “Californication.” Relief becomes present on Kenny’s face when it concludes as he accomplished a task he had worked so hard for. As I sit amongst at least two hundred other attendees, the students are visibly having fun as the audience claps along, enjoying themselves with the modern band.

*At the end of the concert, I am reflecting on the fact that the most interactive music of the night was performed by the modern band. While the classical guitar ensemble, as well as a variety of choral music performed by other students was beautiful, the most connections between the audience and the students performing seems to have been made during “Californication” and “Day Tripper.”*

The energy in the auditorium was at its peak during these songs and I could see that the students thrived on it. Joan was smiling more on the stage than I had seen her in past rehearsals. I make sure to relay my congratulations to the group before heading home. I can see the sense of relief on the students’ and Dr. Anderson’s faces of a concluded concert.

*I remember that feeling quite distinctly.*

### ***10<sup>th</sup> Visit***

The next rehearsal time was utilized for individual student interviews as Dr.

Anderson noted to me that the students were thoroughly “practiced out” and needed a break.

*This did not surprise me as any rehearsals that occur two days after a concert are usually meant to debrief and discuss what went well and what could be improved upon rather than jumping into new material. In a way, for me as an educator, this time served to also reward the students with some well-deserved downtime.*

As I meet individually with seven students, they each tell me in their ways how happy and successful they felt during the performance two nights prior. The students felt great about how the concert went in general, but also shared with me some of their feelings regarding their own triumphs and shortcomings during the event. Each student reflected on how they felt helping their peers, sharing knowledge, and how Dr. Anderson did at facilitating the modern band.

*While it was great to be able to chat with the students individually, I am eager to hear them play again and jump into new material. It seems that I will have to wait another week to hear the new songs they are working on. I am once again thrilled with how open the students were in their interviews. They divulged information and shared their thoughts on plenty of topics surrounding their performance, peer mentoring, and sharing knowledge with their peers. I once again cannot wait to get home and transcribe their input.*

### ***11<sup>th</sup> Visit***

Today is the final day of school before winter recess. James and Dylan enter the room first and set up their acoustic guitars on the edge of the classroom. They immediately enter into conversation mentioning what songs they will be performing next. As Dr. Anderson inquires to the whereabouts of other ensemble members, he asks them to help tune up guitars. With more students now present, Dr. Anderson relays to the

group that they will be working on “All Star” by Smash Mouth for the upcoming spring concert. He walks around, passing out lyric and chord sheets to each of the band members, including the drummer for reference. Dr. Anderson says that the group already knows most of the chords, except for one that may give them a bit of trouble. Jeff says, “I think you mean that C# diminished chord, right?” to which Dr. Anderson responds, “yep, that’s the one” with a smirk on his face. As each of the students wander in at different times, Dr. Anderson proceeds to tell them what song they are doing and how they would have time to work on it on their own with their peers before they listen to the recording. The students have a thorough understanding of the chords that make up the song but are getting confused by the very unfamiliar C# diminished chord. Since this chord is presenting problems for various members of the group, Dr. Anderson walks around encouraging many of them to work with their neighbors to understand it better. There is also a small issue in this rehearsal that no one wants to sing the song. Joan is resilient in her stance that she does not want to take any part in singing the song. Without much audible dialogue, students are working through their issues and practicing together. As today is the last day of the year for students before break, their motivation appears stifled and some seem distracted. Fifteen minutes into the class period, they listen to the song, but Dylan, James, and Jeff seem to be frustrated at the choice and are clearly not engaged with it as they had been for previous selections. Their facial expressions and body language communicate their unhappiness and resistance to the notion of playing “All Star.”

While the students listen to the recording, they comment on various sections.

Some students play chords along with the recording to understand the syncopated rhythm of the verse. The students struggle with the syncopated rhythm, but not the chords.

*This seems to be an evidentiary time where aural and visual modeling is making great strides towards the students learning the song. What would look extremely complicated on paper is sang and shown to each member of the group in a way that makes sense. I also notice that if Dr. Anderson tries to explain something without success, the students will turn to each other to gain more insight into what is happening.*

Joan and Kenny work together, vocalizing the names of the chords to each other as the song progresses. Dr. Anderson talks to the group about why the song was originally recorded in a different key and explains the reasoning behind tuning down a half step, to better adapt to the vocalists. Dr. Anderson asks Brian to demonstrate for the class the feel of the song and the chord progression with accents on beats two and four. James and Dylan are playing the acoustic guitars and rely heavily on each other (without Dr. Anderson's direction) to learn the chord progression. They play for each other, ask questions, and model strum patterns for the syncopated sections. Dylan says to James, "oh okay, I see what you are doing there, thanks" to which he retorts, "yeah, you got it now." The class vamps on the chord progression and it helps them to understand the somewhat unusual chord syncopation that happens rhythmically within the verse. As the group needs more direction, Dr. Anderson stops the recording and demonstrates on his acoustic guitar the way to play the syncopation. He plays it and emphasizes the accents with his voice.

As the guitarists have trouble with the C# diminished chord, Dr. Anderson makes suggestions on how each student can play it and each of them attempt his suggestion. He



explains the chord in a way that guitarists will understand, catering to hand and finger position rather than any explanation of chord tones or music theory.

*In this case, I can relate to how he is communicating what needs to be done. For a popular music guitar player, most relate best to descriptions of where to put their left-hand fingers with mention of frets and strings. If Dr. Anderson had spent time explaining the individual notes or anything more complicated, he may have lost their attention or worse, not gotten through to them in the most practically efficient way.*

Joan and Kenny, Dylan and James, and Brian and Jeff continue to work together in pairs to share knowledge. This rehearsal moves very smoothly and there is ample peer mentoring and knowledge sharing. Group cohesion is occurring with the new material. Dr. Anderson is facilitating this rehearsal, fixing problems as they arise but leaving plenty of learning to happen within student groups. He is listening to the students and giving them space but constantly assessing what is happening around him. The group continues to listen to and play along with the recording using it as a learning tool. Each time the group listens and plays, they get better at understanding the song's structure and its syncopation. As Joan gets tripped up with some of the lyrics, she looks to Dylan for help and he advises her on the correct rhythm. The group is progressing along as best they can with a song that is not familiar to them.

Kenny and Dylan cause dissension in the class when they comment that they do not want to play the song, but they continue regardless.

*I am noticing that student agency is present here as the students are starting to express their dislike of the song that had been put in front of them. I believe that originally, a student had picked this song, but I am not sure which one. I believe that it may have been Kenny, but I think that the group is becoming quite dissatisfied with the choice.*

Other students chime in with agreement. Dr. Anderson says, “let’s do the verse into the chorus.” The group gets ready and he counts them off. Dr. Anderson references the form saying there are only verses and chorus and no bridge. A student says, “let’s make our own bridge!” Before he starts, Dr. Anderson says, “let’s go over the C# diminished chord once more to help people get used to it.”

No students are interested in singing the song as the opportunity gets passed around to each one. I laugh when even I am asked if I want to sing but I politely decline. When the group finally runs out of suggestions of who can sing, they turn to another option, a different song titled “Perfect” (Sheeran, 2017).

*It seems that Dr. Anderson wants to keep his students engaged in what they are doing subsequently giving in to having at least a listen to the tune through one of the student’s phones. While the song “All Star” was originally selected by a student, I am intrigued as I see Dr. Anderson easily decide to transition out of the song the group had begun to work on. It makes sense to me that Dr. Anderson was able to pick up on the lack of interest in the song and moved on accordingly. The flexibility of the ensemble is reflected here in the quick movement to another selection.*

With too much time in between the song run-throughs, the students become restless. The group shows a sense of relief as they have moved on after the small rebellion that ensued over “All Star.” Dr. Anderson passes out capos and tells each guitarist to put them on the first fret of the guitar. Dr. Anderson demonstrates the song breakdown (without any papers or written music for the students). He says “G, E minor, then C, then D... G, E minor, then C, then D and the chorus is pretty much the same chords just in a different order.” Dylan asks Joan to talk him through the chorus chords again and she helps him out. Dr. Anderson walks around the class and helps some of the guitar players with the

chords as well. He convinces Joan to sing the song now. She is not thrilled about singing but tries her best for the sake of the ensemble. He says, “let’s take it from the beginning” and explains the progression to the bass player since he is playing without a capo. Dr. Anderson says to Brian, “the root notes here are not going to be the same for you since the guitarists are using a capo. If they are playing G, you are playing it one fret up on G#. If they are playing Em, you should be playing up one fret on F.” Jeff reinforces the notes to Brian after Dr. Anderson moves on to observe another group of students.

Throughout this rehearsal, students run into problems and then solve them in various ways. When Kenny has an issue, he asks Brian or Jeff for help. When Joan struggles with a vocal line, Lauren and Aaron help her. Every student has run into a problem during this rehearsal and has solved it by going to another student to ask for help or received help from Dr. Anderson directly. At the end of their allotted time, Dr. Anderson says, “okay we’ll do this song and “All Star” when we come back as well as “Waiting on the World to Change” (Mayer, 2006) by John Mayer.” At the end of the class, Joan and Dylan work together on their parts once more. The group discusses other possibilities like Nirvana’s “Come as You Are” (Nirvana, 1992) when they are all dismissed and wish each other “happy holidays” and “merry Christmas.” After I wish the students well, I congratulate Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone on a successful concert and wish them a restful break.

*I can tell that the group needs a break from their routine. The students are tired of being in class today but excited at the winter recess that is only an hour away. I think to myself how pleasant the group is towards each other. No students are aggressive towards each other, there is no arguing, and almost zero disrespectful*

*comments or attitudes. The group has a community that they have built, and the support structure serves it well.*

## **January**

### ***12<sup>th</sup> Visit***

After winter recess, the group meets for the first time in two weeks. The class starts slowly today as the return to school has put a damper on motivation. At the start of the rehearsal, three students are present, Dylan, Elizabeth, and Jeff. Dylan and Elizabeth sit next to each other which is unusual and begin talking about songs they will be playing. They speak about Ed Sheeran and Smash Mouth. They remark about not especially liking “All Star” but have become more inclined to play “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran.

*I notice that Elizabeth is more reserved than other students. Based on my conversations with Dr. Anderson, I know this reflects her personality and has little to do with the group. What I find interesting is how Elizabeth is more open to dialogue with her peers when it is within a smaller group, especially a one-to-one setting. As soon as another student walks through the door, she seems to close up and return to her usual place in the room.*

A few minutes later, Brian shows up with the electric bass and begins to set up. It appears that he may have taken it with him over break. Dr. Anderson instructs Elizabeth to grab the iPad to play Ed Sheeran’s “Perfect.” Dylan and Elizabeth laugh about programming the iPad after Dr. Anderson tells her he will help. Since Brian seems confused with the key adjustment, Jeff shows him once again on the bass where to place his fingers to make it work without a capo as everyone else is using one on their guitars. Brian seems a bit confused but figures it out with Jeff and Dr. Anderson who lends assistance as well. Brian looks at Jeff and asks him to explain one more time. Jeff and Brian are given a bit

more work here in that the chords have become harder to work through after being transposed up a half-step due to the key change.

Kenny and Aaron arrive late and are asked to get set up. The mood is very relaxed as students are getting back into their routines. Each student is having musical and non-musical discussion with their peers. I laugh as I hear yet another reference to the show *The Office* made by someone other than Jeff. Dr. Anderson calls for everyone to tune up and get ready to play the song “Perfect” in hopeful anticipation of Joan entering and singing. The class begins 15 minutes late with a full listen to “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran and a new addition, “Say it Ain’t So” (Weezer, 1995). Dylan and James help each other with the capos and pass the tuner between them as they continue to listen. In a change of pace, Kenny sits up front in the acoustic guitar row next to the student teacher. Kenny seems to gravitate towards a place in the room where he knows he can work with someone else. He is not concerned with sitting in the same location each time even though by default he is the group’s electric guitarist.

*Kenny seems to be the student who has the most acceptance of asking for and giving help to his peers. He does not hesitate to move around the room or flag someone down to give him a hand with a problem he is working through.*

Dr. Anderson asks Joan to put the song on to listen once more. As the class listens to “Say it Ain’t So” another time, James has a bit of trouble but receives help from Dylan.

*While I do not have much experience in the realm of student teaching, Mr. Falcone is taking on a very student-centered approach in this context sitting near the other guitar players and playing through the chords in the hopes that they are listening/paying attention to him.*

The class seems to still lack motivation which may be attributed to a combination of the holiday break recently ending and the slow tempo/energy of the next song, “Perfect.” While some students are eager to keep it included, others seem disinterested as it is a very slow and contemplative song which does not require much energy to play.

Some of the musicians are in productivity limbo now as the focus is on working through chords and guitar parts. As the guitarists work through the transitional part of the song, Dr. Anderson vocalizes the chords for the group to use. Aaron and Dylan work together to go through the transition part and Dr. Anderson counts off the group to give them a chance to perform without the recording. Dr. Anderson begins playing and the group follows. The students restart almost immediately and the following time, Aaron plays a fill to cue the group’s start. Students are discussing the form of the song as Jeff calls out from the back stating the correct order. Jeff is outspoken and funny but is not afraid of helping his peers. During the next take, Jeff is, in a way, musically mentoring from afar by helping Joan with the melody as she sings. He has a very good ear to be able to play the melody of the song. As she sings, Jeff is reinforcing the melody with his right hand on the keyboard. Her body language makes it apparent that she is listening to his playing and gleaning rhythmic and melodic cues from it. Joan does not wish to continue singing the song and passes the microphone to Kenny. Dr. Anderson comments that “the microphone needs to be a lot closer because we can’t hear you sing at all.” He continues by saying, “why don’t you both sing it together” and encourages Joan to now sing with Kenny to bolster their confidence and help each other.

*I think this is a great tactic that can help both students to find their confidence and bring more to the song. While they both may be quite shy in singing the song, together they may be less anxious and stressed to be in front of their peers.*

During the break, Dylan conveys a potential beat to Aaron demonstrated on the guitar saying, “try this” which he had not suggested prior. Dylan and Aaron have not interacted much up until this point, but Dylan is eager to share his opinion and suggestion. More energy is present as the group transitions away from a reliance on the recording.

Dylan and James continue to read each other’s guitar playing during the class as they are both situated next to each other playing the same instrument. They watch each other’s hands and communicate with non-verbal signals. Kenny takes a more prominent role in singing the song since the microphone does not seem to be picking up both students at one time. As Joan and Kenny both attempt to share a microphone, it becomes impossible to hear both students at the same time. The class reaches the solo section of the song and Joan remarks that Dylan should be playing the solo during this song. Dylan is asked to play the solo but says, “I’d rather play it if it were a rock song, but this is a pop song.” Dr. Anderson encourages him saying “you have to make it rock!” In a rare verbal observation of peer mentoring, Dr. Anderson says he “likes how everyone is helping each other out so that people know where to go.” He specifically references students helping others. The group has discussion surrounding who should take the song’s solo. Almost every single student gets offered a chance to play the solo and the lack of consensus is settled by Mr. Falcone who says he will play it but only for that class to keep things moving.

Aaron counts off and leads the group in with a drum fill. The students are not

interacting much now that they understand the chord structure and sequence of the song. The simplicity of the song provides a very shallow learning curve for the students to learn. Vocally, Joan and Kenny are getting a chance to help each other regarding where to enter, what lyrics to sing, and note passages. This is a new bond for this pair as there has only been one vocalist formerly. Joan and Kenny work with each other in a mutually beneficial way. They are thoroughly enjoying themselves while figuring out their parts. Dr. Anderson says next week they will go back to another song.

*I can see how hesitant Dr. Anderson is to return to “All Star” as the class was not very keen on practicing it before the holiday break. He is giving direction here to play the song but in a way that he takes an informal poll of how the class responds to his direction. While I am not sure where the group will go with the song, I can tell that there is a divide present in that some students are no longer interested in the song, but Dr. Anderson may not want to abandon the work they have already put into it.*

Dr. Anderson says the group should be coming up with ideas for new songs in the coming weeks as they prepare for the spring concert. Dylan and James mention doing a Metallica song as well as “Back in Black” (AC/DC, 1980). The rehearsal ends with group discussion regarding the musical tasks at hand.

### ***13<sup>th</sup> Visit***

Elizabeth arrives first to class and we exchange pleasantries. Like I had noticed previously with Dylan, Elizabeth is more open in smaller groups, especially in a one-on-one setting. With her being the only student in the class, she speaks up more than usual and much more casually. She expresses opinions and her personality is more revealing in this setting. When Dylan and James wander in, she closes up a bit and retreats to her



usual spot where she will play the iPad. Dylan and James sit down with their guitars and play “Come as You Are” by Nirvana before anyone else arrives. Elizabeth is on the other side of the room, so Dylan and James have adequate space to discuss their own agenda. Dr. Anderson tells me that the school’s administrators tried to pull Aaron, the drummer from the class due to a scheduling conflict, but he said Aaron would try to attend regardless. Dr. Anderson is frustrated with the school making the decision so late in the year not realizing their impact. Dylan and James help each other with tuning and during the opening riff of “Come as You Are” by Nirvana they ask each other “is this right?,” “do I go up here?,” “am I playing it right?” as well as “is this how you play it?” They discuss the song’s chords and ways to play them using various chord shapes. Dylan and James talk about the difference between barre chords and power chords and which ones they are using. This song was not given to them by anyone in the class, but something they were working through on their own. Two minutes into the class, there are three students present (Elizabeth, Dylan, and James). As I discuss my weekend plans with Dr. Anderson, students play the riff to “Day Tripper” as well as a song by Led Zeppelin. Elizabeth and James start talking about hip-hop, comparing it to poetry. The musical discussions and creation are abounding in the early stages of this rehearsal as the students move to a formal practice of “Say it Ain’t So” by Weezer.

Dr. Anderson says, “alright guys, let’s get rolling” to the small group as Kenny also comes to class late, in a daze. Joan wanders in behind him and picks up a guitar. Kenny and Joan discuss their exhaustion and tiredness. The class will practice the new song, “Say it Ain’t So.” Dr. Anderson asks Joan to sing the song, but she responds with

“I think Matthew is singing it.”

*I have heard the name Matthew only once during the group interview with the students. While I am unaware of who the student is, I am interested to see who they are referencing and who will be joining the group this late into the year.*

The remaining students enter and get settled. Joan asks James for the tuner to get ready. Everyone starts playing their instruments and warming up as Joan throws the tuner to Brian to tune his bass. The new student, Matthew, takes an active role in singing with the group. Students mention he was part of their group prior to my arrival. He is quiet and reserved, but eager to be up front as a vocalist and guitarist. The group is familiar with him as they are happy and eager to welcome him to the rehearsal with smiling faces and boisterous phrases like “hey, Matthew!”

Dr. Anderson discusses the key with the class and reinforces why Weezer adjusted the standard turning. He asks, “why do bands tune down songs?” James answers, “to match the vocalists” and he agrees, saying they like the sound more when it is tuned down. James explains it to Dylan as he becomes inquisitive after Dr. Anderson moves on to discuss another topic. The class gets excited when Matthew starts to sing. While the instrumentalists are looking at the chord sheet during their listening, Jeff says the notes are “E, A, G” to Brian when he asks what he should play. Students are listening to the song one half step down from where they will play it and are unable to play along. This is an interruption to their usual process for learning the song.

*Aural modeling is frequently used by the group. It becomes evident here when the group cannot play along with the recording, they are stifled in using experience as a learning tool to get closer to the time where they can remove the recording*

*as a helpful aid and play by themselves. I see frustration from the students as they are forced to sit idly and listen.*

Students quietly listen to the song as they cannot play along. When the solo section occurs, Dr. Anderson points and says “Kenny!” implying he will play it. Dylan immediately contends the notion as he wants to play the solo. He does not vocalize his discontent but says to James that he does not know why Kenny is playing it again. Since he did not speak up, Dr. Anderson is unaware that Dylan wished to play the solo. Joan and James advocate for him saying he should get a chance as well. Dr. Anderson says, “okay, we will figure it out later, let’s just keep moving along.” The ensemble gets caught in discussion regarding the difference in feel from the verse to the chorus when the chords remain the same. They discuss the verse of “Say it Ain’t So” and how it contains a reggae feel while the chorus is hard rock.

As Matthew arrives, Aaron breaks into a drumbeat almost identical to the recording to start the song. Dr. Anderson calls out the chords as they go through the harmonic progression. The guitarists look to their neighbors as they play to get informal and unspoken confirmation on their playing. They nod their heads and give inquisitive looks to each other when they are unsure of what they should be playing. Dylan and Mr. Falcone informally work out the chords on the guitar. As Dr. Anderson walks around to help some of the guitar players, he focuses on Kenny and then James to demonstrate the difference between E Major and E minor. During a vamp on the chords, Mr. Falcone helps Dylan to get the reggae feel down for the song. Other students model techniques for each other and help those that need assistance.

***14<sup>th</sup> Visit***

It is unseasonably warm outside for mid-January. I am treated extremely casually with friendly hellos and “hey, Mr. how ya doin?” The heat is pumping in the room and students are visibly warm. Students get settled when the bell rings. Lauren enters late and grabs a guitar and sits next to Joan. Joan mentions to Lauren that she “is glad to be playing guitar for this one.” Neither student has a problem reading the chords, but some pose more issues than others for Kenny and Joan. As Matthew is encouraged to sing loudly, he, unfortunately, gets very shy and misses his entrance during the first run-through. The band plays through the progression once more and Joan encourages him from afar to come in strongly.

*The relaxed atmosphere of the group leads to a very supportive environment where students give Matthew adequate space to feel comfortable with his entrances. While some ensembles may have stopped and directed Matthew as to the exact measures of where to come in, potentially increasing his anxiety, this approach aims to support him towards successful execution.*

Aaron says, “come in whenever you’re ready” to Matthew as they vamp on the chord progression.

I am continually encouraged by these high schoolers and their forgiving, supportive, and encouraging attitudes towards the situation of Matthew struggling with his entrances.

Matthew finds his place and starts singing. Before the chorus, the group returns to the beginning to get the verse solidified. As the rehearsal continues, Kenny gets frustrated, asking Joan for help on some of the more difficult barre chords.

Once again, Joan gives general encouragement to Matthew before he begins. She does the same when he ends the song after the chorus. Accountability and friendships are firming up as James asks Dylan “How’d you do with it?” to which he responds positively. Dr. Anderson asks Lauren to emphasize the upbeats of the chords in the verse and Aaron jokingly calls out “Let’s go, Lauren!” The class laughs with both students as they are clearly joking with each other. The ensemble starts the song again and gets through the chorus and back to the verse. The class plays the song very well for the first time through and completes the transitions well. They push through to the bridge but get tripped up and stop. Lauren helps Matthew with suggestions of how to sing and some notes that he can use. She does this while he is singing through non-verbal cues and demonstrations after the run-through has ceased.

The guitarists work together to mentor each other while the class is in between run-throughs. Dr. Anderson continues to help Elizabeth with the iPad as Mr. Falcone helps the guitarists with the complicated bridge. During another listen to the recording, Brian and Kenny discuss the entry points of the songs, including Aaron in the dialogue. They speak as a group and share what they know and their opinions on the music.

Dr. Anderson works with Aaron while Joan and Kenny discuss their guitar parts. Kenny mentions something about a chord in Spanish and Joan responds saying “I like it better this way.” It appears that he gave his opinion on how to play a chord, but Joan did not agree. As Elizabeth struggles with the chords on the iPad, Dr. Anderson walks over to help her and at the end of class, the students are energized with this new, fun song and its hard rock style. There is renewed excitement in their body language and enthusiastic

playing. At the microphone, Lauren plays around with the lyrics and as other students encourage her, Dr. Anderson asks her to sing next week.

### *15<sup>th</sup> Visit*

In the final rehearsal of January, the group meanders between finalizing song selections, not coming to a consensus. Dr. Anderson addresses the class to say they may not be doing the Ed Sheeran song but will be playing “Say it Ain’t So” and “Boulevard of Broken Dreams” (Green Day, 2004). Dylan and James are the only students present as class begins. Dylan says to James, “Say it Ain’t So?” asking which song they are beginning with. Dr. Anderson asks Dylan to get tuners for the guitars as Elizabeth arrives late, getting settled near the amplifier in the back with the iPad. The rehearsal begins quietly as Dylan and James tune. They discuss a song that James plays from his phone and the three students (Dylan, James, and Elizabeth) discuss an incident that happened the day prior, unrelated to music.

*The trio is consistently discussing musical matters that are tied directly to what they are rehearsing but also discuss their social lives and general interests. Their conversations are never consistently about the same topic but fluctuate greatly based on their moods and daily experiences.*

Dylan and James move on to discuss another song that the group is not rehearsing but speak to each other about it regardless. The usual rhetoric transpires regarding who will sing which song and potential availability of vocalists. This is a consistent hurdle for the ensemble. Jeff arrives to class and plays the drums before moving to the keyboard.

The class once again discusses who will sing the song and if Joan is present in school for rehearsal.

Joan and Kenny enter late, discussing whether Joan will play guitar or sing for “Boulevard of Broken Dreams.” Kenny and Joan tune their guitars and sit next to each other. The class is five minutes into rehearsal, but no formal practice has begun. Brian picks up the bass and Jeff is told he will play drums as Aaron is absent.

*I am not sure if Aaron was now permanently removed from the class for scheduling reasons or not. I can sense the frustration and extra work that Dr. Anderson is burdened with by the lack of consistent attendance, most notably the lack of a consistent vocalist. In this case, they are without a vocalist and a drummer and Dr. Anderson seems to be triaging to figure out what the best use of the class' time will be. Dr. Anderson is being extremely flexible and making the best use of the time but it is clear that he is somewhat exhausted from asking the same questions regarding the group's vocalists.*

Students inquire as to Matthew's whereabouts since he is singing “Say it Ain't So” which is delaying the start of rehearsal. The class works together to search for guitar capos and drumsticks. Aaron arrives to everyone's relief and asks for help since he cannot find a pair of drumsticks. Various students help in this endeavor. While they wait for Matthew, Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone show the class how to play the “in between” riffs of “Say it Ain't So.” They share knowledge of the guitar parts that make the sound accurate occurring in harmony with the main chords. Mr. Falcone demonstrates a riff from the song on the guitar. He talks about the riff and style to convey its importance to the class. This pedagogical technique works well in that he references fret numbers and fingers to use as opposed to notes and formal music notation. The guitarists listen and demonstrate a few times, working with each other to get the riff figured out.

*I can sense the unmistakable relief here in that the group relies on Aaron to be their drummer. He is a solid player and, as one might require from their drummer, the rhythmic backbone of the group. While most popular music groups rely on their drummer for accurate rhythm, cues, and style, Aaron does not disappoint them.*

There are four guitarists today and Mr. Falcone plays an active role addressing them in pairs. Once he moves away from the first group, Dylan and James work with each other making sure they have the right notes and positioning. Kenny and Joan work with each other as well once Mr. Falcone moves on.

*I think that it works well when there is more than one student on an instrument regarding working with their peers. While other students in the group can help each other as they are very talented, the matching instrumentation and proximity sets up the best context for this type of interaction.*

Elizabeth and Jeff, who are both playing keyboard parts have the potential here, but do not seem to interact much socially in the class. The class is learning very nonformally. The song is being broadcasted in the background as students learn their parts. Thankfully, the recording has now been transposed into the same key they are practicing it in.

Dr. Anderson suggests that the entire class sing the song in lieu of Matthew not being present. The students do another run-through while Brian and Jeff work together to help each other even though their instruments differ.

*These students are accomplished musicians as they can help each other even though their instruments are vastly different. Knowing that they are both guitarists as well helps to frame the situation.*

As the class discusses which song to rehearse next, Dylan and James point out a few of the chords on the song sheet to each other and play them in different positions to see which work best. Unfortunately, the students once again have too much time on their



hands as Mr. Falcone, the student teacher walks around and helps the guitar players. Students discuss getting chocolate somewhere as they get distracted more with each passing minute. The students deviate their attention from the song after roughly five minutes of not having specific direction regarding practicing or working with each other.

Conversation happens between Elizabeth, Aaron, and Jeff regarding notes of the chords and which ones they should play. Jeff inquires to Aaron what sound effect he should use on the keyboard. Dr. Anderson takes a back seat to the group and lets them work with each other and on their own with their parts. Dr. Anderson says “let’s take it from the top” once a bit of time has passed. To resoundingly large relief and applause, Matthew enters and is ready to sing the song with half the rehearsal time remaining. To maintain order, Dr. Anderson corrals the class and asks students to put away their phones. Dr. Anderson says, “let’s try to get those riffs practiced that we were working on.” He also says “okay, let’s go, come on. Matthew, count us in.” The run-through begins with Matthew standing up front, simultaneously playing guitar and singing. Dr. Anderson sits and helps Elizabeth once again with the iPad as the group plays the song on their own without aid of the recording. Through verbal and non-verbal cues, Dr. Anderson asks Aaron to play stronger and harder during the chorus section, which another student mentions “feels a bit flat.” He not only verbally asked him to do this, but as they are playing, he uses his body language to relay the emphasis that should be put into the part. Dr. Anderson is very animated to further communicate his ideas with Aaron.

Matthew has the song memorized which is very uncommon, especially since he is playing guitar and singing. He is not referencing any sheet music, chords, or lyrics.

During the bridge of the song, the chords are getting a little fuzzy for the other instrumentalists. Dylan and James look towards each other for help while Joan and Kenny do the same. Just after the run-through ends, Dr. Anderson asks, “what do we need to work on?” to which the students say the bridge needs the most help regarding the chords being played. Aaron also mentions that the “feel of the chorus could be bigger.” Dr. Anderson asks the guitarists what they are doing for the bridge to address the problem. He encourages Dylan and James to use the music and work with each other, which they do. The pair look to each other for help on the more unfamiliar barre chords for the bridge.

Matthew counts off for the group as the ensemble starts from the chorus to work on the transition to the bridge. The harmonies and chords are played more accurately for the bridge after students take time to play through it on their own. Dr. Anderson calls out “bridge” as the only direction during the run-through.

*I notice that during this rehearsal, Dr. Anderson is subtly managing the group with these types of small interjections. While he may have lots of ideas as to where he would fix problems or force stops so he can share something, he holds back and lets experience be part of the learning process. His focus is constantly adjusting when it comes to what students he is most actively listening to, but he does it in a way that does not bring attention to any particular student potentially causing them to be self-conscious.*

Matthew takes a lead role here from the front of the class, standing up with his acoustic guitar, while all the others sit. Students chime in vocally regarding the solo, what they must work on, and various parts they should be playing. Many students voice their opinions on matters and decisions are made as a group, not autonomously.

Brian says there “has to be more rock in the choruses” and the class agrees with verbal and non-verbal responses. During most of this rehearsal, Dr. Anderson sits back and lets the group control their own run-through of “Say it Ain’t So.”

*Matthew takes a leadership role in this song. While he may have defaulted to it as the lead vocalist, he is playing the part very well. He counts the group off, and his peers are looking to him for cues on sections and dynamic changes. Dr. Anderson has very much relinquished the stage to him as a sign of a democratic learning environment.*

Dr. Anderson is not concerned about the chords each student plays as they are well known to the group. Joan and Kenny as well as Dylan and James are interacting with each other both verbally and non-verbally as they play the verse into the chorus. The ensemble plays the chorus with more gusto, but they struggle during the bridge, especially as Elizabeth on the iPad sounds unsure of the chords to play. Dr. Anderson encourages Matthew to “really let loose” and get more volume. As soon as the song ends, almost every student gives Matthew praise on his well-executed singing and guitar playing. Elizabeth walks over to Joan to talk about a part of the song and they laugh together regarding an incident that transpired during the last run-through.

*I find it interesting to see that there is such a constant source of enjoyment throughout the group when they are working and helping each other. There is a social bond here that is evident.*

Kenny and Joan practice together as someone arrives at the door and interrupts the flow of the class. As the group ends their run-through of “Say it Ain’t So,” there are only a few minutes left in the class. Dr. Anderson asks Matthew to play one of his original songs for everyone and the whole group goes completely silent to listen to his instrumental guitar composition. After he concludes his performance and says, “I’m gonna put lyrics to it

soon,” Dr. Anderson says that the group will start with “Boulevard of Broken Dreams” by Green Day next week as they focused almost all of their efforts during the rehearsal on the song by Weezer.

## **February**

### ***16<sup>th</sup> Visit***

I realize that I am only going to be with this class for two more weeks. Dr. Anderson informs me that the class will be practicing a new song today, “Fly Me to the Moon” (Ballard, 1954) instead of “Boulevard of Broken Dreams.” Elizabeth arrives early and is told to grab the iPad for the rehearsal. She is the only student present as the bell rings for class to officially start.

*As I ponder the song choice here, I wonder if today’s rehearsal will stand in contrast to the ones I have previously seen as “Fly Me to the Moon” is considered more of a jazz song rather than rock.*

Kenny arrives late as well and meanders around the class with a rose as it is Valentine’s Day. I chuckle to myself as the group seems to feel very comfortable being themselves in this relaxed setting. Joan arrives close behind him and they enter the closet, grabbing guitars to play. In typical fashion, they sit next to each other and tune.

Joan and Kenny discuss personal musical favorites including various songs in the style of Gypsy Jazz. As Kenny plays a few riffs from a song, Joan asks him “how did you pull that off?” Kenny shows her the riff on his guitar. With only a few students present, Dr. Anderson says, “let’s go, we’ve got work to do today.” He informs Joan that they will be playing “Fly Me to the Moon” and he would like her to sing. The sheet music is more

traditional but has guitar chord charts written out above the staff. Dr. Anderson asks Elizabeth to edit the chords on the iPad and works with her to explain how.

*It is surprising to see that Jeff and Elizabeth do not work together during these songs as they are both playing keyboard instruments. This may be due to the pair not being as connected socially as other students in the ensemble. Jeff seems to be much more experienced as a musician and Elizabeth could benefit from his mentorship, but she does not seem to be reaching out for help from him but relies mostly on Dr. Anderson.*

Joan and Kenny sit next to each other looking through the music to “Fly Me to the Moon,” discussing what chords to play. Students have the traditional music in front of them as well as a guitar chord chart reference sheet to help them with the more obscure chords. Brian enters and receives the music to the new song from Dr. Anderson. Other students are staggered in their entrances to the class and proceed to get set up. Dr. Anderson says, “Let’s all take a look at the music and get used to what is going on with the chord charts, as well as the chords for the song itself. Some are a little bit unusual, so we’ll work through them together.”

Dr. Anderson says the students will be learning the guitar chord shapes first which are absent of actual notes. He walks the class through the interpretation of the chords as students work with each other to help explain reading the unfamiliar charts. They do their best to reinforce what they already know and clear up any confusion for their peers. Dylan and Brian work with each other to tune and get the chords understood correctly. Dr. Anderson gives a demonstration and without instruction or direction, Brian provides a walking bass line and Jeff provides a melodic accompaniment pattern behind the chords. Dr. Anderson says “you need to learn the shape of the chord” to the guitarists explaining

how the shapes are more trouble at first. He reinforces that they will be using barre chords without open strings on the guitar for “Fly Me to the Moon.” The students discuss amongst themselves the use of barre chords, understanding patterns and shapes, and where to put their fingers on the guitar to make certain harmonies.

During this song, Dr. Anderson does more formal instruction to explain these new concepts with new chords like minor 7<sup>th</sup> and major 7<sup>th</sup>. Dr. Anderson is speaking and instructing much more than he usually does.

*What I see here is a correlation between the unfamiliar song and how the students are learning. With the jazz song requiring more of a formal approach, Dr. Anderson is talking and instructing more directly as compared to previous songs. While this song falls outside of the type of music that I would expect to see with the band, the group seems to be into it. I am not aware if they know the song already or how it was chosen, but the group is operating a bit differently than I have seen them up until this point.*

Brian is well-versed in reading various types of music indicative of his performance of a walking bass line, while Jeff accompanies on the keyboard. As they are less familiar with these chords, Joan and Kenny sit close and take the opportunity to try to help each other. Joan explains the varying 7<sup>th</sup> chords to Kenny to help him understand. It is clear from the conversation that Joan is leading Kenny in the right direction to further his understanding.

Dylan asks Dr. Anderson, “what are we doing and what are the options for a solo in this song?” Unlike previous rehearsals, Dylan moves up to be in a row of three guitarists with Kenny and Joan as James is absent.

*I think Dylan has relocated because James is not present. Thanks to the relaxed atmosphere, he can move his seat to somewhere where he can be more productive and collaborative with his peers. Without James present, he is unable to collaborate with anyone next to him. This seems to be a salient aspect of the*

*ensemble, especially the guitar players, that students are eager to work with each other.*

Dylan calls out the chord progression as Joan works through a section. Mr. Falcone helps students to understand where chords occur rhythmically and harmonically but leaves them to work on their own. A consistent pattern emerges here in that the rhythm section gets more of a chance to work with each other as Dr. Anderson helps Elizabeth on the iPad. The three guitar players work more with each other as Mr. Falcone takes a step back to facilitate the learning of another group.

In typical fashion, Dr. Anderson brings the group back to order and saying, “let’s take it from the top.” Students are playing through the song instrumentally since no singer has been established. The class seems reserved since the style of the song may be unfamiliar. As I see Kenny ask Joan for assistance, she helps him without complaining or dismissiveness.

*Joan seems to be an important part of the process of peer mentoring here as she is seated in between two of the other students who appear to know less about the guitar.*

Kenny tells Joan that he “does not know what he is doing in the song” and asks, “are you able to help me here?” The chord changes move much faster than in the previous songs that the group has practiced and performed. Students are trying their best and paying attention but having trouble keeping up.

*I see that as soon as an adult is not standing over a student’s head, they get more of a chance to work with their peers and get answers from the mentoring that is occurring. It seems they feel compelled to divert their attention to the facilitator when they are in proximity.*

During the next run-through, Kenny has trouble focusing on the music he is supposed to be playing. Aaron gently calls him out and it seems to get him focused. He does this mostly through non-verbal cues and gestures. Dr. Anderson requests the guitarists “partner up to work with each other, help each other, and so that there’s a page turner.” As the guitarists play, Kenny gets lost and looks to Joan for help. She helps by pointing to various chord shapes on the page to help him reenter the song. Elizabeth has similar struggles with the song from the other side of the room. Some students are not continuously playing, and the group has trouble finding cohesion and enjoyment with this song. Students are frustrated with the song choice here and the amount of talking, contrasting what is usually a dominance of playing in other songs like “Day Tripper,” “Californication,” and “Say it Ain’t So.” At the end of class, students discuss what parts of the song they need to work on. They discuss the solo, chords, and form, as well as the lack of vocals during that rehearsal.

*While I do not see anyone being overly eager to fix the situation, the group’s lack of a vocalist seems to impede their progress and take away from the productivity of rehearsals.*

### **17<sup>th</sup> Visit**

I realize today is my last day observing the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band. I start by conducting a final interview with Dr. Anderson as we recount many of the positive experiences that we had throughout the five months I have been connected with him and his students.



*It is sobering knowing I will not be formally joining the group after this meeting. I have seen them grow and have felt like a genuine part of their interactions.*

As the bell rings, Jeff, James, and Dylan are getting their instruments set up. Jeff sits down at the keyboard and immediately starts playing. He is competent playing pop, rock, holiday, and classical music. Dylan and James sit next to each other again now that James is back in school after missing the previous rehearsal. Dylan is relieved to see him, and they strike up immediate conversation. After he hears they will be playing “Fly Me to the Moon,” Jeff makes a joke saying, “hey everybody, did you hear that the moon landing was actually a big hoax?” Dr. Anderson laughs a little but also shakes his head from side to side relaying the joke was very childish. He says, “good one, Jeff” sarcastically. James and Dylan look at the sheet music in front of them, discussing the complicated chords found within. After being absent from the previous rehearsal, James proceeds to ask Dylan about the parts they are playing. The group starts by rehearsing “Say it Ain’t So” after Dr. Anderson polls the class to see which song they prefer to start with. Everyone opts to play that song in lieu of “Fly Me to the Moon.” James and Dylan tune up and start working together.

*Their friendship seems to lend naturally to mentoring each other.*

Dylan mentors James through the reading of unfamiliar chords. Kenny, Matthew, and Brian walk into the room a few minutes later and start getting warmed up as well. Brian needs reminding of what the chords are but that remembers quickly as “Say it Ain’t So” is harmonically simple. Jeff speaks to Brian about which notes he should be playing where. They discuss the adjusted key and the guitarists’ use of capos. Kenny asks for

help from Dylan as well, which he receives. Kenny says to Dylan, “what song are we playing?” to which Dylan answers and shows him the chord sheet. Dr. Anderson says, “let’s all get closer to each other so that you can listen to each other and have a closer-knit experience” to which the group circles up.

In a booming voice for all to hear, Lauren says, “I forgot the chords, what are the chords?” as a few class members answer her, and Dr. Anderson reinforces their answers with “C#, G#, A, and E”. While the group is waiting, they are working with each other to get the chords understood.

*In this case, the group is somewhat unfamiliar with the chords C# Major and G# Major. I think most of the guitarists are unsure whether to play the full barre chords, playing all six strings, or to use the simpler power chords in their place.*

Lauren asks for the chords once more and her peers remind her as Joan points to a whiteboard that chords have been written on by the student teacher in front of the practice rooms. The group is relieved to see that Matthew arrives late for rehearsal and is ready to sing. Dr. Anderson counts off the group but allows Matthew to lead the entrance.

Matthew is not using any chord sheets, lyric sheets, or other written aid. He has the song memorized and begins playing to get the group focused and ready. Unfortunately, Aaron has yet to arrive, but Jeff covers the drum part. On this rare occasion, Elizabeth experiments with various sound effects on the iPad while she sits next to Lauren in the circle. They discuss sound effect choices she makes as the iPad outputs a strange sound. Lauren makes suggestions that are best for her to use and provides her with feedback and critique.

The group sets up in a circle as Dr. Anderson sits back, letting Matthew run the song at his own pace. Elizabeth is very pleased to find a fitting synthesizer/organ sound on the iPad. She plays the keyboard part that Jeff would have usually been playing if he were not playing drums. As they are in proximity to each other. Kenny asks Jeff and Brian for help and they reinforce the chord pattern to him verbally and by pointing to the whiteboard displaying the chord sequence. Kenny and Brian exchange words concerning the style of the bridge. At the same time, Jeff, Dr. Anderson, and Brian talk about “digging into” the chorus and “really leaning into it” to make it more distinct. So he is not the only one sharing knowledge, Dr. Anderson asks Matthew to demonstrate the chords and pattern of the bridge on the guitar. Lauren says, “show us the way” to Matthew, bolstering his self-confidence.

*This situation is evidence of how Dr. Anderson relinquishes his role as director to students when the opportunity arises. He enables his students to take leadership roles. They seem to take more ownership of their own roles in the ensemble when given these opportunities.*

Through verbal encouragement, students say Matthew is doing a great job. As the group starts from the bridge, Matthew has trouble finding his place, so Lauren sings the words as a helpful guide to the entrance. This rehearsal is filled with flexibility and movement. Aaron arrives late so Jeff seamlessly moves back to the keyboard for him to sit at the drum kit. There is no dialogue, just an understanding that Aaron had arrived so Jeff would head back to his usual spot. Matthew is standing next to another student. They are singing and playing together, laughing, and discussing various sections and what to sing. As Aaron gets up to stretch and walk around, other students help each other with the

issues of the day. The classroom phone rings and Dr. Anderson steps away for a minute. After the call, he regroups the class to continue the rehearsal after disruption from the main office. The guitarists work together while other students practice their parts in a group setting. To help facilitate the group and bring back order, Matthew counts off for the ensemble and everyone follows his lead. The iPad starts too loud, so Dr. Anderson helps to adjust it. Many of the students laugh and enjoy the mistake that drowns everyone else out, but they keep playing the song. Elizabeth and Lauren sit near each other, enjoying each other's company as they look to each other for confirmation on their performances.

*This late into the year, it appears that Elizabeth is gaining social momentum with other students in the group. James, Dylan, and Kenny sit next to each other and often exchange glances as to what to do. This seems to be a common non-verbal way of mentoring and interacting with each other. Non-verbal cues and interactions are commonplace in the class, especially as the group has gotten more comfortable with the song "Say it Ain't So."*

Dr. Anderson continues to take a more direct role in helping Elizabeth with playing the iPad. Since the group has yet to define the ending, Jeff asks, "what do we want to end on?" Brian volleys a suggestion of "E or C#" to which Dr. Anderson says, "it'll be a little dark on the C#." They collectively decide to end by playing an E major chord. The group decides to move on and play "Fly Me to the Moon." A new student, John is the singer today. Dr. Anderson says, "take out your chord sheets" to which Lauren asks, "What key are we in?" Other students pass her the music.

With mutual respect, Brian has a lighthearted musical argument with John and Matthew on a song that they were playing last week in another class.

*The brief interaction is interesting in that each of these students seem to be invested in their musical preferences and are not afraid to voice them in the classroom.*

Matthew takes a step back from the microphone for John to sing “Fly Me to the Moon.” Jeff asks Matthew, “is there a lead-in?” to which John says yes. Dr. Anderson encourages student leadership asking Aaron to “bring them in” on the drums. Matthew and John work together to get the microphone set up, commenting to each other as to where they will both start singing. Dr. Anderson and Aaron remark to the class that the song is too fast, and they restart at a slower tempo.

Dylan, James, and Kenny work together to practice the chords as they seem unfamiliar. To help the group, Brian and Mr. Falcone both call out the root notes as they go through to help Kenny and potentially the other guitar players. The harmonic changes are happening frequently here, and the group continues to struggle to keep up. The combination of unfamiliar chords and quick harmonic changes is becoming a roadblock for the group. There is more non-verbal mentoring and copying occurring as Kenny looks around to confirm he is playing correctly. Brian, Mr. Falcone, and Kenny look at the sheet music and talk about the form. The form and complicated transitions continue to be an issue with the group. To help, Jeff calls out “A, B, A, A, B” and Matthew repeats it on the microphone, so they all understand the basic form. Brian reaches out his hand to Kenny to help him finger the correct root of the chord. The proximity of these two students helps in Brian’s ability to mentor Kenny without it being a formal endeavor.

To gauge the opinion of the group, John asks, “am I coming in too strong?” Matthew and Aaron give him advice with his levels for singing saying “ya just a bit in the

beginning.” After a small break, Dr. Anderson playfully says, “okay, let’s go, we don’t have all day” bringing the class back to order as they stray away from productivity. Each of the ensemble’s members work on the complicated nature of the music. James and Dylan talk about the song’s difficulty as Dr. Anderson calls for another run-through of the song.

Jeff says he will figure out the ending of “Fly Me to the Moon” for the group. He proceeds to explain the ending discussing rhythm, chords, and a stop at the end. The song has a difficult harmonic progression, and the guitarists are all working with each other as Dr. Anderson sits back and allows them space to work without interjection. The class ends abruptly as the bell rings. The students talk about music, working with each other, and socially bonding. I quickly realize that my time with the group has ended. As I thank each of the students for their willingness in letting me join them for such a large part of their school year, they are off to their next subjects with discussion of a staff versus student soccer game and a bake sale happening somewhere in the building. I continue to thank and congratulate them on their progress, wishing them all the best for their spring concert. I say, “be sure to let me know where you guys are going to be playing for the rest of the year, especially for the spring concert” to which they assure me they will “keep me in the loop.” A bittersweet feeling washes over me as I head down the flights of stairs to the exit. I wish the security guards and the school’s principal one last goodbye, thanking them for their help in what I was doing.

**COVID-19**

The following Friday, the group met one last time due to the school closures related to COVID-19. The public arts festival performance at which the group had planned on performing, as well as the school's spring concert, never happened. Five of the seniors graduated and never played with the group again. I am hopeful that in time they will meet again and get a chance to play music together, but it may be unlikely.

While no one could foresee the devastating impact that COVID-19 would have on myriad issues in our world, this micro-context may serve to highlight lost opportunity that hinged upon the group all being present at the same location at the same time. While their spring concert never happened, I can imagine how it would have gone. To honor the lost opportunity, the following, fictional account is based on my experience, expectations, and observed trajectory of the group leading towards a concert that would have happened in May of that school year.

*Like the previous concert, parking is terrible! Now that the weather has warmed up, the air is stuffier outside compared to the cold evening of the winter concert. The schoolyard is crowded with parents, grandparents, and siblings of the modern band and choir students' families. It is touching to be back to see the group that I was so well connected to for so long. I have not observed their group in the last nine weeks when my study observations concluded. I am thrilled to get a chance to pick my seat once again before everyone else is allowed admittance. I mention that "I have an appointment with Dr. Anderson" to which I can search around for him and the modern band. I spoke with Dr. Anderson earlier in the day and the group was kind enough to let me know that they*

would be rehearsing in the classroom prior to the concert. I walk up the two flights of stairs, make my way around the hallway, and enter the room. I am touched by the heartfelt welcome I receive from the students and Dr. Anderson. I come to find out that the group is going to be performing four songs during this concert. They are "Say it Ain't So," "Fly Me to the Moon," "Perfect," and "Smells Like Teen Spirit" (Nirvana, 1991). I tell them I hope they all have a great concert and a blast performing! I make my way down to the concert hall and am thankful that my seat is still saved with my backpack and notebook which I brought to ward off any seat-stealers!

In contrast to the format of the winter concert, the choir performs first. Their beautiful singing as a large group and soloists set the stage for what I am sure is going to be a fantastic night. The choir finishes up and during the interim, the principal comes to the stage and congratulates them on a job well done and wishes all the seniors his best as they head off to college. The modern band sets up to a rousing applause as the attendees seem to know that the feeling is a bit different from one ensemble to the next. Dr. Anderson waits on the side of the stage making sure the group is ready. They start with "Say it Ain't So" and the group nails it. What I appreciate seeing most is that the group has come out of their shell and embraced letting loose on the stage. I remember them being more reserved during the winter concert, but things have changed. The song goes well, and I hear cohesion in the group through the clear distinction in the verse and chorus. I remember them working through that issue and I can tell that their practice has paid off. While there are a few small mistakes in the performance, I may have been the only one who noticed. "Fly Me to the Moon" is a good next song as it contrasts the hard



*rock and reggae feel of the first tune. I love seeing both John and Matthew singing “Fly Me to the Moon.” They trade off sections and have a great give and take in front of the group. The band plays through each section well, including a solo section that Jeff takes on the keyboard. Brian is walking a precision bassline through the chord changes. While I remember him doing well in practice a couple of months back, he has added many notes and made it his own. Throughout the song, only small issues pop up like the vocalists not keeping up with the tempo set by Aaron, but he is able to connect with them on stage through eye contact and they sync up. The non-verbal communication in rehearsals seems to have helped solve the issue on stage.*

*The group slows down the energy with their third song, “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran. As soon as the song starts, it seems that the crowd knows the song well as they start to hoot, holler, and cheer. While I remember Joan not being too eager to sing the song, it seems that she has come around to it after the group adjusted the key to make it a bit higher to accommodate her vocal range. While I may have not been able to tell this from hearing the key, I see the guitars put their capos on the third fret which gives it away. I remember the song being played with open chords previously, but the group seems to have adapted. Part of me wishes I had been there to see the exchanges happen in the group and how they helped each other to learn the new key. The audience connects with the song as many audience members sing along. The off-key singing of the audience does not seem to matter much as they enjoy themselves and it bolsters the confidence of the students on stage. When I first heard the group rehearse this song, I was unsure of the somber mood of the song being a good fit for the group, but the fact that it is such a*

*crowd favorite seems to make it worth their effort. The final song rounds out the evening perfectly in my mind. "Smells Like Teen Spirit" starts off strong. I am thrilled to see that Dylan has switched to the electric guitar for this song and has gotten a chance to shine as he had mentioned interest on a few previous occasions. As he starts off with power chords using a distorted effect, Aaron comes in strong with hits on the tom-toms and proceeds to let loose on the drum kit for the rest of the song. While some audience members may have been unsure of the song at first, they seem to be compelled into awe by the group's energetic performance. While the song does not include a solo section, the high energy throughout brings the crowd to their feet at the end. I am touched by the group's interaction at the end of the song and how they embrace each other and shake hands.*

*Dr. Anderson did not conduct the group but takes the microphone from Joan at the end to say a few words. He says that "this group has been working hard all year and their work has really paid off as you can see in this performance." He goes on to say that "five of these students are seniors and are going to be heading off to college in the fall. While none of them are formally studying music in college, I know that it will remain a large part of their lives for many years to come!" He goes around to shake hands with each member. The principal closes out the night with warm words and well wishes to the group.*

*I feel overjoyed to have such deep knowledge of the group's progress since October of last year. Since I know that this may be the last chance that I have to see this group all together, I make sure to connect one last time with each of the students and find*

*a way to compliment them each on their performance and progress. I make sure that the group knows how indebted I am to them for opening up their classroom to what I was doing. A bittersweet feeling comes over me once more as I head out to my car, knowing that for sure, I would not be coming back to see the group rehearse or perform at that location. The students may have been sharing similar sentiments with each other as for five of them, it was their last concert as a group at this school. As I drive away, I am thankful for having a chance to know them in the small capacity I was given, and I am filled with obligation to tell the story of the group for their benefit, the teacher's benefit, and the benefit of any other educators that may gain insight into what was learned.*

## **Review**

The accounts here serve to describe the interactions authentically. Throughout the time spent from October to February of this school year, many themes emerged. Dr. Anderson served as a facilitator in many capacities. He shared his knowledge with the group through modeling and led the students to learn through nonformal techniques. While he occasionally took on a more formal teaching role, his approach was relaxed and student-centered. The student autonomy present in the class allowed ensemble members to mentor each other, share their knowledge, and assist each other in various ways verbally and non-verbally. The student agency present in the classroom enabled students to develop as leaders and help their peers towards a better understanding of the ensemble's goals and general musicality. By design, the nonformal learning environment enabled students to bond socially in a relaxed atmosphere absent of judgment and formality present in most other classroom experiences in the school.

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE FACILITATOR

I have grouped emergent themes from data analysis into three parts, with a chapter on each. Those are: (1) The Facilitator; (2) Autonomy in the Classroom; and (3) The Students. Each of these three chapters draws data from both observations and interviews. This chapter focuses on the first of these. Below, I describe the group's facilitator, Dr. Anderson, and the influences he had on the group's formation and development. After providing context to the modern band ensemble specifically at Washington Ave. Arts High, this chapter is divided into four themes. Those are: (1) Navigating the Tasks of a Facilitator; (2) Aural and Visual Modeling; (3) Sharing an Educator's Knowledge; and (4) Learning through Experience.

The introductory section of this chapter highlights the type of ensemble that was crafted by Dr. Anderson throughout the year. This ensemble, defined as modern band, used student-centered repertoire and nonformal learning techniques through popular music and authentic instrumentation such as guitars, bass, drums, keyboards, music technology, and vocals. The first theme positions Dr. Anderson as a navigator who moved along a continuum of formal and nonformal teaching methods. Dr. Anderson would most aptly be defined as a facilitator of learning within the group rather than a formal director or conductor due to his democratic and student-centered approach within the group. There were also situations best handled by him making formal and unilateral decisions to keep the group focused and productive.

The second theme highlights the ways in which Dr. Anderson utilized nonformal learning techniques in his role as facilitator. Aural and visual modeling were key tenets of

how he provided instruction to the group. For many students, this was an accurate representation of how they might learn on their own and enabled learning to happen more naturally for the group. For the guitarists, visual modeling made the most sense as it mirrored how they would learn on their own and from their peers. The vocalists in the group benefited most from Dr. Anderson's aural modeling of parts they were singing or corrections that were needed.

The third theme shows how Dr. Anderson shared his knowledge with the group in ways that informed the students rather than directed them. He did this in ways that did not dictate that students change their approach but rather informed them of other options based on his own experience and knowledge. He did this in indirect ways with a relaxed approach. This tactic seemed to let students know that they were still part of the process and not simply being told what to do.

The fourth theme highlights ways Dr. Anderson created an environment in which active participation was a learning tool used in the classroom. He did this by stepping aside and giving students the room to operate on their own. Dr. Anderson walked the room as students learned from each other and interjected only when necessary. He allowed the students of the modern band to develop with each other rather than solely be the recipients of his direction. Before expounding on themes, I will set the scene of the modern band classroom.

### **This Modern Band Classroom**

In this ensemble, nonformal learning involved learning songs by ear and using some music notation – demonstrating a hybrid between informal and formal practices, as

noted earlier (Davis, 2013; Walsh & Straits, 2014). Students did not use written solo transcriptions, nor written out chord inversions, specific voicings, or other traditional examples of music notation. But the students did occasionally use lyric sheets they obtained online or from Dr. Anderson (without pitch notations), chord sheets (without diagrams), and one or two riffs (short guitar or bass passages) found written in tablature that were provided by Dr. Anderson or obtained from students using cell phones or printouts they brought from home. As Dr. Anderson incorporated popular music into his modern band class, peer mentoring, much like Lebler (2008) noted, was a key tenet of learning in this classroom setting. As Lebler (2008) also posited, the implementation of popular music in this classroom would be very difficult without peer mentoring.

At the beginning of the school year, the group concentrated their in-school rehearsal efforts on “Californication” by the Red Hot Chili Peppers and “Day Tripper” by The Beatles. Most of the analysis, discussion, and data surrounding this study focuses on these two songs as they were the primary rehearsal material from September to December, leading up to the group’s winter concert. Rehearsals in January and February were more disparate when it came to song selections as the group was in the exploratory phase of learning and experimenting with the repertoire for their spring concert.

When the group began learning a new song, students, such as Kenny (electric guitar) typically learned a riff, or part of the song, at home and then brought it into class to play it for their peers in the ensemble. Dylan, a more reserved acoustic guitar player, was able to play “Day Tripper” by The Beatles thanks to practice he had done at home with guitar tablature found online. When the ensemble was in a reconnaissance phase to

find a new song, it seemed that most students started their learning at home and then brought their skills and suggestions to the ensemble for refinement and showcasing or at a minimum, group discussion. Dylan was able to play the lead riff of “Day Tripper,” “because I [Dylan] learned the riff off of tabs and it told me what notes to play.” Riffs were commonly known to the group as small excerpts, often written in guitar tablature, that served as defining melodic material of each song, taking precedence over other harmonic parts. Students were given chord charts for both songs, which documented lyrics with chords written above them as well as simple notations as to how the intro, verse, chorus, and bridge were played.

Rehearsal styles in this ensemble were different from the more traditional classical guitar ensemble in which the same students participated with the same instructor. For example, the modern band ensemble would often begin with direction to start at the chorus, the bridge, or the solo. Neither the students nor Dr. Anderson ever referenced measure numbers, as the written music the students used did not include them. The group existed in a relaxed atmosphere inclusive of student autonomy and agency. The students served an important role in the group, but Dr. Anderson paved the way for the particular type of learning that occurred.

During this study, Dr. Anderson served as a teacher and facilitator who maneuvered between nonformal and formal roles with his teaching of the ensemble. This was largely due to Dr. Anderson recognizing that he was not the only source of knowledge, information, and experience in the co-constructed group, much as Green has noted (2002b, 2006, 2008, 2010). His teaching throughout the semester was primarily as

a facilitator where he shared his knowledge, encouraged students, and created an atmosphere where students had a voice in the learning process, aiding in the instruction and mentoring of their peers. His approach was relaxed, humorous, and light-hearted during most rehearsals. Dr. Anderson was trained as a guitar player and led the group in ways that may not typically be found in more traditional large ensembles like concert band or orchestra. He provided a supportive space for student-centered learning in a positive and enjoyable way. Peer mentoring happened organically in the group, thanks to his approach. As a multi-faceted musician, he could navigate the instruction needed for all the instruments in the group whether they were guitars, bass guitars, keyboards, music technology, percussion, and vocals.

### **Navigating the Tasks of a Facilitator**

Dr. Anderson operated on a continuum of roles. At one end of this continuum, Dr. Anderson took on the role of a formal director. In these moments, during his teaching, he made decisions without any consultation of the students in the class. These types of decisions usually involved making judgments about when to begin and end rehearsals and with classroom management, such as correcting improper behavior or attitudes. Dr. Anderson was a caring facilitator and as Crow (2004) pointed out, caring teachers “are reflective about both the teaching and learning process. They are involved in directing the learning process” (p. 66). Dr. Anderson stepped in when needed as a director rather than a facilitator of the group. Often, Dr. Anderson’s more formal instruction to the class was at the beginning of rehearsal. He prepared the rehearsal space for the students with room



setup that included putting chairs in correct places, having lead and chord sheets ready on the music stands, handing out guitar capos, and asking guitar players to tune as they entered the room.

If a student was absent from the rehearsal on any given day, Dr. Anderson modified the group setup and moved instrumentalists and vocalists around to better accommodate the group that was present for that class period. When he would provide verbal directives to the students, such as “can you play softer next time?” or “let’s focus on the instrumental section” he would often guide students towards success. He did this in a way that kept the atmosphere positive and free of judgment. He was clearly the one formally in charge, but he never overly exercised this in a demeaning or derogatory way positioning students as subordinates. Once rehearsals started, most students relied on him to keep the class moving along. When he wished for students to start the songs, he would begin with “let’s get going” or “let’s take it from the beginning.” The formal side of his instruction also included his role as the final decision maker when it came to transitioning from one song to another during rehearsal or bringing the group to consensus if they could not on their own. Through these types of decisions, Dr. Anderson created a secure space, void of chaos for the group. This aligns with Cremata’s (2017) observation that “facilitators create safe contexts for learning and conditions optimized for self-guided, self-directed, discovery-oriented, experiential education” (p. 64). Without Dr. Anderson’s understanding of how to navigate the group, the optimal conditions posited by Cremata may not have been present.

As rehearsals progressed, Dr. Anderson’s facilitation centered around keeping the

ensemble in the correct place if the students became lost during a tune. Dr. Anderson often remarked, “here comes the chorus” and “back to the verse” to give each student a heads-up on the upcoming section such as the chorus, verse, bridge, solo, or repeat sections of a given song. In these moments, he played a more active role in directing the ensemble. He would also casually call out chord names to keep the students aware of what they were supposed to play.

In other situations, when the chords that were listed were unknown to a student, Dr. Anderson would give them advice on how to best learn them or other chord options to put in their place. For example, when Dylan was struggling with the F Major 7th chord during “Californication,” Dr. Anderson suggested, “If the F Major 7 doesn’t work for you, try just playing an F power chord.” This approach was in line with suggestions made by Cremata (2017) who noted that perfection should not be the sole goal of the ensemble or each musician; the facilitator in popular music education is better seen as someone who helps students gets close to the musical standard of a song, but not overly concerned with perfection of the outcome. These facilitative tactics were mostly present in the early stages of learning a new tune and did not occur as the group became more familiar with the songs they were rehearsing. Dr. Anderson did not always interject but left adequate room for peers to mentor each other through the process of learning. Dr. Anderson also used the time during the first few rehearsals of a new song to make decisions about any modifications that were needed to make the song more playable and appropriate, such as changes with lyrics for this school-based ensemble or key adjustments mainly for guitarists and vocalists. In his teaching approach as described here, Dr. Anderson

exemplified the role of facilitator (Cremata, 2017; Higgins, 2012).

Throughout the group's practices and rehearsals, Dr. Anderson played a key role in adjusting musical aspects such as instrumentalist and vocalist volume levels, guitar and keyboard chord voicings, drum kit fills and styles, and solo decisions. While he seemed to have the final say in these matters, he always polled students for their opinions before making a final decision. As Rogers (1969) noted, this type of engagement and group decision-making can enhance learning for students, making it more relevant to them within a non-threatening environment. Through the support of student agency in the classroom, thanks to his facilitative approach, Dr. Anderson was able to ensure that the group's learning was relevant to their desires in both what and how they learned. This type of instruction may have reflected how students learn on their own outside of their school setting (Davis, 2013). He operated the ensemble in this democratic way to seemingly maintain low anxiety levels and keep students engaged in the decision-making process. In collaboration with students, Dr. Anderson also made decisions around solo opportunities including who would play them and how precisely they would be executed in relation to the recording the class had been using to learn the song. Other factors like ensemble volume during a solo would be occasionally adjusted as well.

In a November rehearsal of "Californication," while other musicians were working in peer groups, Dr. Anderson worked solely with the guitar players to identify and subsequently solidify the strumming pattern that they were all using. Dr. Anderson asked each of the four guitar players to demonstrate their strumming pattern choices and then they decided on which the group would use. When there were discrepancies or lack

of consensus, Dr. Anderson used a more formal approach and brought the group to agreement, whether or not the students were aware that such a decision needed to be made. Students like Lauren and Dylan who played guitar were very aware of Dr. Anderson's presence in the ensemble and Lauren noted that the help and guidance given from her peers and from Dr. Anderson was somewhat equal. She noted that she took criticism "both the same but I think of course Dr. Anderson's word is held more heavily because he's the doctor here." Lauren understood Dr. Anderson's role in the ensemble but did not solely rely on his direction throughout the year.

In times when students became distracted, Dr. Anderson intervened to return the group back to the task he had set for them to accomplish. For example, in one rehearsal, Dr. Anderson told two students to put their phones away, saying "let's try to get those riffs in that we were working on" to re-focus their efforts. While behavioral issues were very uncommon in this group, Dr. Anderson was the ultimate authority when it came to bringing the group back to order, maintaining respect for the school, himself, and students.

All students in this modern band were also members of a classical guitar ensemble that met in the same school and in the same rehearsal space with Dr. Anderson as the director. During one modern band rehearsal, Dr. Anderson utilized the first fifteen minutes to rehearse classical guitar ensemble pieces that the group would be performing for their concert three days later. This brief look into an ensemble that was directed by Dr. Anderson for the same students served to highlight differences in student behavior and rehearsal technique. When the students rehearsed more traditional classical music,

the rehearsal direction became more formal and teacher-centered. In turn, this more formal atmosphere led to less peer interaction and required more teacher-led direction and instruction.

Sharing knowledge and teaching-styles in this more formal setting contrasted those more typically found in the group's modern band rehearsals. During a pre-concert rehearsal of the classical guitar pieces, Dr. Anderson was much more rigorous in his direction, noting specific examples of measures to start from, accents to play, phrasing, and left-hand fingerings to be aware of and adjusted. The conversations between students were sparse during the rehearsal of the more formal classical pieces. As students warmed up to play the classical pieces, the usual jovialness was absent as they concentrated more on the traditional staff music in front of them and listened attentively to the direction of Dr. Anderson. There were no audio recordings being referenced from the one classical ensemble rehearsal that I observed. Regarding the classical pieces, Jeff who was a competent classical guitarist said, "you have to really pay attention so you don't miss the dynamics and all the little pieces that put it all together."

Peer mentoring and interaction were largely absent during the classical guitar rehearsals. During these more formal practices, Brian remarked that Dr. Anderson got "more serious and stressed out" noting that the concert being so close called everyone to prepare even more diligently. Joan also noted that Dr. Anderson gave more direct instructions such as "you guys have to work on this part and each section here" and agreed that Dr. Anderson was more in control and the decision-maker was "up there," referencing his physical location in front of the group. Dylan, a quieter guitar player in

both the classical group and the modern band noted that during classical guitar ensemble rehearsals the students did not really talk much, and it was a different feel. A quietness surrounded the group for these rehearsals as students listening to Dr. Anderson trumped group discussion and democratic decision-making.

In his own experience as a professional musician, Dr. Anderson participated in a classical guitar ensemble in New York City with a more formal conductor. Dr. Anderson referenced this experience as a model for how he approached teaching the classical group, saying that:

The conductor comes to rehearsal when the downbeat is going to start at 7:30. He [the conductor] walks in at 7:30, goes to his podium, says “get our such and such” and he coaches us like “we need to hear this part more” and he teaches us how to make the music better and not asking our opinions on anything. It’s a different approach, you have to play it as written.

While he acted as a facilitator for the group, there were times when even during the modern band rehearsals that formal teaching practices were more prevalent. During a winter rehearsal of the jazz standard “Fly Me to the Moon,” the students were evidently more frustrated with the excessive explanation of chords and the lack of music participation. In this instance, the playing was limited, and the formal instruction increased with more explanation and inquisition from Dr. Anderson to students asking questions such as “what is the next chord after A minor 7?” and “let’s go through each chord and make sure we play it correctly.” Dr. Anderson was aware of this contrast as well, affirming in an interview that the “student interaction was extremely limited during these times.” Lauren, a well-established classical guitar player, mentioned that she found

the atmosphere during the classical guitar rehearsals to be “much stricter and more formal since the music wasn’t as relaxed as the rock songs.”

The contrast in rehearsal styles between the typical modern band rehearsals and that of the classical guitar ensemble and the jazz standard, “Fly Me to the Moon” was evident. Through observations and interviews, I found that peer mentoring did not have as much of a presence in the latter rehearsals, due, in part, to the unfamiliarity students had with the music. “Fly Me to the Moon”, as a jazz standard, seemed to not leave as much room for peer mentoring due to the lack of experience students had with many of the chords and the shift in styles from previous, more rock-based, songs. As the genre shifted away from what students were familiar with and the teacher-centered rehearsal methods increased, opportunities for peer mentoring and subjective interpretation seemed to be directly impacted. While Dr. Anderson most aptly identified as a facilitator of the group, times where he was directing the classical guitar ensemble and during rehearsals of “Fly Me to the Moon” appeared markedly more formal.

### **Aural and Visual Modeling**

During the modern band rehearsals, Dr. Anderson utilized teacher-led modeling to demonstrate what to play, when to play it, and the various techniques that were to be implemented in student practice and performance. He incorporated nonformal learning strategies within the classroom, where, pedagogically, modeling was considered first and written music second (Green, 2002b). Dr. Anderson used modeling to not only develop students’ aural skills, but to also expedite the learning process regarding complicated rhythms, riffs, timings, vocal lines, and entrance points. He consistently used modeling as

an instructional tool in rehearsals. The modeling from Dr. Anderson was demonstrated both aurally and visually during each rehearsal. Through this, students were exposed to ways in which they might in turn mentor their peers through similar modeling tactics.

In the early stages of learning a new song, the class relied on aural modeling from Dr. Anderson. During rehearsals of “Californication,” Dr. Anderson would often start each class by saying “let’s take a listen to this song again” or “let’s begin by hearing the different sections of the tune” and would proceed to play an audio recording of the song for the class. Listening to recordings was a common learning tool used in the group when they were in the early stages of rehearsing a song as a group. Dr. Anderson played audio recordings of songs to the students to convey an understanding of where various sections transitioned to others as well as how individual instrumentation played an important role in the song. During these initial listens, Dr. Anderson would call out things like “listen to this part coming up” and ask thought-provoking questions to engage the students to actively listen to the songs. By harnessing and refining skills of modeling by ear, students not only approached learning popular music more authentically (Green, 2002b) but also developed skills necessary to help and be helped by their peers. Aural modeling of studio recordings may have in turn aided in skills necessary for mentees to fully grasp ways that peers would mentor them later on. Aural demonstration was a common tactic that peers used to mentor each other musically in the group.

In the early stages of aural modeling, students would often follow along with a chord and lyric sheet to understand the harmonic progressions of each song and where sections like verse, chorus, and bridge would occur. In these primary stages of learning a



new song, Dr. Anderson emphasized musical qualities such as dynamics, melody, harmony, rhythm, tempo, and accents through guided listening of studio and live recordings. For example, when introducing “Californication,” he said “take a listen to the opening of this and try to get the tempo down” to Aaron, the group’s drummer. Aaron was usually able to listen to a song and recreate the drum beats almost identically to what he was hearing. While it was not measured, learning by ear may have been a common learning tool that Aaron used for his role on the drums. These same types of modeling occurred for learning the tempo of “Day Tripper” when the class strayed from the intended pace. For vocalists like Joan, Dr. Anderson would sing the melody of “Day Tripper” or “Californication” to help her know where to come in, what to sing, and how to sing it stylistically. Joan was a competent vocalist but relied on this type of instruction from the group’s facilitator to bolster her confidence. Joan seemed to learn the songs well by repetitive listening during the ensemble’s in-school rehearsals.

During an early fall rehearsal of “Day Tripper,” Dr. Anderson demonstrated specific accents on beat one of each measure of the verse by accenting the melody in the way he sang the song as well as in his guitar playing. Once again during that rehearsal, Dr. Anderson aurally modeled the growing intensity of the bridge of “Day Tripper” by singing the “ahhs” with increasing volume and effort. Dr. Anderson showcased the growing intensity with his voice, body, and emotional outpouring of energy much like The Beatles’ original recording. These types of aural demonstrations modeled various musical traits for the students in the ensemble. Implementing these informal learning practices helped to diversify and differentiate the ways that students could learn (Jenkins,

2011). During another rehearsal of “Californication,” Dr. Anderson chose to not write the chord accents and rhythm down but opted to call the chords out and play the rhythm on his acoustic guitar for the other guitarists to follow. These types of aural demonstrations and modeling were common for students. By demonstrating how to aurally model for the students, Dr. Anderson was providing them with tools they could use when they mentored their peers in the group.

The students relied on chord sheets which diagrammed the coinciding of lyrics and chords, but made no mention of exact rhythm breakdowns, strumming patterns, or melodic movements. As described by Clauhs et al. (2020), this represents an authentic approach to learning popular music within school settings. Dr. Anderson relied very heavily on the audio recordings as well for both a model and a guide to how the songs would be performed. If students were playing a song in a key that differed from a recording, Dr. Anderson would adjust the key of the audio recording to match what the students were playing to not misguide them in their practice as aural modeling was a crucial part of the learning process within the ensemble. If the group was not provided a recording in the key they were performing the song in, they may not have been able to utilize it as a practice tool. During the ensemble’s rehearsal of their classical ensemble pieces, and as the music became more traditional in one particular rehearsal of the separated classical ensemble, the aural modeling decreased as students were more focused on the sheet music provided to them and no reference to recordings was made.

As student knowledge of the song’s form and harmonic breakdown increased and progress was notable, Dr. Anderson encouraged the ensemble’s members to listen

intently and continue to play along with the recording as they were learning their parts. When a rehearsal would go astray, Dr. Anderson utilized aural modeling as a reinforcement tool and remarked, “let’s take another listen to the form to get the tune down” in order to help the students learn each song, or commented, “everybody stop, let’s hear it again.” If the group could not come to a consensus regarding a particular aspect of any song, Dr. Anderson would bring back the recording for the group to reference and re-frame the discussion. As noted, these occurrences decreased as the group moved closer to being ready for a performance. This type of approach created space for peer mentoring to occur. By communicating to the group that there were multiple influences on the group’s construction, Dr. Anderson relayed (albeit not directly) to the students that he was not the only decision-making influence for the co-constructed group. Not only did students harness their aural skills, but they also were honing the skills needed to pick up on any modeling that may have come from their peers later.

Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone, the group’s student teacher, also used visual modeling as a pedagogical practice. Throughout the year, visual modeling was a key component in the instruction given, very much akin to how aural modeling was used. In many cases, guitar hand positions were modeled visually by Dr. Anderson regarding playing rhythms, chords, and melodic phrases. Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone used this type of modeling as they were aware this matched how students often learned music on their own. These instructors implemented diverse approaches, as noted by Green (2010) and Jaffurs (2004), which aided in helping to reach the breadth of learners in their classroom. Both Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone were primarily guitar players and used

the guitar as their main instrument for music instruction and demonstration. Often, they were both found working with students, asking them to look at their guitar noting either left-hand positioning or right-hand strumming patterns.

During the initial stages of learning the main riff for “Day Tripper,” Dr. Anderson said “guitarists, look at me for the left-hand fingering for this riff, it’s really important” to convey the significance of using certain fingers over others. Both Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone gave frequent demonstrations to the class of best practices with chord shapes, chord choices, and left-hand positioning through visual modeling. The group relied more on this type of visual learning rather than any kind that could be written on paper for the group to reference. Visual learning was all done through modeling and phrases such as “check this out,” “use this finger on that fret,” and “watch me for this part” by Dr. Anderson. In these cases, aural modeling was present but the visual component that dealt with the tactile and logistical execution of the music was given due priority.

In other cases, visual modeling was represented in the classroom when Dr. Anderson showed the keyboard player, the bass player, and the drummer what to play, rather than simply speaking direction to them or having them listen to what they were supposed to be playing. This tactic of guided involvement helped to highlight the multiple ways that students could learn within the classroom both from the instructor and from each other (Rogoff et al., 2016) as part of the informal learning environment. In one rehearsal, Dr. Anderson asked Kenny if he knew how to palm-mute on the electric guitar. When Kenny responded that he was unsure what he meant, Dr. Anderson responded with “here, let me show you,” and walked over to Kenny and visually modeled it for him on

his acoustic guitar. During this instance and others, the visual modeling tactic was one that was utilized when Dr. Anderson had a limited amount of time in the rehearsal to walk students through each step of the process and provide potentially impractical information that would not serve the immediate task or goal of playing music. For Dylan and James, as acoustic guitar players, Dr. Anderson often moved into close proximity to them and made sure they could see the demonstration of chords. In a similar setting at the end of a winter rehearsal of “Californication,” Dr. Anderson walked up to Dylan, played the chords for him, and asked him to “watch me” to better understand what to play. In turn, during peer mentoring instances, students (especially guitar players) utilized visual modeling to help aid each other in what to play on the instrument. These tactics may have been important for Dr. Anderson to demonstrate for the group so that they could be utilized in a peer mentoring setting as well, giving students adequate ways of communicating their ideas and advice to each other.

### **Sharing an Educator’s Knowledge**

Dr. Anderson was a competent instructor and made sure that his students felt accepted and connected with their own learning. He accomplished this by sharing his best practices regarding what to play when and where, as well as what he felt the best approach would be to learning the music they were rehearsing, similar to approaches posited by Crow (2004). In his role as a facilitator, Dr. Anderson chose to relay information in a more informal style of sharing knowledge from teacher to student without strict guidelines and mandatory implementation. He never demanded students learn in certain ways or exercised his ultimate authority to command students to operate

in a particular manner. This approach seemed to make the most sense as students may not have responded as positively to any type of exacted or prescribed learning styles. In the modern band settings, Dr. Anderson did not demand or require the ensemble's members to approach their learning in a specific way but shared his knowledge with the students in ways that demonstrated the mutual respect the group had for each other. He was open to learning from students and often invited students to share with one another. In doing so, he relayed to his students that their opinion was being considered as well. Dr. Anderson relied on the students and vice versa. As noted earlier, Rodriguez (2009) claimed there can be a potential power struggle when a teacher gives up some control over the classroom and students enter into the decision-making process. Dr. Anderson, however, seemed to find an appropriate balance of power within the space. This affirms the recommendations of Clauhs et al. (2020) who noted that students and facilitators should work with each other to determine repertoire for their popular music ensemble.

In an early fall rehearsal of "Californication," Dr. Anderson consistently shared his knowledge with the ensemble's members in many ways. In one instance, Dr. Anderson walked the guitarists through possible strum patterns that they could use for their performance. He did not demand they use those specific strum patterns, but instead showed them options they could utilize. He explained the patterns, demonstrated them for the students, and gave them room to experiment and learn. This, in turn, created space for peer mentoring to exist. Had Dr. Anderson dictated a particular pattern, there would be no context or impetus for peers to mentor or look towards each other for direction.

In many cases, Dr. Anderson engaged in conversation with ensemble members.

Concerning the tempo of “Californication” in a later fall rehearsal, Dr. Anderson stated to Brian (bass guitar) and Aaron (drums), “watch out you guys aren’t slowing down there” in an attempt to share his knowledge instead of making a demand for a specific tempo. In the same rehearsal, Dr. Anderson and Aaron engaged in a relaxed conversation concerning the overall volume and the level of the drum kit in comparison to other instruments in the ensemble, mimicking a conversation that one might normally see between colleagues. This type of interaction created a culture of peer mentoring for the group as Dr. Anderson ensured that students felt comfortable engaging in critical discussion surrounding the group’s direction and decisions with any member, including himself. In this case, Aaron may have felt empowered to have his voice heard which may have influenced his willingness to engage in similar discussions with peers.

Concerning the ensemble’s main vocalists Joan and Kenny, knowledge sharing was evident when Dr. Anderson sang along with the vocal lines. He did this to help guide them, but he did it in a way that did not make it known that they needed assistance. This was also the case when Dr. Anderson walked around the rehearsal space and helped students with certain incorrect chord shapes, suggesting they should try playing it a different way as opposed to the way they had been attempting it. Less experienced guitarists like Gabriella and Dylan were often recipients of this type of knowledge sharing when guitar chord fingerings presented difficulty. Jeff (keyboard), Brian (bass guitar), and Aaron (drums) were part of these types of exchanges when keyboard chords were problematic, a bass riff needed tweaking, or a drumbeat needed slight adjustments. Dr. Anderson left plenty of room for students to explore their own learning and creativity

independently and through peer mentoring but shared his knowledge with them when pertinent.

When Dr. Anderson served as a facilitator of learning in the group, he shared his knowledge in indirect ways. Dr. Anderson remarked that:

I just try to be more of a model. Like, when I just sit with the ensemble and sit with them and when they need something I am there or if they want to look over and see what I'm doing, I'm there.

In many instances, Dr. Anderson helped many students with this type of facilitation, such as when he assisted Kenny with a difficult C# diminished chord on the guitar. Not only was Dr. Anderson modeling the ways in which students could refine their musicality, but also modeled how to engage in mentoring. In similar settings, he audibly named the chords of a section for Dylan when he asked for assistance and continued to work with Elizabeth when she was learning how to use the keyboard settings on the iPad to formulate more difficult chords, being a novice iPad user. Since this was an unfamiliar chord for the group, Dr. Anderson then talked through how the group should handle the chord and had each of the guitar players attempt to play it. In these settings, Dr. Anderson stepped in when necessary, but did not stifle the student-centered learning, like the findings of Cremata and Powell (2017) who advocated for teachers to step back from having a hand in every interaction within the group. Dr. Anderson shared his knowledge in a way that the guitarists understood, explaining potential fingering, fret positioning, string choices, and hand positions. Not only was he modeling the ways in which students could refine their musicality, but he was also modeling how to engage in mentoring.

A similar interaction occurred during a rehearsal of "Day Tripper" by The



Beatles. This time, a problematic B chord presented itself for the guitarists. In this context, Dr. Anderson walked the guitarists through the possibility of playing a B5 or what he then referred to as the more commonly known B power chord to fill out the harmony. Dr. Anderson remarked, “if you don’t want to play the full B chord, try just playing the power chord over three strings.” James had a similar issue with an F# minor chord, and Dr. Anderson explained how an F# power chord would suffice instead as it is a common replacement for other chords (Clauhs et al., 2020).

Dr. Anderson shared his knowledge with the ensemble members during every rehearsal. In many cases, he did this through demonstration and modeling, much like students could do with their peers in a mentoring setting. In an early spring rehearsal of “Say it Ain’t So,” by Weezer, Dr. Anderson worked with Aaron (bass) to help him understand that while the guitarists used capos to alter their chords to match the key of the song, the bass notes would differ as it was not typical for a bass player to use a capo, nor was it practical. For Aaron, Dr. Anderson explained this concept in a way that shared his knowledge of what was occurring rather than simply giving instruction on where to play the root notes of the chords to match the guitar players and the adjusted key. On another similar occasion, he explained to Kenny that an electric guitar solo he was playing may not sound exactly like the recording because their ensemble would be performing the song a half step higher. Dr. Anderson explained the rationale for this to Kenny in a way that made sense to him and accomplished the task of sharing the knowledge of what was happening rather than simply giving instruction and direction without explanation. By relaying relatable information to Kenny, Dr. Anderson was once

again demonstrating how to best enact peer mentoring if he were to engage in it himself. He kept both the information and its delivery relevant to the learner.

Dr. Anderson often took time to explain musical concepts to the ensemble. This included the reasons for overall song difficulty (chords, form, rhythm, tempo, etc.), rationale for alternate tunings during recordings, harmonic patterns to be aware of during each song, as well as the relative keys when using capos on guitars. In certain instances, during rehearsals, this type of knowledge transfer came in the form of small sectionals with instrumentalists. In one rehearsal, Dylan's close peer, James, was absent from class. In this setting, Dr. Anderson sat down with Dylan to help him work through a difficult barre chord on the guitar since the usual peer mentoring between the two students was not occurring. Both Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone often worked with two or three guitar players to walk them through harder sections, more difficult harmonic progressions, and other musical aspects like strumming, accents, and pertinent rhythmic issues.

It was clear that peer mentoring was an important part of learning within the group, but it was not the only method of teaching and learning in the ensemble. While the ensemble was in the formative stages of learning a song, Dr. Anderson often shared his knowledge of song form to help guide the students to understand where changes like verse, chorus, and bridge occurred. The ensemble members recognized Dr. Anderson's deep knowledge of the subject area. Regarding the correction of mistakes, Lauren noted that she would "want to hear it from Anderson and we go to him for help because he knows all that stuff." For Kenny, when it came to being corrected, he noted that "I'd like to have help from the teacher rather than from the student. I get shy kind of quickly

around people with friends, so I'd sometimes rather have Anderson's help." Joan, the group's main vocalist, mentioned that when it came to ever getting help "Anderson will be like, oh you're sharp and he'll bounce that off me and I'll go with that."

These types of explanations from Dr. Anderson helped to bring together formal and informal learning practices as Ho (2014) mentioned to be a crucial way to bridge the gap between the music students listen to on their own and how they learn in schools. In a specific setting where Dr. Anderson shared knowledge on a subject with Joan, he explained the correlation between the microphone's placement and the volume that needed to be exerted from her voice. He did not demand that Joan put the microphone in a specific spot, but rather explained the concepts for her to better understand what was happening. Dr. Anderson possessed a wealth of knowledge that was beneficial for the ensemble. Though only one student (Kenny) explicitly said that he preferred help from Dr. Anderson as compared to that of his peers, other students recognized that Dr. Anderson's experience and knowledge was important. Therefore, while peer mentoring held a crucial place in the ensemble's construction and formation, more direct teaching and learning were also utilized.

### **Learning through Experience**

By giving students the opportunity to learn through experience, Dr. Anderson embodied the role of facilitator, incorporating certain tenets of nonformal learning, reflecting ways that learning occurs outside of school settings (Higgins, 2012). He used these situations to help guide students and often left them to figure out musical issues on their own and work through musical parts with peers. As noted by Clauhs et al. (2020),

“the music teacher must also negotiate when to inject themselves in the rehearsal process, and when to step back and allow the students to collaboratively solve problems” (p. 4).

Dr. Anderson did this by using most of his instructional time walking around, observing and correcting, gently, as needed with various members of the ensemble. In one early fall rehearsal of “Californication,” Dr. Anderson chose to let Kenny, an electric guitar player, work through an important guitar solo on his own during the class and helped only briefly as Kenny gained experiential knowledge in formulating the right phrasing and note choices. Kenny was often somewhat reserved in his demeanor both musically and socially during the class. He had significant experience on the acoustic guitar but was newer to the electric. In this situation, as he often did, Dr. Anderson chose to facilitate and guide Kenny rather than stand over him and fix every wrong note that he played.

Joan knew this type of looser instruction was important to the ensemble’s learning. She noted that:

It’s good, because at the end of the day we’re not always gonna be in school and he’s [Dr. Anderson] not always gonna be there for us, so we kinda need to learn how to be more independent because in life there’s not gonna be someone there to always say you have to play it this way or that way.

For Gabriella, a novice guitar player, there was a stark distinction between how this modern band operated in contrast to her math class. She said, “in those classes [math], it’s more focused on the teacher. You can’t really interact as much as you can hear [referring to modern band].”

Dr. Anderson was aware of his approach to facilitation and reflected that “I guess a teacher should set some parameters so you have some control in the classroom, but also

give the kids choice like how they may want to interpret it or maybe what instrument they want to play.” The autonomy in the classroom that was evident from observations and through interviews provided a context that allowed peer mentoring to occur. Dr. Anderson often left interpretation up to the students which enabled them to mentor one another. He added, “a good teacher these days facilitates these experiences as opposed to leading them.” It was clear that Dr. Anderson knew students would gravitate towards learning with each other as he stepped out of the formal leadership role, much like was found by Campbell (2001) and Shah (2006).

In many rehearsals, Dr. Anderson walked around the room playing his guitar with the group while discreetly guiding students in their learning. In a way, having an instrument in his hands and playing along may have kept the students from feeling like they were being observed and critiqued by a formal teacher. He left room for the students to work on their own. This was due to his physical placement in the room and in the way he gave correction, direction, and suggestion. In one instance during a winter rehearsal of “Day Tripper,” Dr. Anderson made sure that the guitarists in the ensemble had adequate time dedicated to working through the chords on their own and together through peer mentoring while he and Mr. Falcone played along with the chords to demonstrate ways they could approach practicing. When Dr. Anderson was engaging with students, he mentioned to them phrases such as “try putting your hand here” to aid the guitarists’ left hands and “work with each other to get that part down” as a way of facilitating the group’s learning and to explicitly encourage peer mentoring.

As Dr. Anderson integrated himself as more of a member of the ensemble, he was

able to facilitate and guide in casual and unobtrusive methods. It was clear that he approached the ensemble and its students with care and foresight since he possessed a deep amount of experience and knowledge (Crow, 2004). For Aaron (drummer), Dr. Anderson would nod his head to imply a certain rhythmic suggestion while leaving space for him to explore the direction on his own. For the acoustic guitar players, James and Dylan, Dr. Anderson would often sit among them, playing through the guitar parts as one of the ensemble's members, rather than its director. As the ensemble became more comfortable with any given song like "Californication" or "Day Tripper," Dr. Anderson was able to take a more backseat approach to the ensemble's rehearsals. His interjections became very few as he played along with the song on the guitar, watched as an onlooker, or counted the group off and let them play a song from start to finish.

Through the guidance and emulation of Dr. Anderson, Mr. Falcone also took on more of a facilitative role as he was not tasked with formal instruction during this ensemble's rehearsals. Mr. Falcone said, "I feel like a lot of times I play the role of the person who comes to help in situations because like Dr. Anderson will go around and I will find somebody and help out." Mr. Falcone often sat with students in ways that very closely resembled peer mentoring. As Mr. Falcone was both a student and teacher in the ensemble, his modeling of peer mentoring may have helped students to understand how to better interact with their peers in a mentor/mentee setting.

### **Synopsis**

Dr. Anderson was a fluid and flexible facilitator who adapted to each situation in which the ensemble found itself. He taught along a pedagogical spectrum that, at one end,

positioned him as a formal educator and, at the other, as a facilitator of learning within the group. While a pure representation of informal learning for students may be impossible within the constraints and rules of an educational institution (Folkestad, 2006; Green 2002b), Dr. Anderson provided many avenues through which nonformal (Mok, 2010) or hybridized (Smith, 2013) learning practices influenced and guided the education and experiences that each of the modern band students received. Many of these nonformal learning practices paralleled peer mentoring and provided students with tools they could use to interact with other ensemble members. Much like a coach (Watson, 2011), Dr. Anderson provided support where needed but left students to operate in ways that worked best for them. In some contexts, Dr. Anderson took on the role of a formal educator, but more often acted as a facilitator. In both roles, he supported and did not stifle the peer mentoring and sharing of knowledge that occurred.

Dr. Anderson was never absent from the learning process but consciously left space for his students to learn. As Dewey (1933) wrote, “The teacher is a guide and director; he steers the boat but the energy that propels it must come from those who are learning” (p. 36). Dr. Anderson was the one who plotted the course and navigation for the modern band, but the drive came from the students in the ensemble when it came to how they learned and the mentoring they gave each other. They provided the energy and the life of the ensemble. The students did this with their eagerness to learn and their personalities that were present in the learning process potentially due in part to the fostering of student agency within the group. Student voices were not stifled or marginalized. Dr. Anderson did not micro-manage the group or force his opinion. As he

relinquished part of his power in the classroom, other students were allowed space to develop as leaders in micro-contexts through peer mentoring. Situations like Aaron determining the tempo from his drum kit count-offs, Brian leading the class from the keyboard, or Lauren's consistent peer mentoring of Kenny and Joan on the guitar, were indications of leadership development. As Cremata (2017) noted, the facilitator aids in the encouragement of a diverse array of problem-solving tactics within the group. Dr. Anderson limited how he used his power in the ensemble as Cremata deemed how a facilitator should. Dr. Anderson did this by creating a space where students worked within their own circles to solve problems in many ways that would stand in opposition to traditional instructional approaches. Dr. Anderson held a deep understanding of experience and knowledge in the subject areas he was tasked with instructing. He utilized those skills in ways to vary his instructional methods, much like how a facilitator should operate according to Crow (2004).

Dr. Anderson's approach, existing somewhere on the spectrum of facilitation and formal educator, was directly related to the style of music that was being rehearsed. During rehearsal of the classical guitar ensemble pieces, it appeared that Dr. Anderson oversaw rehearsal pacing and decisions being made regarding the musical aspects of the pieces. In the classical ensemble, most decisions were predetermined and written out in the traditional sheet music in front of each student. The classical pieces left little room for interpretation and dialogue. There were only small, stylistic choices to be made, and the formality of the music was reflected in how it was rehearsed and directed. Much like one might assume to find with any classical ensemble, Dr. Anderson was a formal conductor.



Within the context of the modern band, Dr. Anderson utilized many student-centered and nonformal approaches to facilitate learning. As noted previously by West and Cremata (2016), Dr. Anderson retreated from his role as the sole source of knowledge and power in the classroom and empowered his students to be more actively involved in their own learning. He relied heavily on visual and aural modeling, peer mentoring and sharing knowledge, as well as the sharing of his own knowledge. Similar to how Burstein and Powell (2019) described facilitation, Dr. Anderson embraced various teaching styles and differentiated the ways that the students were learning, much like a facilitator in modern band is called to do. This type of differentiation left adequate room for peer mentoring to occur between students.

Similar to results found by Cremata and Powell (2017), it was clear that enthusiasm and creativity were heightened when students were given a chance to have their own voices heard within the classroom environment. The contrast that was present in how each ensemble (classical guitar and modern band) was directed had a direct correlation to observable enthusiasm and creativity. The transition from formal director (present in the classical guitar ensemble) to facilitator (definitive in modern band) led students to open up, explore their limitations, and convene with each other in ways that would not have been available if Dr. Anderson had not given each student autonomy and a role in the decision-making process.

By initially allowing his students to select the music that they would be playing, Dr. Anderson set the stage for how his students' voices would be heard (Smith et al., 2018) both towards the ensemble as a whole and through smaller interactions and

instances of peer mentoring. The style of each rehearsal continued to inform the students of their democratic role in not only what they were learning but how they would be learning and from whom. As Dr. Anderson relinquished more of the formality of the ensemble's direction and took on the role of a facilitator, opportunities for increased social interaction also became possible. Much like Dillon (2007) found, the space that students could interact socially was possible because of the freedom that came with Dr. Anderson taking on a facilitator role. Dr. Anderson recognized that he was not the only person in the ensemble with expertise, especially while practicing and performing music considered popular and relevant to the student members of the ensemble.

## CHAPTER SIX: AUTONOMY IN THE CLASSROOM

Peer mentoring can only exist if students are able to operate in the classroom with a high level of autonomy. In this study, students took it upon themselves to engage in peer mentoring. Therefore, peer mentoring in this context relied upon an atmosphere that was student-centered and allowed participants to operate autonomously. Furthermore, as students engage in peer mentoring, aspects of socializing are present. In order for students to mentor each other and communicate effectively, socializing becomes a necessity.

This chapter is broken up into two parts that describe the autonomy of students in this modern band. Those are: (1) The Mentoring Atmosphere and (2) Socializing During Peer Mentoring. The first part (The Mentoring Atmosphere) is broken up into three themes: (1) Room to Move, Grow, and Find Help; (2) Student Agency; and (3) Music Making During Downtime. The second part (Socializing During Peer Mentoring) is broken up into four themes: (1) Musical Socializing; (2) Joking Around; (3) Peer Encouragement; and (4) Social Bonding of Students.

In the opening section (The Mentoring Atmosphere), the first theme (Room to Move, Grow, and Find Help) describes the environment that Dr. Anderson created for the ensemble which allowed for peer mentoring to occur. The environment was relaxed and casual, allowing students to share knowledge and mentor each other without teacher intervention. While there were some disadvantages to this approach (noted within), the atmosphere was conducive to student-centered learning and autonomous peer mentoring. The second theme (Student Agency) highlights students as engaged participants within

the ensemble. Decision-making power was shared amongst the group's members and students were encouraged to voice their opinions. Student opinions and ample motivation to be involved, along with student suggestions, helped shape the direction and definition of the group. The third theme of this section (Music Making During Downtime) demonstrates student autonomy as it pertained to the choices that students made during the downtime of rehearsals. Students were given freedom to play music and connect with one another when time permitted. Students played music that was not prescribed to them by Dr. Anderson and often used the time to connect both musically and socially. Through visual modeling, aural learning, and sharing of knowledge between themselves, peer mentoring became commonplace. Students delivered this type of mentoring and knowledge sharing through direct collaboration, non-verbal interaction, and peer critique.

The second section of this chapter focuses on socializing during peer mentoring. The freedom to socialize played a large part in the ensemble's success, cohesiveness, and familial bond. The first theme (Musical Socializing) highlights students socializing in conversation and actions revolving around musical topics. Students discussed a myriad of topics related to the music they played, listened to, and appreciated. The second theme (Joking Around) shows times where students joked, lightly teased, and engaged in general merriment within the group. The third theme (Peer Encouragement) examines times where students deliberately praised, supported, and lifted up their peers during rehearsals. The fourth and final theme (Social Bonding of Students) of this section shows how students engaged in the forging of new and old friendships through peer mentoring in modern band.

**Part I: The Mentoring Atmosphere**

The following descriptions and depictions are of the context in which peer interaction and peer mentoring occurred. Dr. Anderson initially crafted the atmosphere of this nonformal ensemble, and the context allowed for various instances of peer interaction and mentoring. The extent of the formality or informality of each rehearsal was largely influenced by the style of music that was being practiced. The modern band in this school played popular music that was generally familiar to the students but also performed in other genres as the students rehearsed music for other concert settings.

The relaxed atmosphere led to students interacting as peers in an environment where they were comfortable enough to express their opinions, joke around, and self-admittedly enjoy themselves. Regarding modern band, Lauren said, “it’s good, it’s different, it’s less serious” and Joan noted “it’s actually kind of fun. We don’t have to take it as seriously as a lot of the other classes.” In this environment, students also took liberties that they may not have in a more formal ensemble. Notably, Jeff experimented with various keyboard parts and sounds throughout the year and Elizabeth did the same with the iPad. According to Jenkins (2011), and aligned with my observations of this setting, “one of the advantages of informal learning comes from its tendency to arise from a relaxed, almost playful attitude” (p. 188). Jenkins went on to say that it can become empowering for learners to not have definite goals set, putting them in more control of their own learning. While Jenkins noted that informal learning could have a disadvantage in that there would not be a formal educator to expose them to new musical adventures, Dr. Anderson’s presence in this more hybridized (Smith, 2013), nonformal

setting served to quell such notions. On occasion, these situations led to increased disruption of rehearsals and apparent increased stress for the teacher but were an accepted by-product of an environment meant to amplify the voices of all the ensemble's members, not only that of the facilitator. This type of pedagogical approach was noted earlier by Green (2008) to incorporate into formal school settings the ways that popular musicians learn.

Throughout the rehearsals from early fall until late winter, students consistently participated in a relaxed atmosphere in which peer mentoring and interaction would not be possible otherwise. According to Mr. Falcone, the atmosphere was:

different, it's definitely looser but I guess that's part of the culture anyway of, ya know, I think a lot of professional rock musicians or pop musicians. You have to be looser and more relaxed about how you approach it. I see a bunch of high energy children that come in, take a little bit to get cooled down, but then once the music starts, everyone gets taken care of and then from there ya know, it just works.

When Aaron (drummer) reflected on his own experience in the classroom environment, he said "I would say that we learned a lot and it was a little more laid back, but it wasn't too serious, but we were still able to learn, learn pieces, learn new techniques, and stuff like that." Gabriella was the least experienced guitarist of the group and the youngest in age overall. She noted that the students all felt that "you're more free" when it came to the ensemble's layout with its contrast to groups like traditional choir or concert band. Dylan noted, "there's something about the rock songs that gives us this feeling that we can let ourselves out now, ya we just let loose." Similar to Clauhs et al. (2020), Martino (2014) claimed that when teachers find appropriate balance in classrooms of when to step back and when to interject, the environment becomes "more relaxed, focused, and

productive” (p. 97). It is evident that for the students of the ensemble, the relaxed atmosphere aided in focus and productivity and made it a more enjoyable experience all around. More importantly, the relaxed atmosphere led to an increase in peer mentoring and enabled it to happen more organically.

The relaxed atmosphere here was often reinforced by student freedom concerning where to sit. While many of the students gravitated towards predictable sections of the room, their individual seats often varied. This was especially evident for the guitar players in the group. The drummer and keyboard player almost always positioned themselves in the same spots due to instrument constraints, but for the guitarists it was different. In one instance where James was absent for the previous week’s rehearsal, the first thing he did was sit down next to Dylan and ask him, “what did I miss last week?” and “what are the chords we’re doing with this one?” The peer mentoring here was evident due, in part, to the relaxed atmosphere and the ability for James to move and ask Dylan for the help he needed.

In many cases, the acoustic guitarists would sit near each other to be able to mentor and interact with each other. While James and Dylan on acoustic guitars often gravitated toward each other, they would move their seats to be around other guitarists when one or the other was absent. When any student, especially guitarists, had trouble with a part, they would move their location to learn more from their peers if they chose to do so. In other cases, the class would find itself in more of a circle or other layout to provide for other types of interactions. In a fall rehearsal of “Californication,” students found themselves in various sectionals to accomplish the goals of the rhythm section,

guitarists, and keyboards. This type of relaxed and fluid atmosphere was encouraged by Dr. Anderson, but not always initiated by him. Rather, it was often initiated by the students. In some instances, Jeff and Brian, who were multi-instrumentalists, would even move to another instrument without prompting during a rehearsal to try out a different sound or feel for the song while engaging in formal or informal peer mentoring. Jeff, who played the keyboard during most of his time in the group would occasionally grab a guitar to play instead.

Dylan, who was solely an acoustic guitarist, was consciously aware of the difference in rehearsal styles noting that “for the classical pieces, it’s more serious. With the rock songs, I just let loose. It’s easier, ya so I feel more pressure playing the classical songs cause they’re harder to be more precise. I love playing the rock songs, I just love it.” During a rehearsal of “Say it Ain’t So,” the relaxed atmosphere was evident due, in part, to not having to follow a written score. Dr. Anderson placed the decisions about entrances and exists in the hands of the students, meaning there was more flexibility in the song structure. During times where Joan missed a vocal entrance, the group would vamp on a repeated chord progression until she was ready to come in, sharing statements like “come in whenever you’re ready” in a supportive and uplifting tone. In these times, peer mentoring could occur based on Dr. Anderson’s backseat approach to facilitating the ensemble.

While the relaxed atmosphere for this ensemble enabled peer mentoring to occur between members, the lack of formal structure also somewhat impeded the progress and productivity of some rehearsals. Many scholars have noted the benefits of a relaxed,



informal, and student-centered environment within school settings (Coss, 2019; Green & Walmsley, 2009; Holoboff, 2015), but fewer studies address the issues that may arise and how to address them within school-based ensembles (Fodor, 1998; Johnson, 2015). The most prevalent disadvantage to the relaxed atmosphere of this ensemble was the punctuality of its members for each rehearsal. During each meeting, most students arrived late and required extra time to get settled into their seats, ready to rehearse their parts. The group never began group rehearsal before a few minutes had passed into the class period. The students often entered the room sporadically for each rehearsal, socializing, making noise, and never visibly concerned with their tardiness. Some students would arrive halfway through the 45-minute rehearsal with only minimal acknowledgement of their previous whereabouts or lateness.

Students were never penalized and only seldomly called-out for their behavior or late arrival during a rehearsal. This was beneficial in some instances, such as when Lauren arrived late one time, but grabbed a guitar and sat down to play without interrupting the rehearsal. Dr. Anderson was aware of the double-edged sword that this created in his classroom saying “they [the students] probably like it too much as they probably think they can get away with anything.” During most classes, Dr. Anderson would encourage the students to begin rehearsing even when there were less than half of the group’s members present. On a few occasions, the ensemble began rehearsing a song with only two or three members present.

On occasion, the relaxed atmosphere of the classroom brought with it issues of discipline and student focus. Jeff was consistently a student who played while Dr.

Anderson was trying to facilitate the ensemble, and on multiple occasions distracted others that were near him. Jeff would, on occasion, wander to other areas of the classroom or start playing other songs when given too much freedom. When the group was without direction or guidance for a period of time, minor discipline issues occasionally arose. For roughly five to ten minutes, students were content with learning and interacting with each other in productive ways, but after that threshold was reached, it proved difficult for them to stay focused. These types of situations often occurred when there were technical or audio problems with a particular instrument or piece of gear or when Dr. Anderson was forced to attend to other school-related issues out of his control. In these cases, students would increase their talking, physical movement in the classroom, and general tomfoolery. In general, however, Dr. Anderson was able to bring the group back to order when these types of situations presented themselves.

### ***Room to Move, Grow, and Find Help***

The relaxed atmosphere of the ensemble was a definitive aspect of how learning occurred as well as how each student handled themselves within the group. Students arrived late, were caught up in social matters, and made lots of noise. They often moved around the room, asked each other for help, and had plenty of laughs. While there were inevitably some issues that arose from such freedom, as noted previously, the context provided a cornerstone for how the students learned and the opportunity for peer mentoring to occur. For many students, the ensemble represented more than a class where they were learning how to play music. It represented more than what may have been

written on the course description or how the school's administration may have defined the learning that occurred. In some ways, the ensemble was a chance for students to embrace autonomy and escape the confines of the traditional school settings found in their other classes. Due to these factors, peer mentoring may have had an increased presence in this ensemble as compared to other classes in the school.

During most classes, Kenny was situated in the corner of the room, closest to Aaron, the group's drummer, and Jeff, the keyboard player. During other classes when he was not playing the electric guitar, Kenny positioned himself around other guitar players on the opposite side of the room. Kenny was flexible and had the self-awareness to know that he could learn from any of his peers in the ensemble. He often looked towards and received help from Aaron and Jeff based on his proximity to them, but in other cases help came from Joan or Lauren in the acoustic guitar section. As noted previously, Harrington (2016) found that problem solving in musical groups can be tackled in various ways through creative solutions presented by a group's director. One of those solutions was to situate specific students next to each other to aid and support each other in the learning process through peer mentoring. Because of the relaxed atmosphere, Kenny had the flexibility to move around the class as he saw fit and learn with and from the peers he thought most appropriate. This meant that Kenny took advantage of the mentorship from his peers that played guitar but also the ones that played percussion and keyboards. Each of the other ensemble's members also benefited most greatly from those closest to them in physical proximity. The ability to move around and learn from whoever they chose was a great asset to each student. When a student needed help from someone else, it

appeared that they did not hesitate to reposition themselves and seek out assistance.

Students, such as Joan, made friends in the class and attributed this to the fact that modern band was not like every other class that she had. She developed relationships through her time in the ensemble and was able to be a leader within her peer circles. These opportunities may not have been possible if she had been situated in a traditional ensemble that did not leave space for students to work with, interact, move around, and mentor each other. According to Shieh (2008), “music educators have a unique opportunity to help their students become sensitive thinkers and leaders” (p. 46). By encouraging Joan to mentor her peers with comments such as, “Joan, can you help Kenny here” and “try singing together,” Dr. Anderson helped to develop her leadership skills which may not have been possible if he were the sole source of information and decision for the group. As Shieh (2008) noted, students take on leadership roles when they feel respected and recognized for their skills and abilities. By fostering peer mentoring in the group, Dr. Anderson recognized that the students in the group had skills and abilities worthy of relaying to their peers and did not limit access to others in the room.

Jeff was another example of a student who took advantage of the space he was given to speak his voice, be loud, and express himself. He often used his well-rounded talent as a musician to help his classmates and voice his opinion on what was happening during rehearsals. Jeff engaged in mentoring by calling out chords to the bass player saying “E, A, G” during “Californication” or playing the melody on his keyboard to help Joan with her vocal lines. Jeff loved the chance to play music in the ensemble. He played around with music genres from classical to rock and capitalized on chances to experiment

with the keyboard parts for each song that he played. Thanks to the atmosphere that was fostered by Dr. Anderson, students in the ensemble were not overly reserved with physically moving around the room when they could, to play loud, and experiment with their parts, and aid their classmates. Dr. Anderson was not overly prescriptive of each student's behavior, actions, movement, or musical choices. By providing a relaxed atmosphere and giving room for the students to be themselves, they grew, got loud, and spoke up when they felt inclined to do so.

From the outset of the ensemble's rehearsals, it was clear that most students who looked for help from their peers chose to find that help from the closest ensemble member. Dr. Anderson left room for them to move when it was fitting and draw knowledge from anyone, but many chose to interact first with those they sat near, moving to students who sat farther away as needed. While many of the students had pre-existing social relationships, their seats did not always correspond to those friendships and social bonds. Micro-contexts within the ensemble served to perpetuate this notion. Dylan and James both played acoustic guitars and sat in chairs next to each other. When they were both present in class, they engaged in peer mentoring with each other as it was most convenient to ask for help based on their classmate who was closest in proximity. During the single rehearsal that James was absent, Dylan repositioned himself in the classroom to learn from Joan who he chose to sit next to. If Dylan was mandated to stay in his pre-assigned seat, he may not have had the opportunity to learn from another student. Because of the flexibility in seating arrangements, students were comfortable seeking the help they needed from various class members based on the type of help and peer

mentoring they required.

By establishing an environment that was relaxed enough for students to relocate at will, students had ample chances to seek out peer mentoring from their classmates. If seating positions were fixed, peer mentoring opportunities may have been limited. Kenny, for example, very much benefited from peer mentoring in the ensemble due, in part, to his ability to move around the room when his needs were better met by various group members. Peer mentoring occurred in various ways both musically and socially for ensemble members. The ability for students to engage in diverse peer mentoring from both a mentor and mentee role was available due, in part, to the flexible nature of the ensemble.

### ***Student Agency***

As noted earlier, Vaughn (2018) defined agency as “a student’s desire, ability, and power to determine their own course of action” (p. 63). Because agency was fostered within the group, students were more freely able to engage in peer mentoring and make it a substantial part of the makeup of the group. Students had a desire to help one another, the ability to do so, and often determined on their own to both mentor and be mentored by their peers. Without student agency, peer mentoring may not have been implemented or adopted organically within the group.

All students had agency in the classroom and were part of the decision-making process. They were given opportunities to have their voices heard in musical, logistical, and social decisions. This type of student-decision integration had a positive effect on

student involvement and input, as noted elsewhere (Clauhs & Cremata, 2020). Joan, Jeff, and Aaron used their agency more frequently than Dylan, James, and Lauren. In many cases, students were given the chance to not only have their voices heard but also make decisions on behalf of the ensemble to exercise their individual and collective will, determining the ensemble's course of action. Students had opportunities to discuss issues within their rehearsal time regarding their opinions on various song elements such as tempo, difficulty, appropriateness, and an overall desire to keep or remove any songs from the group's repertoire. The students learned in a classroom environment where they were seen more closely to equals in the ensemble rather than as subordinates of Dr. Anderson. In this ensemble, group discussion and decision-making were prevalent as students engaged in the co-construction of the group. Though Dr. Anderson occasionally stepped in to make decisions, directive power was generally distributed amongst the members of the group.

Instead of Dr. Anderson being the sole proprietor of knowledge, students were also given the opportunity to mentor and share knowledge with each other. This occurred when Dr. Anderson allowed various students to stand in front of the class to lead rehearsals and encouraged all members to vocalize their opinions. Cleaver and Ballantyne (2014) noted that "effective music educators today (in a post-modern, technological landscape) must pay attention to assisting student agency in "constructing an identity in music" rather than simply focusing on "training" students to become a particular kind of musician with particular skills" (p. 238). Dr. Anderson's approach paralleled this call to action in that he never appeared to be interested in schooling the students to be precise

musicians in this modern band, but rather helped them to find their own voices and construct their own learning.

Vocalists like Matthew and Joan were positioned in a place to assume an authoritative role based on their encouragement to stand where an ensemble would usually position its conductor in front of the group. Dr. Anderson would often sit back physically with his acoustic guitar during a rehearsal and assume the role of an ensemble member, letting the group control their own run-through of songs like “Say it Ain’t So,” “Californication,” and “Day Tripper.”

During many rehearsals, Dr. Anderson would encourage students such as Kenny to show others like Dylan or James how to play a chord correctly when one of them was having trouble. Neither one of these three students were notably any more experienced than another, but sometimes each held knowledge that another did not. This was evident when Dr. Anderson said to Dylan, “I think you’re playing D major instead of D minor, Kenny can you show them how to play it correctly?” He did not force Kenny to help, but fostered Kenny’s agency by giving him the power and ability to determine what would happen next. These situations were frequent and also manifested when Dr. Anderson asked Aaron (drummer) to count off a song, when he asked if a particular student could help another vocalist, when he asked what section the group felt like they wanted to start from, when he inquired about particular musical choices like playing harmony or melody, or when he encouraged students to determine the overall pace of the rehearsals.

Furthermore, the onus for betterment was often put on the students as well when Dr. Anderson asked questions like “what do you think you need to improve on there?” to



which students such as Brian would say “the bridge needs the most help regarding the chords being played and where” or Aaron noting that “the feel of the chorus could be bigger.” These types of inquiries from Dr. Anderson led to student discussions concerning which parts the group needed to work on. The students, without prompting, would discuss things like solos, chords, form, and ensemble issues as rehearsals wrapped up and they moved on to their next class. There was variation in the opinions that were present, thanks in part to the acceptance of student voice and the championing of student agency within the group, encouraged by Dr. Anderson. As noted by Cremata and Powell (2017), this helped to “foster students’ independent and collaborative construction of knowledge promoting group diversity and student agency” (p. 310). When educators can encourage greater student-centered learning and student agency, learning may become more ingrained and substantial for each student.

It was evident that students took ownership and embraced accountability for the co-constructed group. Jeff (keyboard) noted that everyone usually helps when it comes to fixing things in the group and that it was not solely up to the teacher. Gabriella was also aware of the place they were in being further along in their studies and how that had played a part in this type of environment. She said, “well, Anderson does so much for us, like, we’ve come to the point in guitar 4 and 3 [advanced levels within the school] that we’re mature enough to help each other out and everyone should be mature enough to know what to do.” To that end, students were also keen on keeping each other responsible for their various parts and the rehearsals they were a part of. Various students would often remark with the common phrase “don’t add!” at the end of a song. To the

ensemble's members, this was an accountability tool that students used to imply that others should not be playing, making unnecessary noise, or adding musical material when the song was over. The students were intent on ending together and called out their peers when this was being prevented.

Students often exercised their agency during small conflicts. For example, Dr. Anderson asked the students their opinion on the tempo of "Californication" during an early fall rehearsal. He asked, "are we taking it too fast, what do you think?" as he polled the ensemble's members for their opinion. During the next run-through of the same song during that rehearsal, Joan exercised her shared authority and ceased the song's run-through noting to the class that they had "started off way too slow." In a later fall rehearsal where Dr. Anderson said to the entire ensemble, "what do you guys want to warm up with, it's up to you, do you wanna start with "Californication" or "Day Tripper"?" At the end of "Day Tripper," which was chosen, Dr. Anderson continued with "so, do we want to do that again or move on to the next one, did you notice any problems, did you notice any issues?" to which Jeff and Gabriella jointly said, "it was tighter coming in and out of the solo." The group agreed with them that the transitions were smoother throughout the sections. Brian added, "I'll break out with a few more active notes once we get the song down a bit more." This type of dialogue was customary and was often found during every rehearsal or practice. Validating students' opinions was a key tenet of how the group evolved during the rehearsal of each song, recalling my own observation in a previous study that, "counting the students' opinions as valid," is key to combating the traditional and often hegemonic teaching practices of large group

ensemble directors (Smith et al., 2018).

Many of the students in the group were thankful to have a chance to work through issues on their own. For instance, Gabriella remarked, “where we were playing a part, he [Dr. Anderson] said, “you guys could either switch parts or do improvisation, work with each other.”” By encouraging student agency within the group, peer mentoring had a more applicable role in the learning process. Students were given the ability and power to direct the course of the learning for not only the group as a whole but also for their peers through direct mentoring. This type of instructional environment was also evident to Mr. Falcone. When asked how the approach in this ensemble differed from more traditional approaches, he said “I think he [Dr. Anderson] puts a little more power into the kids to kind of figure it out for themselves, amongst themselves, rather than going to each person individually and showing them a hand shape, for instance. They have to take their own initiative and work together to bring it all together.”

Most student-led discussions were found in the early stages of learning a song. As an example, a discussion began regarding an instrumental break in the song “Day Tripper.” Dr. Anderson asked, “how many times should we do that part?” and a discussion ensued amongst the class members who eventually decided on six times for the repeated section. Dr. Anderson responded with “you guys cool with that?” as he sought the consensus of the group. Students would frequently interject their opinion in matters like this regarding tempo, style, dynamics, and other musical characteristics of each song. This type of agency presented itself in instrumental decisions as well. When certain ensemble members were absent, such as the bass player, Dr. Anderson would ask

the students in the group if anyone would be willing to play bass for the day. This occurred often regarding the singers for each song, when Joan was absent or running late for a rehearsal, or when no one was present to play the iPad. Joan even felt comfortable enough in the group to contradict Dr. Anderson when she would correct him with which student was the prescribed singer for each song. While infrequent, Dr. Anderson never took offense to this type of correction as he considered the voice of his students to be important.

When it came to choosing the songs that the group would rehearse and subsequently perform, Dr. Anderson used those chances to prioritize the voice of his students as well. This notion echoes similar findings in a study by Dorfman (2020), who found that teachers saw a broadening of repertoire for their ensembles and an increase in engagement when the music that they listened to outside of school was introduced within it. After a song was definitively part of their chosen repertoire, Dr. Anderson would tell the students that they should “come up with a few ideas for some new songs in the coming weeks.” In one instance, Kenny called out, “what about “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran?” to which the group had mixed feelings. In another, Dylan and James responded to this prompt by referencing songs by Metallica and AC/DC. “Come as You Are” and “All Star” were also discussed as potential song candidates for future rehearsals. As articulated by Powell et al. (2017), aspects of informal learning integration begin when a facilitator puts the onus on their students to choose the music for the group. Putting the burden of selection on students lends itself to a greater variety of song selection and can include a myriad of genres. While familiar to some students, others that

are less familiar with certain songs can find success as they work through and learn them through experience. By introducing new songs that are familiar to students, educators may give students more opportunities to engage in peer mentoring because students may be familiar with the music being rehearsed and have adequate experience and knowledge with the styles to help other peers. If songs are simply chosen by the group's director, chances for peer mentoring may be limited due to lack of relevancy to students in the ensemble.

Much like Mr. Falcone, students were aware of their democratic role in the ensemble as well. Speaking to the students' role in the ensemble, Jeff said, "I feel like it's all of us, not just one person that can call the shots." Since students knew that they had a hand in co-constructing the ensemble, peer mentoring may have seemed a logical and appropriate way of helping peers as student agency was something celebrated within the group. Jeff was outspoken from behind the keyboard in times when he was given a chance to exercise his opinion. As a confident member of the ensemble, he took advantage of the chance to be part of the decision-making process. Evidence of this was present when it came to discussing the song "All Star" by Smash Mouth. Kenny and Dylan expressed their lack of interest in continuing with the song and brought dissension to the group in open dialogue when they were very vocal about the song not being one they wished to continue practicing. Dylan and James were usually somewhat reserved but very vocal regarding their dislike of that song. The song's rehearsals lacked the usual energy felt in the group and while the students debated over whether or not to include it in their concert, Kenny called out the song "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran, a choice which the

group decided to pursue. The small rebellion over “All Star” was purely student-led and resulted in the elimination of the song from their rehearsals. For Dr. Anderson, this type of agency had its pros and cons. He said:

I try to give them more democracy or choice or I will like, a lot of times, even without them noticing, in “Day Tripper”, I had this kid who was always playing the riff all the time coming into class. So, I asked, “Do you wanna do that song next”? And he’s like yeah, let’s do it and everyone’s like let’s do this. It’s more organic with the song selection. I know a lot of times even when I would do private teaching with students, I would give the choice with what song do you want to do. Sometimes it’s a good idea to get them to choose but sometimes there could also lead to chaos because they never come to an agreement. I had the same thing last year, I had the kids always playing the riff from “Californication” so it’s natural to just, so maybe they’re not selecting it outright, but they are in their influence.

Dr. Anderson was strategic in how he shepherded the group when decisions were to be made regarding song selections. He relied on student opinions and influences and, while the students were a large deciding voice in which songs they were to play, he also helped steer them towards ones that made the most sense for the group as a whole. Dr. Anderson used the music that the students brought with them to honor their voices.

In this ensemble, students were free to voice their opinion on others matters, even those concerning their peers. During the early stages of a spring rehearsal of “Perfect,” Joan and James spoke up regarding the solo section. While Dr. Anderson commented that Kenny would play the solo, Joan and James noted that Dylan was interested in playing it and advocated on his behalf. Dylan, however, did not speak up for himself. As the group meandered around the decisions of who would take the solo in the song, Brian, James, and Aaron all exercised their voices in making suggestions of who should or could play it. In reference to this type of general approach to student-centered education, Dr.

Anderson noted:

I think the whole educational model wants to go towards student-centered instruction. So certainly, it lends itself to that. A lot of the traditional music classrooms are teacher-centered or teacher directed. It has its place to some extent but certainly it is looser, more laid back. As they [students] get more established with skills, I do allow them to play on the iPad and pick a song from a site that they want to learn. So, they do get choice, they get a lot of variety. I think a good high school music teacher generally, regardless of whether they teach choir or guitar, band, or whatever, that they should have, that kids should leave with a varied instructional exposure, not just one style, not just one method, but they can learn enough that they can continue a musical experience outside of their school.

Clearly, Dr. Anderson was aware of the approach he was taking. He felt strongly about this approach being the right one for the popular music ensemble context he facilitated.

He believed that a well-rounded approach would lead to well-rounded students. Dr.

Anderson coached his students in a way that may have left them with meaningful musical experiences that may have a longer impact as compared with other musical endeavors they pursued in school.

Many students found a place in the ensemble and felt that it was a time where they could be themselves and act differently when compared to their more traditional classes. Concerning Jeff, Dr. Anderson said, “in other classes, he’s mainly quiet and reserved, he doesn’t say much. In here, he has a voice, and he is constantly using it to help others and give his opinion.” By having a voice in the decision-making process and an understanding that their voices would not go unheard, students were allowed, encouraged, and praised for engaging in classroom dialogue. The modern band students were excited to be in the ensemble and noted that having a hand in the decision-making process, both small and large, meant a great deal to them. The encouragement of having a

part in the decision-making process helped to provide a context where peer mentoring could occur. With this type of decision-making authority, students took it upon themselves to ask for assistance and give assistance without prompting from Dr. Anderson. Without being given this authority, peer mentoring may have happened much less frequently.

Much like Clauhs and Cremata (2020) noted, giving students opportunity to exercise their voice in selecting songs and curriculum was an act that honored the learners and respected their input. While each song may have been finalized as an official selection for the group by Dr. Anderson, student voice and choice were present in the selection process. During the formative stages of the ensemble's work towards a concert performance, Dr. Anderson would often ask, "what else do you want to do?" and "what other songs are you interested in for the concert?" He would rely on students to guide this aspect of the ensemble and would work around the choices they had suggested. For instance, if the students suggested five songs, he would help guide them in their eventual decision of one. While not every student's song suggestion was taken on as a formal endeavor, they played a part in constructing the group. It was clear that each student felt heard by Dr. Anderson and may have been more inclined to participate in the songs knowing one of their peers had helped to select it.

Similarly, many students in the ensemble felt comfortable enough to voice their opinion when songs they had selected were not progressing as they had hoped. Clauhs and Cremata (2020) championed similar approaches, saying that, "school music programmes ought to rely on engaging students, involving them in collaborative musical



opportunities and inspiring their imaginations” (p. 113). The first step towards this process, according to Clauhs and Cremata is to seize student attention through the act of participatory repertoire selection. This was indicative in the rehearsals of the song “All Star.” While the group had originally been supportive of the notion to practice and eventually perform this song for an upcoming concert, many students expressed their disdain as they began practicing it. Dylan and James, on acoustic guitars, were avid with their derision towards playing it. It seemed that they were respectful towards the decision initially but did not hesitate to make it known that they were disinclined to continue working on it. The same notion was true for “Perfect,” by Ed Sheeran. While many students loved the song from a listener’s standpoint, it seemed that the slow tempo and low energy of the song contributed to a lack of interest. Jeff and Aaron were quick to make it known that while they may have liked the notion of playing the song originally, they did not think it was a great fit for the ensemble moving forward. As students showed a lack of interest in a song, peer mentoring opportunities may have decreased as students’ willingness to engage in learning decreased. The songs with high energy, dynamic presence, and upbeat tempi were more engaging for the students and led to more social and musical interaction, often found through peer mentoring, as well as an increase in student voice and display of agency. The more that students were interested in learning, the more opinions they had in how that learning occurred and, in turn, the more they shared their views through mentoring opportunities with their peers and Dr. Anderson within the ensemble.

### ***Music Making During Downtime***

The relaxed environment combined with democratic learning and decision-making aided in students taking advantage of downtime. Students took initiative when they had free time or space in between rehearsals to make music on their own and in groups. This was done without formal instruction or guided facilitation.

As facilitator, Dr. Anderson encouraged each of the students to express their creativity. He did this through his positive and casual mannerisms that relayed to the class that the structure was loose, and they possessed autonomy within the creative space. Dr. Anderson allowed students to play music with each other informally as it aided in building the community of learning present in the ensemble. Westerlund (2006) noted that these types of situated learning opportunities are ways that students can “develop knowledge-building communities and musical expertise in formal music education” (p. 119) but in no way are they intended to replace the necessity of a teacher. The findings of Westerlund through the study of garage rock bands can inform ways that educators can create partially authentic popular music education experiences within formal classroom environments complete with peer mentoring. For the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band, this type of musical learning typically occurred at the beginning and end of each rehearsal. The staggered entrances of students gave them the freedom to warm up and lead each other in musical experimentation and impromptu jamming. Similar to the findings of Cremata and Powell (2017), the enthusiasm for learning and overall creativity increased when students were allowed space to learn amongst themselves.

Aaron (drummer) was a confident musician, never hesitant to add his own style

into the mix of the group. He was able to keep accurate time and match recordings note for note on the drum kit inclusive of prominent rhythm patterns, styles, and fills. When given time to create, he took advantage and experimented with various fills to match the recordings and add his own flare into the song's structure. He often counted the group in and would use those introductions to vary what he played and the amount of lead-in time he gave the rest of the group. This type of improvisation was evident during one fall rehearsal when Aaron arrived earlier than the other students and started playing on the drum kit. Kenny (electric guitar) joined in with him, improvising lead guitar lines. As the rest of the ensemble began to arrive, their music-making transitioned into a formal rehearsal of "Californication." Both Aaron and Kenny were visually pleased with the musical interaction and they were never told to "focus" or "stick to the songs that the group was performing" by Dr. Anderson.

In another rehearsal, as the students were getting settled, Jeff began experimenting on the keyboard with various sound effects to go along with what he would be playing that day. As a music-maker in and out of school, Jeff was also a confident musician able to read music well as well as play solely by ear. In this setting, he played through a variety of holiday songs on his own, making evident his competency on the instrument. Jeff never waited for the invitation or the allowance to start playing music when he arrived to class, which was often before others. His warm-ups demonstrated his love for many styles of music like pop, classical, kids' songs, and classic rock. With the freedom he was given, he often showcased his musical abilities by taking a piece that he was playing on classical guitar and playing it on the keyboard. As

songs became more cohesive and polished, Jeff was one of the first students to begin to take more liberties with what he was playing on the keyboard, gaining more confidence and pushing musical boundaries. While his playing would begin simply, it evolved over time as he gained what appeared to be more confidence in the song's breakdown and the boundaries he could push with his playing. On occasion, he even doubled the notes of the guitar solo on the keyboard.

In between the rehearsals of each song, students often took a few minutes to transition to the next song the group was practicing. Kenny, who often played the singular electric guitar in the room, would take this time not only to practice his solos but also to play through some of the other music he liked to listen to; mostly hard rock and metal guitar riffs. Through these types of musical showcases, Dr. Anderson was able to better understand the music that his students were listening to and were interested in. Without this type of availability, song choices may not have been as student-centered and, in turn, the opportunities for peer mentoring to occur may have been fewer. The freedom to make music on their own may also have had a relational impact to the peer mentoring that occurred in the ensemble.

Dr. Anderson used the information gleaned during these informal jam sessions to, in turn, increase motivation for learning through the music that his students already knew as well. Dr. Anderson said that in one instance, "he [Kenny] actually took the initiative to start learning how to play the "Californication" solo on his own. So that's something he did on his own...he then brought it in to one of our sessions and was playing it." As Jenkins (2011) noted in a follow-up to Green's (2006) work, "if a student likes a song or

instrumental piece of music, it seems to follow that they would be more interested in learning how to play that music themselves, as opposed to learning some music with which the student is unfamiliar” (p. 190). Kenny did not own an electric guitar at home and was limited to playing what he could in the time he had during the class. In one winter rehearsal, Kenny decided to start playing the melody to “Happy Birthday” when the class remarked that it was a student’s birthday. Dr. Anderson, in support of the positive atmosphere and general enjoyment of the student music-making, sang along with the class quite jovially, even strumming a few chords on his acoustic guitar.

In many instances, students used the time they had to break out into impromptu jams sometimes, but not always, utilizing the music they were rehearsing. During one rehearsal while students were getting set up, Kenny took it upon himself to start playing the opening riff to “Day Tripper” on the electric guitar. Without any prompting, Dylan and James joined in with the chords and Brian added the bass. Both Brian and Kenny played succinctly without interacting physically or through speech, just through listening. Jeff arrived to class a few minutes later, stood up next to the drums (not his usual instrument) and started playing a steady beat with the music that was already happening. Everyone stopped abruptly after the music started to get a little out of sync and sloppy and immediately started laughing at the somewhat impromptu jam with their “new” drummer. This type of situation repeated itself later in the fall when Jeff chose to play the keyboard when he arrived seeing Aaron already sitting at the drum kit. In this later example, Joan arrived and immediately started singing the song without prompting or direction. The “jam” quickly devolved as Aaron and Brian began playing through a Latin

style drum beat and bass line. These types of impromptu jams happened often and were never scripted. They were inclusive of the material that the ensemble was working on formally but were also made up of songs that students may have been working on in their own time such as one example where Kenny and Brian began playing the opening riff to the song “Dream On” (Aerosmith, 1973). The impromptu nature of these types of interactions was indicative of the style of learning within the ensemble as well. Not every interaction was prescribed and the ways in which students operated themselves (musically and socially) was largely up to them. Impromptu interactions were also evident through the peer mentoring that occurred as the approach of the group was loose and unregimented.

Connecting through music making was a common occurrence during downtime. James and Dylan often sat next to each other on the fringe of the group’s rehearsal space. They both played acoustic guitar throughout the entirety of the rehearsals in the fall and winter. They were quiet and somewhat reserved but had similar musical tastes. In between rehearsals, they often played small sections of other songs that they were interested in and practicing on their own. Dylan said, “it’s [modern band] not as boring as another class, we can be more creative.” This was evident during one winter rehearsal when the pair began to play “Come as You Are” by Nirvana. They had both arrived at class earlier than other group members and used the time to demonstrate the song for each other and play through the various sections. They then both moved to playing the riff from “Day Tripper” and then proceeded to play various material from songs by Led Zeppelin. They would also occasionally experiment with the solo material from songs

like “Californication” even though they may not have been playing it at a performance or during the rehearsal that day. While these casual demonstrations may not be evidence of mentorship between the two, the interactions were indicative of those that would enable peer mentoring to happen later. These students may have been more comfortable engaging in peer mentoring thanks to having more experience and subsequent comfort interacting with each other.

Various instrumental students in the class were often found playing improvisatory material in between song rehearsals. Kenny would play solos, Brian would experiment with bass lines, and Aaron would play various styles on the drum kit. When students were given the opportunity, improvisation would occur naturally inclusive of melody, harmony, or rhythmic material. Elizabeth, one of the group’s younger members, said, “I think it’s like being in more like a band at your leisure where you pick up an instrument with friends and create music that you like to play sometimes.” Dr. Anderson was always supportive of students having this type of freedom to express themselves in his classroom. McPhail (2013), as referenced earlier, posited that improvisation is a core tenet to learning popular music and largely sets it apart from how classical musicians learn and have become reliant upon written notation. Dr. Anderson never stifled the improvisation of his students whether informally (outside of a song’s official run-through) or during the group’s official practicing, but encouraged it through his facilitation of the group’s cooperative learning.

In addition to improvising, students also used this space for other creative musical endeavors. Dr. Anderson noted that in the past, a lot of kids came up with their own

musical ideas and presented them to the class, collaborated, and wrote original songs based on that material. This modern band environment “inspired kids to come up with their own original music” and “was pleasantly surprising” according to Dr. Anderson. A student vocalist named Matthew, who joined the group only after winter break, took advantage of this type of encouragement in playing one of his original songs for the class which had a pop/jazz feel to it.

The end of each rehearsal also gave students a chance to play through music on their own. Much like the impromptu jams that occurred at the beginning of and during the rehearsals, students would use the last few minutes of each class to play music of their choosing. While they would often be working together on polishing the parts the group was just rehearsing, they would also branch out into other music making. The students only had a few minutes at the end of each rehearsal but utilized them well to serve their own musical endeavors and discuss potential areas of improvement. James and Dylan often discussed problematic chord sequences at the end of each rehearsal to continue working through their parts. Other times, Lauren and Joan would sing various songs to one another to close out their rehearsal time. Music making happened formally and informally for the group at prescribed and unprescribed times.

## **Part II: Socializing During Peer Mentoring**

Based on my observations and interviews, it appeared that students were free to interact with each other socially within the modern band ensemble rehearsals. Socializing played a key role in the ensemble’s development, cohesiveness, and musical progress. This type of social interaction, alongside peer mentoring, was key to the overall social



development of the students. As noted previously, Dennison (2000) found that collaborative organizations and groups, regardless of subject matter or focus, have a tendency to aid in the social development of children, especially those who are at a high risk of being alienated and left out of social activities. Dennison claimed that, within these groups, peer mentoring can help develop positive relationships while also increasing academic performance. In the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band, the development of students as whole beings was potentially as important as their musical tutelage.

Sharing knowledge and peer mentoring were the catalysts for students interacting with each other on a social level. With an increase in social interaction, peer mentoring becomes a more natural process and its genesis more organic. Socializing was a part of the context in many facets and made possible due to the autonomous classroom and relaxed atmosphere. For Dr. Anderson, “the approach here is certainly more about dialogue. The dialogue is how they talk in class, it’s looser, they are talking and it’s more fun.” Various social interactions took place during the rehearsals of this modern band with many of them being from student to student both exclusively and inclusively through peer mentoring. To a lesser extent, socializing occurred between the teacher and the students as attested to in both classroom observations and interview data.

In a study by Madsen (2011), the results of tutoring and interacting with others develop over time and bonding is significant for those that are mentoring others, even in times where there is a significant age difference. Aaron noted that “it [the relaxed environment] helps us learn more, it keeps us like, you come here every day because you

know it's not gonna be a competition, it's gonna be somewhere where you can have fun but also learn at the same time." The absence of competition within the group helped students to develop in other ways, as was found by Whitener (2016) who saw an increase in cooperation and a development of social skills when encouraged to exist in a more cooperative rather than competitive space.

Other students referenced the benefit of participating in a group that allowed for social interaction, joking, and friendship building in a relaxed atmosphere. In many instances, the group took advantage of downtime to interact socially with each other and build up bonds of friendship amidst practicing, jamming, or conversing about musical and non-musical topics. For Elizabeth, there was not as much social interaction in the group. Dr. Anderson noted that Elizabeth was a younger Sophomore in the school and extremely new to interacting within the group. As the year progressed, Elizabeth found herself bonding with classmates and benefiting from the expertise and experience they brought to her, recalling the findings of Madsen (2011) regarding the development of relational bonds. Elizabeth was predisposed to being quiet and self-reliant, Dr. Anderson mentioned that she "likes to be on her own" and the fact that there was one to two years age difference between her and the other members may have contributed to her more significant, but not total lack of interaction within the group. Elizabeth was in the minority of the group with her limited interaction with peers. She may not have had time to fully matriculate into the ensemble, although it did become noticeable that she was interacting more towards the latter part of the year. On the opposite end of the spectrum, the group of acoustic guitar players often played together, laughed, and conversed about

various topics at will. Matthew appeared comfortable with the relationships he had in the group finding himself often standing right next to other students and talking about musical and non-musical topics, where his entrances were, and other vocal topics with his peers.

Frequent socializing in the group was a key tenet in the forming of bonds that may have in turn led to greater success through the peer mentoring that occurred. As students experienced stronger bonds with each other, the comfort level of interacting may have increased. Peer mentoring relies on trust between those engaged in the process and positive socializing can serve to build that trust. The act of peer mentoring and socializing are not mutually exclusive and for this group, both were present. The four main themes of socializing in this modern band were centered around musical discussion, joking and humorous interaction, peer to peer encouragement, and social bonding.

### ***Musical Socializing***

Social interactions between students often took place in conversations focused on musical topics with discussion of preferences, current artists, and prevalent themes in the music they were interested in. These conversations occurred mostly at the beginning and end of each rehearsal but also during the downtime in between song run-throughs. These types of conversations were present, especially in times when excessive downtime occurred due to technical difficulties or other school-related issues. Various groups of students in the ensemble discussed a myriad of musical topics. These included references and discussion on how to end a song, which notes to accent, and their peers' musical

styles. The group would discuss the speed of the songs they were playing, and Aaron (drummer) would frequently speak to specific students about their rhythm and tempo. Other examples were when Brian and Aaron discussed the group's lack of energy while playing the song "Perfect" as others spoke about hip-hop and its relation to poetry. These types of musical discussions were important in the development of students' understanding of each other. These findings parallel those of Reid (2015) who intentionally grouped students so that musical conversations could informally follow and happen naturally in the breaks between formal rehearsals. The musical conversations between students in this study happened naturally and served to inform both other students and Dr. Anderson of the current interests of the ensemble's members. As song selections had a direct impact on peer mentoring, not knowing the music that students were interested in may have directly impacted the opportunities for peer mentoring to occur.

Students often used the time at the end of rehearsal to discuss musical choices related to the songs they were playing. Aaron, Brian, and Jeff took opportunities at the end of many classes to discuss musical choices they made during that day's run-through, their plans for moving forward, and questions that needed to be answered. This type of interaction also occurred with Kenny during the beginning of many rehearsals where the group discussed songs they were going to be playing that day, helped each other get set up, and tuned their instruments. The musical socializing between students was evident to Mr. Falcone who said:

Sometimes a student can explain it better than a teacher can. They have similar points of view. I can think I'm being perfectly clear and then a student can go over and be like 'do this' and they get it from their peers versus my intense, theoretical description.

The students in the group would discuss helpful approaches, practice techniques, and other musical topics as part of their direct involvement with the music that the ensemble was working on, but these conversations often extended to music that they were interested in outside of the ensemble's practices. A common practice of the group was to start each rehearsal with musical discussion surrounding what their tasks were for that day and any looming issues that needed to be figured out ahead of time. Dr. Anderson would encourage this type of interaction by commonly asking "what do we need to work on?" and "what needs help?" as a continuation of his fostering of student agency.

In one winter rehearsal of "Perfect," Jeff and Dylan sat next to each other, which was somewhat unusual for the pair. Both students conversed frequently around issues of musical preference and musical characteristics of the song during this rehearsal. They agreed as to how slow the song's tempo seemed in their opinion while listening to the studio recording of the song. They also agreed that their interest level in playing the song was extremely low as it lacked the feel and usual drive of the groups' other song choices. Their proximity to each other aided in the conversation's natural flow and continued progression. On another occasion, Dylan socialized with Joan as they were listening to "Day Tripper." The pair discussed the vague and somewhat confusing lyrics of the song. They spoke to each other referencing their uncertainty and interpretations of what lines like "I found out" truly meant as well as a discussion surrounding what the people who wrote the song were doing at night since they were "tripping during the day."

The musical topics that Dylan and James discussed included songs they were listening to, artists they liked, guitarists they were trying to imitate, and specific guitar riffs they were practicing. The pair would often use the time in between songs to showcase various musical material to each other that they were practicing on their own time. They both loved rock and metal bands like Metallica, AC/DC, and Nirvana. The riffs they played were not always recognizable to me, but they were fast and embodied characteristics of rock, hard rock, and metal music with their quick melodies and challenging technical aspects for the guitar player. Even when both students knew the music well, they would talk to each other and have conversations around the chords they were playing. In some instances, both students would listen to songs on their phones during rehearsals in between run-throughs, at the beginning of class, and sometimes at the end of class-time. They were often laughing, admiring songs they were listening to, talking about music in a general sense, the difficulty of songs they were playing in class, and their overall musical preferences. In some instances, Dr. Anderson was quick to say “put your phones away” but at the same time, he occasionally let the infraction slide as he seemed to be aware of the musical nature of what was happening.

This type of open dialogue in the classroom occurred frequently between other members of the group as well. Joan was often involved in musical socializing with her peers. During “Day Tripper” in a late fall rehearsal, Joan and Lauren discussed and demonstrated for each other the difference between their full voices and their head voice to achieve falsetto. Joan was a generous student when it came to her time spent sharing and mentoring her peers. She would take the time to discuss musical topics with other

students such as Kenny, the group's electric guitarist. In one rehearsal, the pair spent a significant amount of time talking about their fondness for the song "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" by Green Day and its various musical characteristics. While the pair could have opted to converse about any topic during the first few minutes of this rehearsal, they chose to use it to socialize with their common bond of musical preferences. During a separate conversation, the pair discussed their love of gypsy jazz and some of the songs they each liked in that style. Kenny (electric guitar), Brian (bass), Jeff (keyboard), and Aaron (drums) frequently conversed with each other about musical topics as well. In a discussion surrounding the chorus of "Say it Ain't So," the four students discussed the overarching differences and similarities between the verse and chorus of the song. Kenny said, "they're all the same chords" while Brian and Jeff mentioned that they should be "digging into" and "really leaning into" the chorus to get an edgier and more distinctive sound and feel.

Elizabeth was one of the more social reserved students in the ensemble, but she often engaged in socialization about musical topics with her peers, suggesting that she may have found these topics easier to discuss. On one occasion, Joan and Elizabeth walked over to each other on the side of the room, talked about a particular section of the song they were rehearsing and starting audibly laughing when they discussed a funny incident that transpired during the last run-through. Elizabeth used musical topics to engage in socializing with one of her peers, Lauren, as well. Elizabeth seemed to gravitate towards only a few of the other students in the group. She and Lauren took time to discuss the implications and preferences surrounding the various sounds that Elizabeth

could use on the iPad to go along with her keyboard playing. This modern band, much as Powell (2019) found in a previous study, was able to integrate the use of technology more easily into the classroom and ensemble space. The pair laughed and enjoyed themselves as they experimented with the multitude of sounds that the iPad held, inclusive of some that were very strange, made very odd noises, and were completely impractical to the group's sound. This interaction was indicative of the social transition of Elizabeth who began the year as an onlooker and moved towards participation. Later on, she found herself talking to Dylan about current songs they were both interested in. This interaction took place at the beginning of a winter rehearsal when they were the only two that had arrived at the rehearsal on time that day. They discussed pop songs that they were both listening to and the songs that the group was contemplating performing such as "Perfect" and "All Star." They remarked to each other that they both did not especially like "All Star" and were much more inclined to play the more contemplative song, "Perfect" by Ed Sheeran. They continued to discuss who they thought would prefer each song in the group if they were split in opinion. Their conversation came to an abrupt halt when other members of the group began entering the room.

This progression of increased participation echoes the findings of Green and Walmsley (2009). The researchers posited that "learning by listening and watching peers is a central informal learning practice" (p. 4) and shared that "experience suggests that as time goes by these pupils [those with less cooperation previously] become increasingly active and involved through their own motivation and through the co-operation and encouragement of other group members" (p. 4). Musical conversations were



commonplace for students in the group. These types of casual musical conversations could be seen as predecessors for peer mentoring in the group. As students became more comfortable discussing musical topics with each other, they may have had more comfort in discussing musical topics more focused on each other's playing in the group and ways that their peers could benefit musically from peer mentoring.

### ***Joking Around***

Joking, humor, lighthearted teasing, and overall playfulness were also aspects of socializing that occurred during the rehearsals of this modern band. Cremata and Powell (2017) noted that playfulness is an important component that enables a learning context to be rich in constructivist learning. Commensurately, jesting, jovialness, and laughter within the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band were commonplace. As a by-product of a relaxed atmosphere, the students were able to be themselves and find joy and laughter within the ensemble through joking around and having fun with their peers. As per student interview and observational data, this element was definitive of the modern band and provided students with self-proclaimed escape and enjoyment during their school days. The joking that occurred was not only from student to student but also occasionally involved Dr. Anderson. The slight and infrequent teasing in this ensemble was largely through playful sarcasm from one student to another or general joking about a situation that was occurring or had occurred. While I observed and found data to support the claim of benefit from a jovial atmosphere, it is understandable that all members may not have seen the playfulness of the ensemble as a positive aspect of their

experience. While no student outwardly expressed feeling dissatisfied, offended, or slighted by the humor of the group, these feelings may have been in existence and not necessarily brought to my attention through the observations, individual, or group interviews. Björck (2013) noted that in spaces of mixed gender, girls, in particular, may often feel that they have been marginalized and not empowered to speak up or occupy an equal amount of verbal and authoritative space in the ensemble and Johnson (2013) documented instances of peer pressure present in peer mentoring situations. Though such episodes and conceptions were not captured through data collection during this study, I am aware that it was possible they occurred. I also acknowledge the implications that gender may have played a significant role in how students interacted within the group but a full investigation into this aspect of the group's learning, communication, and collaboration were not within the scope of this study.

Mr. Falcone noted that, socially, "in modern band, they [the students] bust each other's chops. They interact, I want to say, somewhat like professional musicians. They're very opinionated and outspoken." Dr. Anderson saw this as well in saying that "they [the students] may help each other sometimes in a funny way like "play it like that, you idiot" trying to sound like they're saying it in not the most polite of ways." Jeff was the chief jokester in the class. He would make at least one reference to the TV show, *The Office* during each of the ensemble's rehearsals. To be coy and a bit crude, he would often utter "that's what she said" to break up the group's serious undertakings and lighten the mood. Inevitably, the group would laugh if the joke were timed well and made sense or shake their heads in disagreement if it did not. Dr. Anderson would always laugh a bit

and shake his head in a way that indicated his mix of frustration as a facilitator and humorous nature as a person. He said:

You just can't get offended. Obviously, you see *The Office* sense of humor is very prevalent in this class. If they like that stuff, and nobody gets offended by anything, you know, let it go, it's fine as these are high school kids.

Jeff would often make humorous sounds through his keyboard to go along with what was happening in the rehearsal, including the use of an applause sound. His humor appeared innocent and never grossly inappropriate for the setting. His jokes were more along the lines of, "did you know the moon landing was a hoax?" when the class referenced their intent on playing the song "Fly Me to the Moon" or referencing the movie *Shrek* when a song was included in the movie's soundtrack. Jeff was humorous and fun, and the class seemed to enjoy his presence. When Aaron asked the class what they should do at the end of "Say it Ain't So" for their upcoming winter concert, Jeff said, "we have to throw stuff at them like they do in rock concerts." In one instance, he joked around with the bass player saying, "come on Brian, come on, Brian, get with the program, Brian!" to razz his friend. Other studies (Amabile, 1996; Reiter-Palmon et al., 2014) have found that low anxiety work environments, complete with humor and playfulness, have correlated to an increase in creativity. The playfulness of the group enabled students to engage in friendly, jovial conversations which may have contributed to their development of creativity and engagement in nonformal learning tactics like peer mentoring existing in a space that engendered playfulness and camaraderie.

Students such as Aaron and Jeff had a special relationship with Dr. Anderson. They would joke around with each other occasionally in a lighthearted and playful

manner. Even while this type of interaction was present, it was obvious that Jeff held Dr. Anderson in high regard both as a person, an authoritative figure in the class, and as a quasi-peer. This was evident in how Jeff felt comfortable joking around in a teasing way towards Dr. Anderson and in turn, Dr. Anderson seemed to take no offense to what was being said. In one instance, Jeff joked around mentioning how other students were speaking poorly of Dr. Anderson to which he responded with “okay, Jeff, thanks so much” in a way that Dr. Anderson was showing he was understanding the joke that was being made. The relationship between these two people was an enjoyable dynamic to watch from an observer’s point of view. Like Jeff, Aaron was also aware of the jovial dynamic between student and teacher. He said that “Anderson’s a funny guy, he gives us a lot of trouble, almost as much as we give him.”

Regarding the jovial nature between students, Lauren and Joan enjoyed the times where they could joke around with each other. They would often look at each other during the rehearsals and laugh. Lauren said, “I don’t know, we’re [her and Joan] friends so we always do silly faces at each other and it’s almost like dancing around. I don’t think it has anything to do with the music.” The ensemble’s members made jokes around myriad topics such as funny song lyrics like those in “Day Tripper” where Joan said, “if she’s a day tripper then what is she doing at night?”

Technical difficulties prompted opportunities for jovialness in rehearsals. On one occasion, the ensemble had a laughable time when sounds coming from the iPad went awry. This situation presented a time where the group found humor during an awkward setting. Dr. Anderson was playing around with the technical aspects of the iPad during a

run-through of “Day Tripper” when the sound became overly loud, almost drowning out the other students. Most students in the group began looking at each other, laughing, and making comments on the excessive volume coming from the amplifier that the iPad was plugged into. Eventually, Lauren and Joan started to say it was too loud and Dr. Anderson joined the group in laughing at the mistake and found a way to turn the volume down. Afterward, Dylan and Elizabeth both laughed with Dr. Anderson after he mentioned to them that he would help Elizabeth with the sounds. The group worked well through the craziness of the ensemble and seemed to bond through humor and laughing. This situation was indicative of the acceptance of technical difficulties. The group encouraged each other through their triumphs, but also through their disappointments. While Vasil et al. (2019) noted that “failure is understood to be a part of the creative process” (p. 4) regarding composition, its meaning remains true in a general sense for the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band. For the students in the ensemble, learning through failing was an acceptable method of improvement, as was demonstrated and displayed by Dr. Anderson himself.

Other students found connections through joking and teasing each other as well. While Kenny was initially working through his electric guitar solo in “Californication” during a fall rehearsal, Aaron and Brian were playfully mocking him by saying he had to learn the solo perfectly during that rehearsal but then told him to calm down and relax as they were just joking around with him. In a similar context during a run-through of “Day Tripper,” Aaron (drummer) playfully teased Lauren (playing the tambourine) by loudly exclaiming, “let’s go, Lauren!” as they began a run-through. This lighthearted teasing

was always very obviously in jest and each of the students seemed to be aware of this fact. In some ways, it seemed to signal that they were accepting of their peers through humor. This type of playful interaction built up the social bonds for the group's members. While peer mentoring may not have been a learning tactic informed by or influenced by joking or teasing, these types of social interactions served to build bonds between members which may in turn have made peer mentoring an easier endeavor for the ensemble.

### ***Peer Encouragement***

Many students took it upon themselves to be overtly encouraging to their peers during the modern band rehearsals. Through this, students created an environment where their peers felt supported and uplifted. As a byproduct of an autonomous classroom, students had the agency and authority to display encouragement to their peers and did not seem to rely solely on Dr. Anderson to dispense approval. During instances of peer mentoring, it may have been important for students to feel a sense of positivity and encouragement from their peers to engage in this sometimes critical type of interaction. The successful implementation of peer mentoring in this ensemble may have been due, in part, to the encouraging nature of the frequent social interactions within the group. In this modern band, Dr. Anderson relinquished part of his unilateral control of who oversaw encouraging and praising when it came to student success and progress. The student members of this ensemble were not pushed to encourage each other by Dr. Anderson and received no increase in opportunity within the ensemble by doing so. The students

encouraged each other passively and casually throughout their time together. While he may not have explicitly directed them to be encouraging to their peers, Dr. Anderson appreciated the way in which they did so. He mentioned that he noticed how the students were being encouraging toward each other and how it was “especially cool to see them being that way towards Kenny” on the electric guitar.

Kenny’s rehearsals and performance of the electric guitar solo in “Californication” were indicative of how students encouraged each other. Aaron mentioned to Jeff, in reference to Kenny’s guitar playing, that “this guy is going places!” Throughout the rehearsals and performance of “Californication” for the group, Kenny was the recipient of plenty of peer encouragement. After a particularly good run-through of Kenny’s guitar solo, lots of his peers hollered congratulations towards him as they moved to the next part of the song. Various students called out, “killing it!” and “ya, Kenny!” Other students typically called out sounds like “woo!” to encourage his efforts. After many run-throughs of the song, more praise was sent to Kenny through his peers with exclamations of “great job” and “nice work” and on one occasion a rousing applause sound from Jeff on the keyboard. Jeff paired his keyboard applause with non-verbal body language aimed at Kenny with head nods to show his approval of his performance. When Aaron followed up this moment by saying “when you go to play the chorus and the solo, turn it up!” Lauren joined in by noting, “what a good suggestion.” To follow up his suggestion with her own encouragement, Joan added “that was good!” Peer encouragement played a key role in the positive environment that defined this ensemble as it did in an ensemble studied by Kenny (2013) where a particular member of the group

encouraged and challenged their peers to push the boundaries of their comfort level to bring the group as a whole to a higher level of competency.

The group was close, and they showed their bond through encouragement towards each other. In one setting where students were discussing topics amongst themselves in small groups, Jeff walked in late and the whole group stopped what they were doing and started calling out “happy birthday!” to him. The students appeared to care about each other and showed it in various ways. In one early winter rehearsal, all students were accounted for except Brian, the group’s bass player. The students remarked that they had called him at lunchtime to see where he was that day and woke him up. They had reached out to him to see if he was ill and proceeded to relay that to the class when everyone, including Dr. Anderson, inquired about his whereabouts. At that point, Joan stepped up to cover the bass part in addition to her vocal responsibilities of the song. After her first take, Dr. Anderson, as well as the other students in the group, congratulated her on the great performance and her help with stepping up and covering the bass guitar part for the group.

In another similar case, the group encouraged Kenny to try out singing when it was clear that Joan was not interested in being the lead vocalist. In the end, Matthew chose to sing the song. Matthew was a student who officially came into the group later in the school year, only after the group had returned from their December break. He was somewhat shy and reserved but showed himself to be a talented singer and guitar player, even experimenting with his own instrumental compositions. As Matthew solidified himself as the vocalist for “Say it Ain’t So,” the front row acoustic guitar players, Lauren



and Joan, showered him with praise to help his confidence grow while singing the song in front of the group. As soon as the run-through ended, the group added in “great job!” and “nice!” to bolster his morale. The run-through concluded with Lauren shouting out, “show us the way!” to Matthew referencing the chords he was playing while singing. The group agreed that Matthew did well in this vulnerable situation, and they made sure he knew how they felt.

Many other students in the group were part of this give and take of peer encouragement. At the end of one December rehearsal of the modern band, Joan and Lauren walked up to Aaron, without prompting and simply told him that “he was awesome” that day during the group’s rehearsal. Students were encouraged by each other, which in turn led to an increase in joy, camaraderie, and support. As noted by Austin (2018), as peers provide support, acceptance, modeling, and encouragement through their interactions, they support each other not only musically but psychologically. In the ensemble, these mentoring relationships were very informal and as Austin (2018) said, “informal mentoring relationships also are considered vital elements of a more comprehensive mentoring milieu” (p. 7).

### ***Social Bonding of Students***

Throughout the year’s rehearsals, students bonded on a social level through their participation in modern band. Many ensemble members expressed that they had made friends with other ensemble members during their time in modern band and many others noted that participation in the ensemble served to strengthen the bonds they had

previously formed. Green and Walmsley (2009) similarly found that the opportunity for students to work alongside their friends was a “major motivational factor as well as an aid to group cooperation” (p. 5). Working alongside friends was a potential reason that peer mentoring worked well in the group and aided in the cohesive nature of the ensemble. The encouragement of interaction amongst friends became an integral part of learning for students and a source of motivation for learning both musically and socially. In some cases, other vocal students in the school were eager to collaborate with the ensemble. Dr. Anderson said that those students would say “oh, next time I wanna sing a song with you guys.” He continued to say that participation in the modern band “connects the students with other communities at large, the school community. I have had students that weren’t even in my class where we start collaborating and writing music together.” In interviews, students mentioned friendships and socializing as being an integral part of the ensemble. This suggests that peer mentoring, socializing, and friendships may not have been mutually exclusive endeavors within the ensemble. These students cited friendship as being a key component of success in many areas, notably peer critiquing and encouragement. Dr. Anderson also noted that, even through live performances, the ensemble’s members connected with other peers in the audience thanks to the shared musical interests of their larger school community.

In a general sense, socializing was woven throughout the ensemble’s day to day rehearsals. Socializing was never a conscious undertaking or something that was overtly required or directed by Dr. Anderson. Friendship appeared to be highly valued by the members of this ensemble. Students would often check in with each other at the

beginning of a rehearsal, asking how they were doing and making note of who was absent and whether they were going to be showing up for rehearsal. Professional growth was evident here through the development of peer mentoring and accountability, similar to the findings of a study by Draves (2017). The group operated best as a whole, and the students seemed to strive for the cohesive nature of an entire ensemble experience. Joan mentioned that in modern band “it’s more laid back, we don’t just talk about music but if someone needs help, we’re there.” The social interactions and bonds that were present situated peer mentoring as an applicable way for peers to help each other. In the previously mentioned study, Draves (2017) noted that participants found comfort in discussing matters and issues amongst those in similar situations and of similar age. The bonds that the students in this study formed may have occurred in part due to the empathy built up through peer mentoring and the support they received from each other, much like was found by Draves.

Aspects of socializing occurred that had nothing to do with music practice or pedagogy as well. Micro-examples of these were times when Brian, would offer students a piece of gum while other students would share candy and ask around to see if anyone had any bottles of water. Conversational topics included, but were never limited to the weather, other classes, getting haircuts, mustache growth, and their favorite show, *The Office*. Other conversations revolved around students’ grades in other subjects, everyone’s age, students being tired and exhausted, and current fundraisers going on at the school. The group was largely open and transparent with each other in many ways. This openness in the group showed the comfort level that many of the students had with

each other. Through the socializing that occurred, students became more familiar with each other. As students became more familiar with each other and more comfortable with interaction amongst group members, peer mentoring may have had more of a chance to be a successful learning tactic for the ensemble. During their second rehearsal of “Californication” in the fall, Kenny said “this is actually my first time playing an electric guitar” to the rest of his peers before embarking on taking a guitar solo on the instrument. Other occasions where this presented itself were when the group knew that it was one of its member’s birthdays, there was always an energetic rendition of “Happy Birthday” sung and played.

In a more specific example of this type of socializing, Dylan and James almost always sat next to each other in class and maintained a friendship throughout the year. They conversed frequently regarding many topics and always preferentially worked with each other. Their friendship seemed to exist prior to my observations but strengthened over the course of the year. Their presence in the classroom was typically a bit distanced from the rest of the group. They interacted with the group as a whole and with other members but prioritized this more intimate friendship between themselves during their time in the ensemble. The modern band provided avenues for students to develop and create new friendships as well. Compared to other classes, Dylan said that “they’re boring and it stinks when you can’t make friends” in reference to more standardized subjects like math and language arts. Speaking more to these types of contrasting experiences, Gabriella said “in guitar class [a common alternative reference to modern band in their setting], you can be social, but you can also be serious. It has to have that

balance in order to get something done.”

When asked what her experience was like in modern band compared to other classes that were more teacher-focused, Lauren stated, “we definitely get closer as a group, you know friends wise.” Joan agreed with her that the modern band learning environment was a positive experience and “it helped establish the relationship for me and her [another student in class], friend wise and now she’s one of my closest friends.” The entire group agreed that the interaction with their peers strengthened their friendships in the group and Jeff candidly noted that the environment, inclusive of peer mentoring, “helps you grow as a person.” Brian, as a senior in the group and one of the more reflective students, said, “at a certain point you have to move on from this, but there is a connection between the personal things.” Lauren also framed the bonds that were being created in a succinct way saying that “everybody has a special part. Let’s say we didn’t play the parts that are shown it wouldn’t sound good. If Brian wasn’t there it wouldn’t sound right. If he [Aaron] wasn’t there it most definitely wouldn’t sound right because everybody has a part.”

Communication between the ensemble’s members played a large role in initially forming and strengthening their social bonds through participation in modern band. The social bonds that Joan created over the years in the group were crucial to her development as a person as she said, “I don’t talk to people often so when I came to modern band freshman year it kinda helped me. Progressively through the years, there were different people in the class. Communication about different things made it get better for me.” She continued to say that “this year, after we started playing the pop

songs, I started to make more friendships here.” Joan also mentioned that communicating with both Dr. Anderson and her peers became easier after the time spent with the group. As students began to encourage each other, they strengthened their bonds of friendship. Harrington (2016), as referenced earlier, noted that “bonding in peer relationships may occur as students encourage one another by building trust through constructive criticism and achieving consensus towards rehearsal and performance goals” (p. 16). This was evident in the relationships that were formed and solidified in the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band as well. As students criticized each other and positively encouraged their peers, their bonds strengthened. This was likely a by-product of Dr. Anderson embodying the role of a facilitator and allowing for students to be themselves through an increase in autonomy. Lauren said, “yes, cause you’re not born knowing everything, so you have to talk about it.” Brian then added that “the music isn’t gonna become music or sound good if you guys don’t communicate and work it out properly” to which Dylan closed out the subject by saying “I think it’s also a main part of the band cause if you don’t communicate with each other you don’t know how to go or where to go with it.” These comments reinforced the mentality that the group had in helping each other and the desire to mentor their peers and co-construct the ensemble.

Students in the group were inviting towards each other in building their social bonds. In similar studies by Wells (1990) and Draves (2017), the implementation of peer mentoring led to a strengthening of the relationships between peers. For Jeff, playing in the ensemble was “like we were hanging out and having fun. We’re also trying to make it sound good though!” Through peer mentoring, peer encouragement, and peer critique,

students helped each other throughout the year. As students frequently praised Kenny and built up his morale, other students used non-verbal communication to relay positive and constructive feedback to each other. Alexander and Dorow (1983) found similar results when it came to the notion that through positive approval techniques, musicality would increase. They found that the benefits of tutoring are prevalent no matter what techniques are used. This supports my observation of how students in this ensemble benefited from various types of mentoring delivered from various peers.

Jeff and Brian frequently communicated in this way and built up their social communication skills and bonds without verbal interaction. Brian noted that “the friendship helps because it just makes everything easier, like the communication and just getting along better.” He also said that he did not think there would be so much conversation regarding the music and the ensemble if the friendships were not present. Similar to results found by Harrington (2016), students identified becoming closer with each other through the relaxed atmosphere, inclusive of socializing through conversation. This also aligns with Foster (2014) who noted that these types of peer mentoring bonds increased students’ comfort levels due in part to the interaction with peers and the validation that they received from a support structure akin to community.

Dr. Anderson was conscious of the social bonds that were created and reinforced during the group’s time together. He knew that several of the students were friends and that there was “camaraderie between sections, people in particular sections, like the ones who are all playing acoustics and the ones who are playing electrics.” Peer mentoring was evident in the group as Dr. Anderson went on to say that:

There is a type of relationship there. I don't know but it's all being communicated on their own level, not like a teacher would. The stuff that we've done, it's doing it through like their social interactions. Of course, they are interacting with each other but also, I think they are looking, and they need to bring things up to each other. I mean these kids; they definitely love being here in a sense as we have like a little family. Jeff doesn't say much in other classes. He may not talk in other classes; he just sits there. It's [the rehearsals] to a fault sometimes because it gets too carried away, where it's too loose but it's what they need, and they always pull it back together. There is definitely a family bond going on. It's cool to see them grow up here and make choices. They get to see and realize what and how their actions and decisions play out.

### **Summary of Findings**

The relaxed atmosphere and informal approach of the ensemble crafted by Dr. Anderson gave opportunity for students to express themselves and build social bonds. Part of the social bonding that occurred stemmed from the lighthearted nature of the group indicative by the joking, teasing, and general tomfoolery present in each rehearsal. By allowing students to joke around with each other free from worry of chastisement from their teacher, the general nature of the class was positive and fun. The ensemble appeared to be made up of happy students who were able to enjoy themselves while present in the ensemble. Dr. Anderson established a respectful environment with his students and always made sure that any jokes made were playful and not harmful. Dr. Anderson established an appropriate balance of joking and respectfulness for his students. While the limited presence of a formal educator could bring on more behavioral issues and classroom management issues, the established level of mutual respect for students by Dr. Anderson and for him by the students was clear. The group bonded through joking and the atmosphere that was created through this joking encouraged positive student



behavior. The students were free to have fun and with this freedom came a desire to be present and active within the group, helping to better the group through peer mentoring. As found by Rogers (1969), the active participation within the group may have led to an increase in learning and may have provided a context for a heightened level of retention.

The relaxed atmosphere of the group also enabled students to not take their mistakes too seriously which in turn may have kept their anxiety levels low. By creating an environment where students were free to explore and make mistakes, they were more confident in their abilities and stress levels seemed to be kept to a minimum. In the adaptive role of a facilitator, Dr. Anderson embodied the recommendation of Green and Walmsley (2009) in keeping his distance while students explored, potentially made mistakes, and worked towards their goals autonomously. Green and Walmsley (2009) as well as Clauhs et al. (2020) recommended that teachers not overly influence each situation but leave space for students to work with each other. Once a student comes to their own solution, they (the teacher and student) can “spend a few minutes in musical dialogue, with the pupil attempting to pick up and copy what the teacher is demonstrating” (Green and Walmsley, 2009, p. 12). This was evident in a setting where Elizabeth and Dr. Anderson played the iPad with some very unusual sounds. In a more traditional ensemble, she may have felt a level of heightened anxiety due to a public-facing mistake and misstep on her part even though she was sitting next to the facilitator. In this case, the group was able to laugh it off and move on.

Students were free to break away from the rigid approaches in their other classes and be more of themselves in the modern band. They moved about freely, engaged in

dialogue about topics of their choice, and participated in nonformal learning practices like peer mentoring. Dr. Anderson crafted a space of freedom for his students but kept the students focused when the environment ever veered to close to unproductivity.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE STUDENTS

This chapter serves to present thematic data that focus on the interactions of the students within the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band. I describe five themes: (1) Peer Mentoring and Direct Assistance; (2) Visual Modeling and Aural Learning; (3) Sharing Knowledge Between Students; (4) Peer Critique; and (5) Speaking Our Language.

The first theme (Peer Mentoring and Direct Assistance) highlights the mentoring of one student to another focusing on peer-to-peer interaction where one student was clearly mentoring another. These instances provided evidence of there being a singular mentor and a subsequent mentee in the process. Various students in the group found themselves reciprocally acting as mentors and mentees throughout the course of the year's rehearsals. While some students served more as mentors than mentees, each student benefited from the mentorship of their peers at some point to some degree. Students seemed eager to mentor each other and Dr. Anderson encouraged this tenet of group learning. The second theme (Visual Modeling and Aural Learning) examines the ways in which students relayed information to each other and their heavy reliance on visual modeling and learning by ear. Students used nonformal learning tactics with each other and approached mentoring in ways that were most appropriate to each of their contexts. The third theme of this chapter (Sharing Knowledge Between Students) shows an indirect and less structured form of peer mentoring between students. In these cases, there were no obvious designations of mentor and mentee roles. In more relaxed, casual, and informal ways, students shared their knowledge and experience in small groups and

with the entire class. Sub-themes within this section include Non-Verbal Communication and The Proximity Factor, showcasing the impact of a student's physical location on peer mentoring. The fourth theme of Peer Critique shows the ways in which students gave and received criticism and feedback from each other. Most students preferred to hear feedback and critique from their peers as opposed to Dr. Anderson, but some felt otherwise. The fifth and final theme (Speaking Our Language) serves to emphasize how students found communication between their peers to be more easily understood compared to communication with their teacher, almost as if there existed a unique set of words and phrases that made more sense to their own group.

### **Peer Mentoring and Direct Assistance**

Students in this modern band leaned heavily on their peers for mentoring, guidance, and the knowledge they sought. In many cases, students took on the role of a mentor to their peers in musical and non-musical ways. As Whitener (2016) noted, peer mentoring is a necessary component of learning when an educator takes on a role more akin to a facilitator. Mentorship roles were not pre-determined by the group's facilitator and never scripted. In these instances, a single student was clearly mentoring another. No student appeared to be in a mentor or mentee role permanently in the group as these roles fluctuated and were never formally defined in the relaxed atmosphere and loose approach to learning that was set by Dr. Anderson. When Dr. Anderson reflected on how this class differed from others in this regard, he noted that "it's a different thing when they're creating music compared to other classes or playing instruments. They're [the students] playing and they're talking and they're listening to each other, and their bodies are part of

this creation of outcomes.”

Students helped each other through verbal, physical, and visual instruction with many specific musical examples dealing with songs that the group was rehearsing and others they were interested in. As in studies by Goodrich (2007, 2016), peer mentoring was shown to help students in this ensemble develop their musical skills. In Goodrich’s (2007) study, seasoned and unseasoned students saw musical benefits from learning with their peers. Students noted that their playing improved thanks to the mentorship they received from their peers. The Washington Ave. Arts High ensemble’s members were often eager to help guide and mentor each other. This was evident in the ways they interacted with one another and the observable times that students needed help and received it from varying members of the group. These types of interactions were present in small groups but also in more obvious situations where the whole ensemble would be aware of the interactions.

Peer mentorship began early in the year for many students. During a fall rehearsal of “Californication,” Kenny (electric guitar) was tasked with playing a notable and seemingly challenging guitar solo. When it became obvious that there needed to be a distinction in the volume of the electric guitar to contrast the time when Kenny was strumming chords, Aaron was there to assist him. Aaron helped Kenny get set up with the electric guitar, showing him how it should be positioned and how to get his gear set up. From there, Aaron advised him on the volume level needed to really make the solo “cut through” as he said. As Kenny played the solo, Aaron (seated near him) leaned over to the amp and turned the volume up so he could be heard over the rest of the instruments.

In an interview, Aaron said that the electric guitar was “sometimes up a little too loud so I help turn him down” as well. As Kenny began getting more comfortable with the solo, he still needed rhythmic help from Aaron on the drum kit. This type of interaction proved to be musically beneficial for Kenny in terms of the accuracy of the notes he played.

As the group rehearsed the solo section of “Californication,” Aaron would call out rhythm cues to Kenny to help him return back to the chordal section of the song with simple numbers and phrases like “back to the intro” as he played a drum fill to help guide him. Kenny noted that he also got help from Brian, who played bass guitar, “whenever I ask him [Bryan] for help with any notes.” In an interview, Brian said “ya, I’ve helped Kenny because Kenny can’t read. I’m pretty sure he knows how to read tab, but he never learned how to read, except tab, so I always helped him with the notes.” At one point during a spring rehearsal, Kenny looked to Joan and said, “I don’t know what I’m doing in this song” to which Joan gave him help. All the students in the group agreed that it was helpful when they received assistance from their peers. Aaron even noted that “I also feel like we’re learning more, too” when it came to this type of interaction with his peers.

All the ensemble’s members were in both a mentor and a mentee role at some point in the group’s rehearsals throughout the year. Kenny was not only a mentee but a mentor on occasion. He noted a previous experience with another member of the ensemble as well with one of the group’s previous members. Kenny reflected that he “actually got better by teaching another student” and that “it was nice to help her.” He also noted that he helped to teach James during the rehearsals.

This movement between roles had a positive effect on the transmission and

acceptance of knowledge in the group, much like was found by Foster (2014) through reciprocal peer mentoring where there were no official designations of who was mentor or mentee in each situation. This was very similar to the ways in which students operated within the Washington Ave. Arts High ensemble, without hierarchies of mentorship or pre-established roles. Kenny, for example, may have been more open to receiving mentoring as he moved through the roles of mentor/mentee when he needed help. Jellison et al. (2015) confirmed that while students have many spheres of influence in their lives, “some of the most influential and effective teachers of children are other children—siblings, school friends, and older children” (p. 18).

It was clear that Dr. Anderson was aware of the peer mentoring that was occurring in the ensemble. Aaron, who was very confident on the drums took many liberties with his playing and interpretations of the songs. Dr. Anderson noted that during one rehearsal, Aaron’s playing was not incorrect but lacked the correct style for the song. Dr. Anderson remarked that many of the other ensemble members advised Aaron to “tone it down” for the sake of the feel of the song. Dr. Anderson was clear, regarding the students, in saying that “they are definitely mentoring each other.” On a separate occasion, he said “they definitely help each other. I’ve seen a lot of times that a kid might get a chord mixed up like A major instead of A minor and they’ll correct that. They’ll correct chord shapes then they show them.” This may have been in reference to a specific occurrence where Jeff said to James, “watch out it’s A minor not A major.”

Direct mentorship was evident in how students interacted with each other when experience levels varied. Aaron directly helped Lauren who was playing the tambourine

part to “Day Tripper.” The rhythm was tricky for her and Aaron gave her advice on how to hold the instrument and keep up with the fast tempo. In turn, Lauren said, “here we go, Aaron!” in a spirited way as she counted off the song with him. Aaron was clearly the more experienced percussion player of the two and aided Lauren throughout the rehearsals of the song. As Lauren slowed in her rhythm on occasion, Aaron emphasized the beats to keep her on tempo. Lauren, as a younger and more inexperienced percussionist, was also thankful to hear from Aaron when it came to his advice on when to play quarter notes, eighth notes, or sixteenth notes as well as where to play and hit the tambourine physically. While student conversations in these settings were focused on musical topics, their social bonds developed through the interactions (Taylor, 2016), and Aaron developed crucial leadership skills through the process (Caswell, 2005; Goodrich, 2006, 2018; Sheldon, 2001). Modern band ensembles often include student-centered repertoire but also a promotion of student agency which manifests itself in leadership, according to Wish (2020). These opportunities for peer mentoring were likely possible thanks to the facilitative approach by Dr. Anderson as Shieh (2008) noted, teachers must be flexible in their leadership styles and give opportunities for students to be leaders for those skills to develop. Shieh posited that “leadership development cannot take place where individual differences are not validated and encouraged” (p. 47). Through Dr. Anderson’s advocacy of student leaders and peer mentors within his ensemble he in turn validated his students’ opinion, voices, and the knowledge they inherently possessed. Aaron, therefore, was able to develop his leadership skills through this student-centered approach which validated his opinions and values in a deterritorialized space for music



education.

Students who engaged as mentors also gained skills in leadership and a boost in their self-confidence. Lauren embodied a crucial role in the ensemble as one of its most experienced guitar players. Even as one of the younger students in the ensemble, she often played the role of a mentor when it came to playing guitar. Lauren did note though that she would converse and ask for help on occasion from other students that shared similar parts to hers on the guitar. She said that she sometimes helped both Gabriella and Matthew with their guitar playing as well as other students the previous year. Lauren also recounted a memorable time where she helped Gabriella during a rehearsal of “Day Tripper.” She helped with “chords like the part where we go [sings parts] with all the barre chords.” She noted specifically aiding Gabriella with more difficult chords like F# minor, G# minor, and B minor. She told her, in this case, to “put your fingers like this [mimicking chord shape with her hand].” Lauren went on to say to her that “we’re gonna try it and she messed up a few times but after I helped her more, she got it.” Lauren often took a very direct approach with her peers. This could be seen in her interaction with James when during a rehearsal she said “James, you’re not playing it right” and then proceeded to show him what to do to help him by saying “it’s E major, not E minor.” This type of interaction seemed to bolster the self-esteem of both students, similar to the findings of a study by Sprinthall et al. (1992) who found that both the peer mentors and the mentees benefited from the interactions. While it may seem like the mentee benefits most from the interaction, the authors found that skills akin to maturity and greater self-awareness were found to have developed in the mentor. Lauren was an example of a

student who seemed to benefit from this personal growth as she was able to develop leadership skills through peer mentoring.

The group's drummer, Aaron, was eager to help Joan when she stepped in to play bass guitar for one rehearsal. During that day's class, Brian, who usually played the bass, was absent. For fear of losing a crucial part of the group's sound, Joan volunteered to sing and play the bass simultaneously for the run-through of "Californication." Since she was very much out of her element, Aaron aided Joan by helping her get the electric bass guitar plugged in and reinforced some knowledge that was easily translated from her experience as an acoustic guitar player. In this case, much like many others, Aaron served as a mentor to Joan who was glad to have help from one of her peers. Joan recognized this fact when she said, "we're just all trying to keep calm about it and help each other." For these students, there was a personal satisfaction that came from engaging in peer mentoring as was also found by Foster (2014) who said that:

the participants...took pride in their ability to analyze both the academic and social needs of their classmates and respond effectively. The participants found satisfaction in their individual progress as well as that of the group, knowing that, through the process of peer mentoring, each of them had made a worthwhile contribution to the progress of this community of peers. (Foster, 2014, p. 219)

Students in the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band found similar pride and thankfulness regarding the bonding of community within the ensemble through engagement and mentorship of their peers.

Peer mentoring presented ways in which ensemble members could increase confidence in one another. Joan was typically a vocalist for each of the songs that the group rehearsed. Early in their rehearsals of each song, Joan appeared shy when it came

to singing in front of her peers. She was usually a confident person socially in the group but being in front of the microphone seemed to reduce her confidence. This may have been due to a combination of timidity and lack of preparation when it came to the rhythms and notes of the vocal lines she was singing. In one instance, Dr. Anderson was not able to get the vocal microphone working and she had to sing without amplification. As the group was eager to help Joan, almost all members present that day sang along with the song “Californication” to help Joan and bolster her confidence to sing loudly. In other cases where the vocal microphone was working as expected, Lauren sang along regardless of the presence of amplification to help with the entrances of each section where Joan struggled the most.

Lauren also helped John and other peers in similar ways. John joined the group for a brief time in the winter rehearsals and Lauren seemed aware that he needed some help at times. While John was vocally leading one of the songs, Lauren helped by mouthing words to him as well as giving him advice on notes after the run-through had concluded. Matthew and Aaron helped John as well, giving him advice when it came to his volume level in different sections of the song. Lauren’s mentorship was not reserved solely for guitarists or vocalists but also extended to one of the more reserved students in the group, Elizabeth, who played the iPad. Lauren sat next to Elizabeth for one rehearsal in the fall to help her work through the sounds on the iPad. It was clear that Lauren was an experienced musician and provided help and mentorship for various members of the groups. In this setting, Lauren was more experienced in the pairing and was able to assist her peer even though they had a notable difference in skill levels. Johnson (2017) found

similar results in a study that established peers to be able to mentor each other regardless of the variation in their skill levels.

Spacing and room setup also created opportunities for peer mentoring to occur. The way in which the room was set up gave Jeff and Joan easy ability to make eye contact. The group mostly faced the front of the rectangular space they rehearsed in while the vocalist(s) looked back at the instrumentalists. Positioned in these locations, Joan was standing at the front of the room singing to the group while Jeff was standing at the keyboard in her direct eye line. This helped in one rehearsal of the song “Day Tripper” where Joan was struggling with the melody of the song. It was clear that she had synced up visually and aurally with Jeff on the keys as he helped her with the melody by both singing and doubling it on the keyboard. This type of non-verbal communication and mentorship was not uncommon in the group. Dr. Anderson even noted during that rehearsal that he “really liked how you [directed towards all students] were helping each other out so that people knew where to go.” Cueing through visual and aural means were ways that peer mentoring occurred more informally.

Jeff (keyboard) and Brian (electric bass guitar) were close as friends and in proximity where they were found in the rehearsal space. According to Dr. Anderson, “Jeff and Brian are really close friends which is obvious...they definitely feed off of each other.” Brian took a somewhat centralized seat near the drum kit and Jeff was behind him, only a few feet away on the keyboard. Both students mentored each other at various times throughout the rehearsals much like Dylan and James. Jeff noted, “usually if I make a mistake, he [Brian] would tell me and then if I hear him do something that’s not right

then I'll say, "it's this way" and then we'll help each other out." He then added "like when we're in class, I help him sometimes like for "Snow (Hey Oh)" (Red Hot Chili Peppers, 2006) [previous song by the group]. It was a lot of notes, so it was confusing. He would ask for help and I would help him out here or there." Specifically, during the song "Say it Ain't So," Brian moved over to sit next to Jeff to ask him questions as to where to play each note. These types of exchanges were common in this relaxed atmosphere where students could move their seats to get direct mentorship from their peers.

Dylan and James often mentored and aided each other in their musical progress. This occurred when they ran into complicated chords, had trouble with strumming patterns, or were curious about the form of a particular song. They often helped each other tune their guitars, place capos where needed, and gave direction to each other. Both students were reserved when it came to addressing the group, other members of the ensemble individually, and the group's facilitator, Dr. Anderson. At the end of a particular rehearsal of "Day Tripper" in the fall, Dylan and James sat around for extra time after the rehearsal had concluded to help each other. In this case, Dylan was mainly helping James figure out the chords and voicings/positions that worked best on the guitar. Dylan helped him in a very subtle way but voiced terms like "no, like this" and "try it this way" proceeding to guide James where to place his left hand. This all occurred without prompting or intervention from the group's facilitator or other class members. Dylan said that James "taught me the notes like where to place my fingers. I was missing one note" when they were both learning how to play a B chord for "Day Tripper." He recalled

being thankful for that type of help and mentoring when he needed it. In a similar setting where these roles were reversed, Dylan said that James was, “playing the riff incorrectly and I taught him how to play it correctly” when they were jamming on a song by the band Slayer. Dylan specifically recognized that James was “playing the open E incorrectly” for the riff. When both students were playing around with the song “Come as You Are” by Nirvana during an impromptu jam, it was clear that Dylan was helping James once more. Questions abounded from James such as “is this right?” “do I go up here?,” “am I playing it right?,” and “is this how you play it?” There was consistent back and forth mentoring for these two students throughout the year. While both students (Dylan and James) had similar skill levels, they were still able to help mentor each other, much like was found by Johnson (2017) who noted that students (in similar pairings like Dylan and James) with comparable skill and experience levels are still able to mentor each other in micro-contexts based on the variation and diversity of skill and experience.

While Dylan and James were examples of students who engaged in peer mentoring, both also reached out to other students as well. On one occasion, Kenny noted that when James asked him for help with what fingers to use for a certain passage, he said they would “usually take one of these things [pointing to a practice room within the classroom] so we don’t have to hear what they [the rest of the ensemble] are saying. In here, it’s not as tricky to hear.” James did not always rely on Dylan for help on the guitar. In one instance where they were learning a complicated chord that neither Dylan nor James could figure out on their own, James reached out to Kenny for details of where he had to place his left-hand fingers.

Dylan was content to reach out to other students for help as well. Dylan asked Joan for help with a particular chord during “Day Tripper” where he said “let me see” to Joan, referring to the position of her left hand. Joan turned to Dylan and gave him advice and instruction. In other situations, students took it upon themselves to offer mentorship and assistance to Dylan. This was evident when Joan noticed that Dylan was playing an incorrect chord. She moved closer to him and helped reposition his left hand to match what they were listening to in the recording of “Say it Ain’t So” during a winter rehearsal of the song. These roles also reversed and there were times when Joan looked to Dylan for help with the rhythms of certain chord progressions. Many students relied on each other in this way for assistance and mentorship in a symbiotic and reciprocal way.

Students embodied various musical roles in the ensemble. Kenny was the group’s only electric guitar player but also served as a vocalist with Joan during a trial run of the song “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran. During an early winter run-through of this song, Joan and Kenny got a chance to help each other work through the melody, rhythm, and lyrics of the song. In this setting, Kenny was not as comfortable being a vocalist. Joan helped Kenny with encouragement, direction, and advice concerning holding the microphone in an appropriate spot to amplify his voice.

During another rehearsal, this situation was somewhat replicated on different instruments when Kenny sat next to Joan in the acoustic guitar section. It was clear that Kenny needed help during a run-through of “Say it Ain’t So” and turned to Joan many times to ask for help with comments such as “what chord is this?” and “where do you play that?” Kenny was comfortable enough during most rehearsals to ask Joan for help,

especially when it came to the seemingly more difficult barre chords on the guitar. Joan took the time to help Kenny as well in a short practice session of “Californication” earlier in the year. She took the time to play acoustic guitar chords to give Kenny a chance to practice his solo. It was evident that during this time, she helped him with what notes to play and where to enter rhythmically in the various sections of the solo. Towards the latter part of the winter rehearsals, the group branched out a bit and began to learn the song “Fly Me to the Moon.” This song had atypical guitar chords for rock and pop music. When it came to learning Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> and Major 7<sup>th</sup> chords, Kenny once again relied heavily on Joan who helped him through the learning process. She sat close to him and explained the variety of 7<sup>th</sup> chords they were using and how to position them on the neck of the guitar but both students in turn relied mostly on Dr. Anderson for help and explanation. Joan also helped Kenny understand how a capo might be useful in other settings.

According to Mr. Falcone, this type of peer mentoring was important to the success of the ensemble. He said, “there’s a lot going on and it’s hard for us [Mr. Falcone and Dr. Anderson] to be everywhere, so having students take control and help with their peers really helps out.” This recalls Koenig’s (2011) findings that student leadership, akin to peer mentoring, is a key component of keeping control over classroom management. This leadership/mentoring can be accomplished, according to Koenig, by addressing various needs of students at different experience and skill levels. Mr. Falcone continued in saying that within a single group, “there are kids that are shredding classical solos and there are kids that don’t know where their notes are. It’s hard to speak to them all as a



whole.” Mr. Falcone continued to say that in these classes:

I can definitely rely on certain students to be role models. Like [imitating pointing a student], can you please show him, or can you two guys work together, can you play this together. I have a couple of kids that I can lean on and they help support the rest of their peers.

It was clear to Mr. Falcone and Dr. Anderson that peer mentoring not only helped students but enabled the facilitator(s) of the group to not feel solely responsible to be the mentor for the entire ensemble, complete with its diverse array of learners. The reliance on students as leaders and role models enabled more students of varied experience levels to receive the help they appeared to need.

The presence of community within the ensemble was evident. Students often assisted their peers in rehearsal when the situation involved a non-musical task. Students helped when one of their peers needed logistical advice, could not find a capo, needed a chair or stand, or were having trouble getting equipment set up. The group operated as a unit that continued to build community and help each other in whatever way was needed. It was clear that the students cared for each other and the ensemble’s success, both musically and socially, by their actions. Through the incorporation of peer mentoring and peer assistance, students were appreciative of what they accomplished for themselves and for others. According to a participant in a similar study, a student found joy and love being part of a student leadership team (Whitaker, 2016) that allowed for similar types of peer mentoring. The student said she had “learned a lot about working with a team, overcoming obstacles, finding my voice, and patience” (Whitaker, 2016, p. 69). These findings parallel the accountability that was pervasive in the Washington Ave. Arts High

modern band. Each ensemble member appeared to care about the music but also helping one another with a variety of tasks.

In an effort to summarize the attitude of his peers, Dylan said, “if someone is struggling with a part, with reading a part, we’ll help” to which Kenny also noted:

I get confused a lot in music because I’m really clueless, so I’ll ask my best friend for help when that happens. I’ll ask them “how do you play this again?” I ask because sometimes I have no idea what I’m doing, and they show me how to play it.

Joan saw the simplicity of the process here in saying that at one point in another rehearsal, Matthew needed help with some specific notes. Joan said that she “went to Matthew and helped him. Ya, he asked me for some help with some of the notes, he asked me for help, and I gave it to him.” Many of the students in the group recalled specific times where they served as a mentor to their peers within the ensemble.

Referencing a previous year’s group Joan said:

Ya, so this girl, she was a grade ahead of me, so she was a sophomore. I think it was her first year in guitar and I had already been playing a little bit. And basically, Anderson was like, “you know some things” so I helped even though I didn’t know about reading music too much. She just needed help with reading music so I just remember telling her you can do this or that to help out.

Kenny had a similar experience, noting:

So, my freshman year wasn’t in this building, it was at a different school. I remember taking my midterms and having someone ask me for help a lot and me asking them for help because I only knew how to read tabs and he didn’t know anything. He came up to me and I helped him. So, there was this girl [referencing a separate student] that was new, and she didn’t know anything. So, she came up to me and I helped her the whole entire year.

The students in this ensemble were in large agreement that Dr. Anderson was not

the only source of knowledge in their sphere of influence. When asked where they went for help, multiple students said, “we ask our friends” and “I ask my friends.”

### **Visual Modeling and Aural Learning**

Visual and aural modeling was a common tactic used by students to mentor and share knowledge with each other. Students played, sang, and visually demonstrated various musical examples for their peers as a way of sharing knowledge. Similar to the ways in which Dr. Anderson visually modeled musical skills for the ensemble, students did the same for their peers. In the ensemble, Dr. Anderson found balance between allowing peers to model and coach each other and facilitator-led modeling. This balance worked well for the group and addressed a concern presented by Goodrich (2018), who found that many students appreciated the peer mentoring they received but longed for a balance of modeling and feedback from the instructor as well.

Visual modeling often occurred between students that shared similar instruments, mostly between acoustic guitar players. During the group’s first rehearsal of “Californication,” acoustic guitarists Lauren and Gabriella made use of visual modeling. During the instrumental break and the pre-chorus of the song, there was a somewhat atypical chord, an F Major 7. While Gabriella was playing her guitar, she looked to her neighbor, Lauren for help. Lauren demonstrated to Gabriella the difference between F Major 7 and F major with her left hand. Gabriella also looked to Kenny for similar help when he began as an acoustic guitar player before moving to the electric. Gabriella remarked to Kenny, “how are you playing this?” in reference to a particular chord

looking for a visual understanding of his left hand. Joan worked with Kenny in this style as well. On the few occasions where Kenny and Joan were sitting next to each other, they often watched each other's left hands to make sure they were syncing up with when they were playing each chord and the fingerings they were using. Kenny was never shy when it came to seeking out help from his peers and it was obvious that this was the case as he would often look around the room to observe his peers to make sure his playing was correct. Other students who had developed relationships in the group, such as Dylan and James, were often able to use visual modeling to help each other when it came to showing how to finger chords, chord positioning, or interpreting guitar tablature.

Aural and visual modeling may stand in contrast to the sole reliance on written music for knowing what to play in more traditional settings. One of the most evidentiary examples of this type of modeling occurred during "Day Tripper" when Aaron was demonstrating how to play the song's tambourine part. Aaron gave Lauren a demonstration of how to hold the instrument to achieve the best sound and be most comfortable. He said to her "hold it like this" to which she complied. He noted that "we'd practice, I would practice next to her and she would watch me." For Aaron, visual modeling and visual learning was an important tenet of how he learned himself. When reflecting on his own learning experiences he said, "that's sort of how I learned how to play drums, like learning from YouTube and stuff like that...I just watch it and I just look at it." According to Oleson and Hora (2013), many educators (peer mentors in this case) instruct similarly to the ways in which they were taught. The researchers found that "faculty do not only model their teaching after previous instructors, but also draw upon a

varied repertoire of knowledge and prior experiences” (p. 29). As students in this study’s modern band engaged in nonformal learning tactics, such as peer mentoring and modeling, they did the same. Furthermore, they may in turn utilize those tactics if they become educators themselves in any capacity later in life.

Students also used aural modeling to instruct, mentor, and share knowledge with their peers, a technique that Dr. Anderson also employed and modeled for the group. In many cases, it made the most sense to sing or play a part to a peer rather than show them through a visual medium or write out a transcription or some kind of formal notation. During a rehearsal of “Day Tripper” and its iconic opening riff, Lauren (an experienced guitar player) said out loud, “how does it go?” asking for help. To this, both Joan (vocalist at the time) and Kenny (electric guitar) started singing the instrumental riff to demonstrate it for her. Aural modeling and learning were key factors for the group. When Joan spoke about how she learned each song, she stated that “for the pop songs, basically I would listen to the songs. When I have the house to myself, I’ll put on the songs for singing and listen to them.” This made it clear that aural modeling was a learning method that students were comfortable with and seemed to work well for them.

Playing along with recordings was also a common use of aural modeling. During one of the first rehearsals of “Californication,” the class began by listening to the studio recording which was loud and intense. As the recording progressed, Brian (bass) began playing his part over the recording. The guitarists and drummer eventually joined in. This type of slow entrance to playing along with a recording was common. When students seemed to feel comfortable enough with how their parts worked in the song, they joined

their peers. Usually, the students would be asked to mainly pay attention during the first listening of the recording and were then encouraged to play along as best they could during following instances. This pedagogical technique helped students to not have to stop a rehearsal while they were working on their parts and making mistakes early on. In between playing a song throughout the year, the class would reference back to the audio recordings to solidify parts and often to gain clarity on song structure.

Akin to the recommendations of Green (2008) for successful implementation of learning through informal practices, teachers (or peer mentors in this case) can use modeling as a way to enact help for others in a direct and immediate fashion with the needs of the learner at the heart of the instruction as opposed to simply directing them with a pre-established set of objectives or outcomes in mind. If pre-established pedagogical techniques were the most pertinent, each learner may not have progressed as well as they did. For every song that the group practiced, rehearsed, and played in concert, rehearsals began with thorough listening to develop their aural skills and awareness of what to play. The students played, sang, and actively listened while the recordings were played for the class. This type of aural modeling helped prepare students to use this type of learning for themselves and potentially while engaging in peer mentoring. Reliance on copying recordings by ear in lieu of written transcriptions is a key tenet of informal learning (Green, 2002b), exemplified in this modern band.

### **Sharing Knowledge Between Students**

The student members of this ensemble shared their knowledge with each other while engaged in peer mentoring and during casual interaction in ways that mutually

benefited the overall goals of the group and built social bonds. Dr. Anderson and Mr. Falcone were not involved in such interactions and, generally, there was no clear mentor or mentee. Rather, knowledge was shared in a manner that was beneficial for all parties. This method became a crucial part of learning within this modern band as students often took it upon themselves to ask for help from their peers and share what they knew regarding a multitude of musical topics, similar to Green and Walmsley (2006). There was less formality and definition in these settings as to who was the main contributor of knowledge sharing, as these were mostly settings of small group discussion. Many students in these situations were not looking for help, had not verbally expressed a need for help, nor were in a position where help was required to complete a task or follow a directive. Dr. Anderson was encouraging of these types of collaborative groups through directives like, “Gabriella, can you work with Kenny on this song?” or “can you guys work with each other on that part?” to the acoustic guitar players on multiple occasions.

As mentioned, listening to recordings was a learning tactic that Dr. Anderson and many students recognized as beneficial. During an early rehearsal of “Day Tripper,” Lauren mentioned to Joan that “it helps to listen to the song a bunch of times to get a feel for the song.” Jeff followed that comment with “ya, it’s always good to hear the song again if you haven’t heard it enough times” to the rest of the class, sharing his knowledge of the benefit of repetitive listening. In this instance, like countless others during the fall to winter rehearsals, students shared helpful knowledge with each other in informal ways. This collaborative style of learning was a positive endeavor for the students within the ensemble, similar to findings by Harrington (2016) who noted that, “the influence of the

collaborative learning environment, the sharing of knowledge and skills, and social interaction” (p. 181) contributed to positive findings regarding student-centered approaches in the classroom.

Knowledge exchanges generally occurred in pairs of students and small groups. Occasionally, however, such exchanges occurred in full ensemble-based conversations. During a winter practice of “Say it Ain’t So,” the group was positioned in what most closely resembled a semi-circle. Gabriella called out to the group, “I forgot the chords, what are the chords?” to which varying members of the group told her to check the board on the other side of the room where they were hastily jotted down in dry-erase marker. Other students also audibly named the chords in order for her as well. Even accomplished guitarists like Lauren looked for help from the group, calling out, “what key are we in?” to which another guitar player passed her the sheet music she was not able to locate. Other students spoke up to the class to reinforce what was happening. Dylan, an acoustic guitar player, took it upon himself to call out “we’re starting James” as he was struggling with getting focused for the beginning of a song. In each of these examples, students were willing to help their peers even when the context was less intimate and required them to use their voices on a larger scale.

Throughout the year, students took advantage of downtime in between song run-throughs to work through their parts in small groups. Many conversations occurred between various members of the group regarding songs, their parts, successes, and disappointments. Lauren, a competent and well-rounded musician, was confident but understood her limitations. She realized that although she may have been one of the



better guitarists in the group, she could still benefit from her peers. She remarked that “it’s good because if you’re talking to somebody else, they might know something that you don’t, and you know something they don’t.”

Aaron (drums) and Brian (keyboard) often shared knowledge with each other. They sat very close to each other and played an important role together as key members of the rhythm section. Their instruments and roles were closely aligned musically, and they were in constant communication regarding musical aspects of songs as well as a multitude of other topics. For songs like “Californication,” Aaron and Brian often discussed the form of song noting where the verse, chorus, bridge, and solo sections occurred. Aaron noted to Brian, “I think there might be a double-chorus at the end” during one practice as a way of sharing his knowledge and interpretation of the song’s structure in a manner that was not meant to give Brian advice, direction, or assistance to something he needed. Jeff and Brian shared a similar bond. During that same rehearsal, Jeff spoke to Brian about the distinction between the notes F and F# on the bass guitar. The class then began discussing this issue as well, talking about where the F# minor chord was occurring rhythmically. Brian continued to ask questions surrounding the F# minor chord and the class continued the discussion to solidify understanding. Some students shared their thoughts while others listened.

The trio of keyboardist, bassist, and drummer worked closely together and continually shared knowledge with each other through verbal dialogue. For example, when they were playing “Say it Ain’t So” in an early winter rehearsal, they verbally reinforced the chord changes to each other, and which notes the bass should be playing.

While Brian, the group's bassist, stuck mainly to the roots of the chords, he experimented with other notes like the 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> chordal tones to give harmonic variation. During the early fall rehearsals of "Californication," Jeff worked closely with Brian on many occasions. In one instance, they worked together to talk through the song's various chord changes and, during rehearsals, proceeded to discuss the harmonic changes while they were playing with the ensemble. Jeff and Brian specifically identified a troublesome B minor chord that the pair was not syncing up on. Jeff said to Brian, "make sure you are on the second fret" to informally share his knowledge. This was another example of a student offering knowledge without the recipient expressing a need for help or mentorship.

Students also shared opinion-based knowledge with each other during these more casual exchanges. During one practice, Jeff shared that he thought Brian should bring in the bass notes as soon as they start as opposed to waiting a few measures as he had done previously. Jeff was often outspoken in his opinions and Brian was receptive in this case and came in immediately on the next chance he got. When Jeff commented on this type of interaction with his peers, he said "It's not only important to listen to yourself, but to listen to everyone else to make sure everyone is on the right track." Brian was also corrected during one rehearsal of "Californication" by Joan who shared that, "it's too fast" when the bass began the song at an accelerated tempo. These types of interactions were not indicative of a pre-established mentor and mentee, nor of a moment where someone expressed a need for help, but rather a more informal way of sharing knowledge between peers. As Goodrich (2018) found in a previous study, peer mentoring can

“signify a teaching-learning scenario that involves peer-to-peer teaching” (p. 25) but also times where a student “shares knowledge with a mentee(s) toward a specific music or pedagogical goal” (p. 25). Brian, like many others in the group, took criticism well from his peers. In this case, he responded to Joan with a simple nod of his head to relay that she was correct and that he agreed. Aaron (drums) and Brian (bass) worked closely as well. Many of their conversations focused on the musicality of what they were playing on a more macro-level which complemented their micro-level conversations on topics like when to play certain chords. They discussed and shared their knowledge with each other regarding the style of songs they were playing as well as the motion of the chords within a song.

Many students were eager to share ideas and supply each other with tools they needed to make rehearsals successful. Jeff also shared with the entire class that “they [referring to the guitar players] don’t need to play the bass note in the F major 7<sup>th</sup> barre chord because Brian [bass player] is covering that note.” Regarding “Californication,” Aaron said to Jeff, “you’re missing some keyboard parts that you should listen to and try out.” Even as that day’s rehearsal wrapped up and Dr. Anderson told the group to pack their things, the trio continued to work through the song a bit more, talking about form and exactly where each chord change occurred. This close-knit trio sometimes included Kenny (electric guitar) in their conversations as well. While getting started with the song “Californication,” Kenny, Aaron, and Brian spent their first few minutes of the class period discussing the song, the breakdown of form, and their opinions on whether they were enjoying the song or not. As one of the initial group practices of the song

commenced, Aaron (drummer) engaged in dialogue with Kenny on which notes to bend higher and which ones to bend lower during his solo. The guitar solo in the song was very much characterized by these types of electric guitar note bends and they discussed the importance of a few key examples. When the group began playing through the song, Aaron commented to Kenny that he thought the guitar solo should be higher in volume, to which they both agreed. Students in the ensemble seemed to be open to both receiving and delivering critique to one another in small and large group settings. The community that had developed within the group may have enabled tactics such as peer mentoring to be better received and implemented.

Kenny and Brian displayed their agency by sharing knowledge in the ensemble during many rehearsals of “Californication.” The opening of the song began and continued through the verse with a repeated electric guitar riff and a countermelody on the bass guitar. They helped each other and often practiced the part when given a chance during downtime in the class period. Plenty of discussion occurred surrounding where each instrument would enter, if they were trying to match the recording, and if they were looking to put their own interpretation into the song’s performance. During a later winter rehearsal of “Say it Ain’t So,” Brian, Kenny, and Aaron all discussed what they called “entry points” of the song in reference to when the keyboard, electric guitar, and drums should begin playing the song. These types of sharing of knowledge were pervasive in the group and were not limited to one song.

Joan was aware that this type of camaraderie and collaboration was a definitive part of their close-knit group. She said, “I don’t know if you remember Garrett [former

student], there was a part where everyone was doing different rhythms, so Anderson said, ‘you guys can’t be doing this rhythm,’ so we all had to kind of talk to each other to see what we were gonna do and then we figured it out and it got better.” This recalls Allsup’s (2002) observation of how musical creations are better and more significant when they are arrived at through a shared process of decision-making and discussion. The peer mentoring that occurred both formally and informally in the group was evident in these types of collaborative and democratic group interactions throughout the year.

Joan was a student that served as the group’s main vocalist. She shared her knowledge and was the recipient of her peers’ knowledge on many occasions. Joan was close in age and friendship to many of the ensemble’s members. As a vocalist, she often stood at the front of the class, somewhat close to and within the eye-line of most of the group. Kenny and Aaron knew each of the group’s songs very well and often worked with Joan to help solidify the vocal parts. Aaron, while seated and playing the drum kit, would talk to Joan about the vocal parts of the songs and she would engage with him in dialogue. They would talk about specific lines of the songs, lyrics that needed improvement, or gauge each other’s opinions on how their last attempt was perceived. Their musical conversations and sharing of knowledge were centered around entrance points and specific melodic passages.

Kenny would also engage with Joan, as they both served as vocalists at one point during the ensemble’s rehearsals. They would sing the song or sing along with the recording and make various comments to each other about the melody and lyrics and how they were going to be performed. At one point during a rehearsal, Kenny said to Joan,

“what about this?” and proceeded to demonstrate an interesting way of vocalizing the chords with her help. This type of interaction happened between Joan and Matthew as well when the group began rehearsing the song “Fly Me to the Moon.” At one point, both students were jointly singing the song, trading off the lead vocal part of different sections. They shared knowledge with each other regarding when to come in and with what type of vocal presence as well as smaller details like how far away to stand from the microphone when their volume changed. While many of their conversations were inaudible from where I was positioned in the classroom, it was clear their discussions were about the music at hand and sharing knowledge of best practices.

The students who played acoustic guitar had a significant bond as well which was evident in how they shared knowledge with each other. Most of their approaches were similar and what they played was often doubled by another acoustic guitarist. The guitarists sat near each other and interacted frequently. Their parts often appeared the same on the page (guitar chords without diagrams above lyrics to the song), but the guitarists shared their knowledge regarding chord shapes, interpretations, and overall understanding of the music and what they were hearing. This group was fluid and included Dylan, James, Kenny, Joan, Lauren, Gabriella, and Matthew. A major discussion point for the group was the difference between using open chords versus barre chords on the guitar. These conversations often included how to use a capo and where to position it as these types of chords presented issues for various members of the group. The ensemble operated cohesively through verbal cues of upcoming chord changes, fret positioning for their left hands, and troublesome sections (harmonically and

rhythmically).

In one fall rehearsal, Lauren and Gabriella worked with each other to practice the opening riff of “Day Tripper” while Lauren and James separately worked together to figure out where the E7 chord happened throughout the song. While James and Dylan often worked together and mentored each other, Lauren also worked with James on occasion on the acoustic guitar. They often discussed fingering choices and where to play chords. There was never an obvious designation of who was helping who in these situations as the approach was casual and often mutually beneficial. The students discussed differences between chord shapes on varying frets and the ways to make harmonies sound distinct on the guitar. Joan and Kenny worked with each other to experiment between different positioning of chords like A minor 7 and D minor 7 and how they fit into the song “Fly Me to the Moon.” Since that song presented atypical challenges for the guitar players, Joan and Kenny were often discussing it and working with each other to solidify their approaches after more heavily relying on Dr. Anderson for instruction. Humphreys (2004) called the collaborative process amongst group members fitting, calling rock music, “the music of American democracy” (p. 102). This was true for the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band as well. Group members made micro- and macro-decisions during rehearsals to aid in the evolving definition of each song as they shared knowledge with each other.

Guitarists like Dylan and James would discuss their general difficulty with barre chords in various songs, but also specific chords like E minor and the various ways they could approach this common chord, aiding each other informally with their knowledge

and experience. When a specifically troublesome chord, a C# barre chord, was present in “Day Tripper,” Dylan and Joan, who did not work together often, found themselves in discussion on where and how to play it, sharing knowledge with each other. During that conversation, they discussed various chords in the song and the difficulty in moving through them as well as best practices to help them be successful. Lauren and Gabriella found benefit in discussing other topics like left-hand fingering choices for the riff of “Day Tripper” as well.

Elizabeth, as a younger and less experienced member of the group, participated in other small group interactions akin to what occurred for the acoustic guitar players. Elizabeth was tasked with playing the iPad for the group to add depth to the ensemble’s sound through music technology. She was reserved musically and socially. If one were to observe the ensemble, Elizabeth would most often be a student that partially hid behind an amplifier, chair, or music stand while playing. She was quiet, polite, and respectful. She only worked minimally with her peers when it came to sharing knowledge and overall interaction. Though, on occasion, she discussed chord changes and progressions with Aaron and Jeff as they were closest to her in proximity where she usually sat. In one rehearsal, Elizabeth and Kenny discussed the various sound effects that they were both using on the iPad and electric guitar, respectively, and how they were going to complement each other. They talked about where their entrances were going to occur and various problematic chords like B major that they both had trouble with.

Other times, students shared their knowledge with the entire modern band ensemble and took micro-leadership roles for the group. Many of these students



developed leadership skills through peer mentoring as previously found in studies by Caswell (2005), Goodrich (2006, 2018), and Sheldon (2001). Due to the agency they had in the group, students expressed their opinions and shared their knowledge without pre-authorization from their facilitator. Dr. Anderson encouraged students to share what they knew, and while he gave verbal encouragement for this to occur, it also happened without any prompting.

While all the ensemble's students were given authority to voice their opinions, directives, or advice to the group, not all members chose to do so equally. As a confident musician and clearly outspoken member of the group, Jeff took advantage of this opportunity more than any other student in the class. During "Californication," he shared with the guitar players that they did not have to play the root of a difficult chord as the bass guitar would be playing it. In other rehearsals, Jeff would comment on the group's variation in tempo. He said to the entire class, "the tempo is fluctuating" as they were playing through "Californication" during an early fall run-through. When he was asked to share his thoughts on their last take on the song during a different day's rehearsal, he said, "I don't feel like we're firm on where we go, the chorus and verse" and that "we need to work on the map" of how the song is laid out. Jeff noted "Mostly, I try to make sure everyone is in time. Sometimes, it doesn't flow right, and also, I like to fix like little mistakes that come up like dynamic stuff, so we do that."

Jeff would often take it upon himself to call out helpful direction to keep the music moving correctly. Even though he was positioned towards the back of the room, standing behind the elevated keyboard, he called out the chord progression as the group

played to keep everyone informed during a difficult part of “Day Tripper.” In other examples, he would call out when the group was playing certain chords in incorrect rhythmic locations. During a later winter rehearsal of “Fly Me to the Moon,” he called out “ABAAB” so that the entire class was aware of the overarching form of the song. During that same rehearsal, the class seemed unsure of how to approach the ending of the song. In this case, Jeff called out, “I’ve got it!” and proceeded to walk the class through the ending he was proposing speaking about the rhythm, chords, and a distinctive “stop” on the final beat.

Much like Jeff, Aaron was sure of his knowledge and shared it when the situation was appropriate for this type of interjection. While he was the group’s drummer and usually sole percussionist, he was adept on many instruments. Aaron was consistently pointing out when the class tended to speed up or slow down as well as if someone started a song’s practice too fast or too slow. He would utter comments such as, “let’s make sure that we have the tempo down right” and “ya, we were playing it a little slow” as he was the person who made the majority of the decisions regarding the tempo of each song the group played. One of his designated roles in many songs was to count the group off and establish the song’s initial tempo. He had authority in this regard as to how he would count off and what kind of drum fill he would use to cue everyone as to when to enter.

Other students also held similar decision-making authority in the class. When a particular take of “Californication” did not go as planned, acoustic guitarist Lauren stated that, “it’ll be a huge mess and we want it to be a beautiful and awesome thing and we

don't want it to be messed up if the chords are wrong" as another level of accountability was brought to the ensemble. This level of student voice within the classroom aided in the successes of many rehearsals throughout the year such as when Brian said to the group that the acoustic guitarists could not be heard, leading Dr. Anderson to regroup the ensemble in a circular layout. Many of the students in the ensemble had the confidence and agency in the group to be transparent and seemingly vulnerable in expressing opinions and thoughts to the entire ensemble as they shared knowledge and engaged in more informal peer mentoring.

The sharing of knowledge between peers was, in a way, a more informal type of peer mentoring for the group and occurred frequently. This type of knowledge sharing displayed the student agency that had been fostered in the group and autonomy where students were free to exercise their voice and opinion where they saw fit. Within music classrooms, multiple contexts exist where social benefits of peer mentoring surface. Through these types of knowledge transfers, peers were casually voicing opinions both positively and critically towards their peers, but did so in a manner that was open and required little or no prompting. This aligns with scholarship that suggests that peer mentoring helps students both positively provide and receive critique in the music classroom (Goodrich et al., 2018; Jellison et al., 2015).

### ***Non-Verbal Communication***

In many cases, students gave feedback and shared their knowledge and opinions with non-verbal communication. This usually occurred during rehearsals of the modern

band where it might not be considered appropriate or efficient to talk over the music or stop rehearsal for discussion. Students in the group found creative ways to communicate with each other without speaking. From Dr. Anderson's point of view, this type of interaction was obvious. He said:

the kids are helping each other but also sometimes, I don't think it's verbal but it's non-verbal. They may be picking up on how the kid is playing something and they may be listening and that is sometimes hard to pinpoint.

Dylan, Aaron, and Jeff were all positioned in a way that they were able to exchange glances with each other to make sure they were synced up during various sections of each song. These types of glances were usually given to reinforce positivity toward their interpretations of how the song's run-through was progressing. The casual nods seemed to affirm to each of the students that they were in sync and moving along with the song as desired. Joan and Jeff also communicated non-verbally during parts of the songs that did not go as well as planned. Joan remarked that if she caught Jeff's eye during a section of music that was incorrect, they both started smiling, knowing they were understanding of what had happened without mentioning it verbally.

Students in the group used non-verbal communication to signal each other when it was obvious that someone was playing incorrectly. These types of interactions are a common occurrence in peer mentoring as one of many varied techniques that peers used to enact modeling and demonstration towards a particular goal (Webb, 2015). Students would usually look up from their music and identify facial expressions from their peers to gauge how the rehearsals were going. Aaron used non-verbal communication to make sure he was keeping his peer, Kenny, on track and accountable for his part. At one point,

during a run-through of “Day Tripper,” Aaron clearly used non-verbal communication to gain Kenny’s attention and get him to focus once again on the music they were playing. As the acoustic guitar section built up their cohesiveness as a group, their non-verbal interactions increased. Dylan, James, and Lauren would often look up with various facial expressions giving rise to visual modeling when a student needed assistance. This happened with varying members of the group regardless of their instrumentation or parts.

Rhythmic variation was a consistent topic that was often addressed with non-verbal communication. To not impede rehearsals with stopping and restarting, the group would use this type of communication to relay that a song was accelerating or decelerating in speed. For Lauren, she noted that “it was hard for me because I would have to be concentrating to feel the time and it was really hard so I would have to look at him [Aaron on the drum kit] while we came in and have to hear where the fill was going.” Aaron served a crucial role in communicating his knowledge in a non-verbal way as the primary driver of every song’s tempo and rhythmic style. He would often give cues to other members like Joan (serving as a vocalist) to communicate where she was to start singing in and out of each section. These cues were often identified by raised eyebrows to signal the need for someone’s attention and other head nods to showcase a tempo needing to be followed more succinctly.

These types of non-verbal interactions were methods of peer mentoring that occurred more informally for the group. While some instances of peer mentoring were obvious and depicted a mentor and mentee, others, much like these types of non-verbal interactions, were times when peer mentoring was much more nuanced for students. Due

to these types of non-verbal interactions, it was clear that peer mentoring manifested in many diverse ways in explicit mentor/mentee situations as well as in these other contexts.

### ***The Proximity Factor***

As noted earlier in chapter six, one factor that appeared to dictate who students shared their knowledge with was the physical proximity of an individual to their peers. In general, students worked with and learned from those situated close to them within the classroom. The relaxed atmosphere allowed students to sit where they desired (when physical instrument placement was not an issue) and learn from who they felt comfortable being around. In many instances, students chose to sit near their friends in the group or made a conscious choice to sit near someone that they knew could give them mutually beneficial information. Other times, however, their seats appeared to be positioned somewhat randomly.

The proximity factor often came into play with the guitar players. Kenny, for example, seemed to remain indifferent to where he sat. Over the course of the year, Kenny sat next to or near almost every other member of the ensemble. Dylan, Joan, James, Brian, and Jeff all shared their knowledge with Kenny and vice versa. In one instance during the solo section of “Californication,” Brian was able to help Kenny with a specific left-hand fingering because he was close enough to help him put his finger on the correct string and correct fret.

Joan was a student who found herself helping others, often due to her usual seating location. When Kenny was playing the acoustic guitar, he frequently sat next to

Joan and would often discuss issues he was having with her. They did not appear to have a particularly strong friendship, but they would often work together and mutually share knowledge as they usually defaulted to sitting next to one another. This was evident during rehearsals of each song where initial work was required of the ensemble's members to figure out their parts and for these two students, the guitar chords they were playing. Joan often sat in between Kenny and Dylan by default. This put Joan in an interesting position that tasked her with sharing knowledge with both students. Joan had a very comprehensive working knowledge of the guitar and with guitar chords specifically. She would talk with both students about various chords, difficulties in moving through them, and would help them figure out which chords were best played in each situation.

Dr. Anderson seemed to recognize that physical presence in the classroom had an impact on the students' learning experience. While rehearsing, he said, "can you guys get closer to each other so you can listen and work with each other?" The proximity factor played a role in many different settings where students were mentoring each other and sharing knowledge via modeling (both aurally and visually) as well as non-verbal interaction. Since proximity had a direct impact on which peers students looked to for help, the location of each student had a direct impact on the peer mentoring that occurred. The relationship between these factors was significant in that the availability for direct peer mentoring may have been contingent upon where a student was seated in the classroom.

### **Peer Critique**

Throughout the ensemble's rehearsals, peers critiqued each other regarding their musicality, rhythm, and performance attributes. Many students specifically noted that it was easier to hear criticism from someone that was a peer in contrast to their teacher, Dr. Anderson. Many students also mentioned that it was not only easier to accept criticism from a peer but more importantly that it was easier to grasp and understand that criticism based on the language and style of delivery from a peer or friend.

When reflecting on how he took criticism, Kenny said, "for me, it's the other kids who it's easiest to take from. When it's the teacher or the student teacher, I don't understand it at all." Specifically regarding the critique she received, Gabriella noted, "I like my friends because they use the vocab that I know. You know what I mean? If Mr. Falcone is explaining it, he'll use a completely different word." In a specific incident where Lauren helped another student, she commented on how the original help from Dr. Anderson did not get communicated in the most effective way. She said, "the teacher helped her, but she didn't get it. She only would get it when I would help her cause I would show her how to do it and how to play it." During this same conversation, Kenny continued to say that, "what I see on the board and read it and the teacher explains it to me, I don't understand, but when someone else tells me, I hear it, I know what I'm doing." This data aligns with findings by Lebler (2008) who described that in undergraduate popular music programs in Australia, student peers typically give each other the most feedback in popular music rehearsals.

The acceptance of peer critique was evident in my data collection through



individual and group interviews, but not through research observations. Jeff and Brian were two students who were aware of the mutual respect they had for each other and recognized the ways in which peer critique played a role in how they learned their parts. During a group interview with all ensemble members, the following dialogue took place.

Interviewer: Jeff, I know if you see Brian playing something incorrectly, I've heard you interject and correct him a bit. How does that make you feel when that happens?

Jeff: For me, it feels good for some reason.

Brian: For me, I don't mind if you're [referencing Brian] telling me I'm doing something wrong. I want to listen so I can fix what's wrong.

Jeff: I think you need that correction. Nobody likes hearing you're wrong, but you gotta hear that.

Brian: Ya, like the other day you know how we [Jeff and Brian] had to switch parts? So, we were playing and then he said it sounded a little choppy and that's okay because I'm okay with getting those corrections and then it sounded better.

Jeff and Brian shared a bond that was a helpful part of the critiquing process. Brian noted that "I feel like it's easier to critique each other if you are friends." Jeff remarked that it was not strange or weird to hear his friends or peers correct him because it helps him to improve, and because of that, he welcomed the feedback. Similarly, Aaron said, "I think letting someone know when they are doing something wrong is good, cause if someone is doing something wrong and no one tells them, it's gonna stay wrong and the music is gonna sound bad." This type of accountability was present in the ensemble for many members. It was clear that students were intent on helping each other and they used peer mentoring within the group to fulfill that desire thanks to the fostering of student agency by Dr. Anderson.

All the students in this modern band were guitarists if not multi-instrumentalists.

Therefore, it was not unusual that many of the peer critiques that were given were not solely from students who were playing similar instruments. Aaron (drums), for example, commented to the group that he thought the guitars were out of tune during a rehearsal of “Day Tripper.” On another occasion, Jeff [keyboard] was experimenting with various organ synthesizer sounds for that same song. He was attempting to play the song with a multitude of sound effects and looked to Dylan for approval on each one. Dylan’s responses were mixed, and he critiqued Jeff’s choices with a positive and reaffirming attitude.

Joan was very aware of this group dynamic and the accountability that each of the ensemble’s members held for each other. She said:

they [Jeff, Dylan, Aaron, and Brian] say things about each other or other people like if Kenny messes up, they’ll tell him it’s too fast or whatever. It helps me because then I realize I’m not the only one who notices it. So, we all get that feedback from each other.

Byo (2017) noted that a shared accountability for community is valued by both educators and administration. Like the expressions of students in this group, those in Byo’s study commented that they understood the level of teamwork required for success and that they were all working towards a shared goal. Joan’s understanding of the mutual accountability for the ensemble and its members was apparent. For Joan, it may have been impactful to be a member of a community of peers who critique each other, hold each other accountable, and are open to receiving and giving critical feedback.

Many students operated as reciprocal mentors within the group. Kenny was aware of the type of help that his peers gave him and said that he was appreciative when a friend

tried to help him. Lauren and James shared this type of respectful bond as well. Lauren said that she could speak to James a little differently because they were friends as opposed to how they would give similar feedback or critique to Dr. Anderson or another teacher. In front of her peers during the group interview, Gabriella remarked on the difference between the help she received from Dr. Anderson in comparison to her peers. She said the way Dr. Anderson communicated was less clear than when she received feedback from the other members of the ensemble. She said, “it’s more of a way of doing it how we [the students] would do it. When we [the students] say do it like this, it’s more of a way that we would get it cause it’s your friend.” During this group conversation, Dylan (one of the more reserved acoustic guitar players) said that it would not be easier if Dr. Anderson showed him how to fix an issue. “With friends, they understand, and they teach you differently,” Dylan noted. This type of peer critique somewhat paralleled findings in a study by Goodrich et al. (2018) as well where peer mentoring aided in the process of giving and receiving feedback between peers in a music class. This reinforces that peer mentoring and peer critique as closely interwoven and may not be mutually exclusive. While Goodrich et al. (2018) studied students in undergraduate music programs, there is evidence that students of younger age in the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band found benefit in operating within reciprocal roles both giving and receiving critique.

### **Speaking Our Language**

It was evident that the students were keenly aware of the fact that they preferred to receive criticism and direction directly from their peers. Some students even noted that

the delivery of opinion, critique, or feedback of any sort from their peers was more closely aligned to “speaking their own language.” Kenny, Gabriella, and Lauren were cognizant of this dynamic. They spoke about their peers who used the same type of vocabulary and wording as they did to better explain a point or convey meaning in certain contexts. Kenny even went as far as to say that he simply did not understand the direction when his teacher was giving it but better grasped certain points when they came from a peer like Joan, Lauren, or Aaron.

Mr. Falcone was also aware of the preference for student-to-student communication over teacher-student communication. He understood that he could explain something to a student many times, but often they would only fully understand it when it came from one of their peers. As he said, “I can think I’m being perfectly clear and then a student can go over and be like “do this” and they get it from their peers versus my intense, theoretical description.” Kenny noted, “what I see on the board and read it and the teacher explains it to me, I don’t understand, but when someone else tells me, I hear it, I know what I’m doing.”

In similar findings, Webb (2015) noted that during an instance of communicating how to use vibrato, it became quite challenging to confirm student understanding and teachers often had to restate concepts in various ways. Students in the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band recognized this as well saying that Mr. Falcone and Dr. Anderson would use words that did not make sense to them, but when a different peer understood what was wrong, they could translate it to them in a more succinct way.

When it came to hearing critique of their playing, most students were quick to

recognize that they would rather take criticism from a friend rather than the teacher. Lauren, however, was an outlier. She stated that the teacher knows best since he has a degree and it therefore made more sense to hear from him what she was doing wrong or ways she could improve. While peer mentoring was clearly an established learning tenet of the group, it was not the only way that students learned information. There existed a balance between Dr. Anderson's facilitation as well as his encouragement of peer mentoring between students. Dr. Anderson still held an important place in the ensemble to guide the students when needed or step in to share his own knowledge. Based on the data, the ensemble may have faltered more frequently if only a singular method of learning was utilized in the group.

Dr. Anderson was not the first person to jump into a rehearsal to critique, criticize, or comment on the mistakes (large or small) of his students. By allowing room for the students to vocalize their own opinions and voices in the classroom, as well as mentor each other, the critique that students heard was not always from their teacher. This is the way that dialogue commonly occurred during modern band rehearsals. This contrasted with rehearsal of the classical guitar ensemble (with the same members). The critique in that instance came almost solely from Dr. Anderson towards the students without dialogue or the presence of student voices. During modern band rehearsals, students were given autonomy and were encouraged to voice their opinions on musical matters during the class, especially when it came to explanations given to other class members or mentorship that occurred. This all may have occurred more effectively in that peers communicated with each other using common language.

**Summary**

For this ensemble, peer mentoring made sense. This was because through peer mentoring, students were more receptive to learning from each other based on the language and wording that was used from one peer to another as well as the evidentiary fact that the majority of students outwardly stated that they preferred to hear critical feedback from their peers, in addition to Dr. Anderson's direction. As students used diverse ways to mentor each other, both formally and informally, non-verbal communication was another way that they helped each other in this student-centered environment. While it was clear that direct mentoring and more informal knowledge sharing held foundational places for the ensemble, other factors such as proximity, peer critique, the wording used, and non-verbal communication were notable in how the group interacted with each other and in what ways those interactions brought about more cohesiveness for the students both musically and socially.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter serves to discuss the four research questions presented at the beginning of this study, three overarching topics from observations and data analysis, calls to action for music educators, and the need for future research. After addressing the four research questions, the three discussions that follow are titled: (1) The Ripple Effect of Repertoire Selection; (2) Modeling as a Foundational Tool for Learning; and (3) More than Just Music. The first discussion highlights the importance and crucial role that selecting repertoire plays for a modern band and its impact on peer mentoring. The tempo, style, intensity, and genre of each song that a modern band plays seem to have a direct correlation to the energy of the group and opportunities for peer mentoring to occur. The second discussion focuses on how aural and visual modeling became key tenets of how information and recommendations were transmitted throughout the group's members. Learning by ear and modeling audio recordings were staples of learning for the group and lend clout to the authentic approach towards learning popular music. The third discussion serves to highlight how participation in modern band was impactful on the lives of students in many ways both musically and socially.

### **Research Questions**

The questions that provided direction for this study were: (1) In what ways, if any, do the participants mentor each other in the context of a modern band? (2) How does peer mentoring play a role, if at all, in the overall musical growth of students in a modern band? (3) In what other ways, if any, does peer mentoring affect the participants of a modern band? and (4) What role does the facilitator play in creating an environment that

nurtures peer mentoring and the sharing of knowledge between students?

Answers to the first question (in what ways, if any, do the participants mentor each other in the context of a modern band) manifested in various contexts throughout the five months of observations. Peers mentored each other musically and socially in both direct and indirect ways. In many cases, there were students who were definitive mentors or mentees, but in other settings, these roles were less clearly defined. In various instances, students informally shared knowledge and opinions with each other in ways that were more akin to dialogue rather than formal mentoring. Aural and visual modeling also played a significant role in how peers mentored and shared knowledge with one another. Students also engaged in less formal mentoring relationships where a clear mentor and mentee were not always delineated. These relationships often emerged organically without direction from the facilitator, Dr. Anderson. For many students, these less formal mentoring relationships were due to the way that they communicated with each other through shared language.

The second research question (how does peer mentoring play a role, if at all, in the overall musical growth of students in a modern band) is initially answered by stating that peer mentoring did play a role in the musical growth of many students. Students engaged in peer mentoring that aided and addressed skills such as technique, accuracy, interpretation, listening skills, and overall performance ability. Through democratic spaces in which the teacher-as-facilitator fostered student agency, students were able to hear a variety of perspectives from their peers on how to play, what to play, and the direction to take with their own musical learning. As students referenced learning more



easily in many cases from their peers, musical growth appeared to occur through peer mentoring relationships. Students recognized Dr. Anderson as a key to the ensemble's success through his facilitation, sharing of knowledge, and modeling, but peer mentoring was another foundational tool for musical growth within the ensemble.

To answer the third research question (in what other ways, if any, does peer mentoring affect the participants of a modern band), peer mentoring did affect participants in other, non-musical ways. Most apparently, students were positively affected socially. Friendships were cultivated, leadership skills were developed, and students' sense of accomplishment was heightened through peer mentoring in this modern band. As a byproduct of peer mentoring, it became clear that leadership skills were developed for almost all students. Because most students were a mentor (formally and/or informally) at some point during the year, they were in a leadership position with their peers. In leadership roles during peer mentoring, students were validated through the process as their opinions, knowledge, and direction were seen as worthy of being included in the dynamic of the group. Furthermore, friendships appeared to be strengthened due to the relaxed atmosphere of the class as Dr. Anderson took on the role of a facilitator of learning. Bonds were created through positive social interaction and students were positively affected by well-received critique from their peers as it aided in assisting the group musically.

To address the fourth research question (what role does the facilitator play in creating an environment that nurtures peer mentoring and the sharing of knowledge between students), Dr. Anderson, as the group's facilitator, played a crucial role in

crafting the environment that made it possible for peer mentoring and the sharing of knowledge between students to occur. This was accomplished primarily because Dr. Anderson chose to be a facilitator of learning for the ensemble rather than an educator who may not have included student voice in the decision-making process and co-construction of the ensemble. Through the cultivation of a welcoming and relaxed learning environment, Dr. Anderson encouraged students to voice their opinions, make decisions democratically, and aid their peers. Through these types of encouragements, peer mentoring often occurred organically. By relinquishing some of the inherent authority given to him as the group's formal instructor by the school, and validating students' voices, students were empowered to mentor each other and share knowledge and experience with each other in a way that was communicated effectively.

### **Unique Contribution**

This study adds a unique contribution to existing scholarly literature on peer mentoring and modern band, but more importantly, where they intersect, inform, and rely on one another. While peer mentoring is usually concerned solely with roles of teachers and students, this study identified how the intersection of environment, facilitator, repertoire (with its delivery), and students enabled organic peer mentoring to exist within the ensemble. Peer mentoring roles, both fixed and reciprocal as well as formal and informal existing on a sliding scale of fluidity, depend on a multitude of factors that may not be identified and fully understood by looking solely at the interactions between students themselves. In addition, peer mentoring should not only be considered a beneficial tool for developing students musically and socially, but also as a defining

component of the methodology of modern band and the ways in which it brings partial authenticity to a popular music ensemble based in formal school settings.

### **The Ripple Effect of Repertoire Selection**

Song choices like “Californication,” “Day Tripper,” “Say it Ain’t So,” “Perfect,” and “All Star” fit well with the group, leading to an increase in peer mentoring opportunities. Because students were familiar with the repertoire, and they aligned with the knowledge that students already possessed, engagement in peer mentoring was more organic. “Fly Me to the Moon” did not leave as much opportunity for peer mentoring as students may not have had the capacity or knowledge to engage in peer mentoring.

Students were actively engaged in the learning process through the use of popular music within the classroom (Ho; 2014; Kertz-Welzel, 2005). While the group had a small rebellion over “All Star,” the song may have still worked well for a pending concert and was appropriate for modern band based on the popular music preferences of the group.

The other four songs that the group spent most of their time rehearsing also fit well in the modern band for several reasons. These five songs (noted at the beginning of this section) worked extremely well with the group and demonstrated an increase in engagement and peer interaction. Potentially due, in part, to the familiar nature of the chords, style, and structure of the songs, peers were able to mentor each other and rely less on Dr. Anderson for facilitative instruction. These songs utilized typical modern band instruments of electric and acoustic guitars, keyboards, vocals, technology, bass, and drums in a popular music setting (Dorfman, 2020). It seemed that the choice to play “Fly Me to the Moon” in the late winter, a jazz standard, did not bring out as many opportunities for peer

mentoring as did the other five in previous rehearsals due to a heavier reliance on Dr. Anderson and an unfamiliarity with the style of music. The group often referred to the modern band as when they played “the rock songs.” It seemed that this jazz standard forced the group to adjust in many ways outside of how they typically played and rehearsed, leaning less on each other as they had previously. I acknowledge the notion here that the way students were interacting during this song may have been influenced by not only the repertoire choice but also the ways in which Dr. Anderson chose to facilitate. There existed a tension here that will remain somewhat undiscovered as to how both the repertoire and approach created tension within the ensemble concerning how students learned during this somewhat atypical song choice.

During rehearsals of the five rock songs (“Californication,” “Day Tripper,” “Say it Ain’t So,” “Perfect,” and “All Star”), students were comfortable with the chords that were used, the style of the songs, and were familiar with the general layout of each song. The chords that these songs used were commonplace (minus a rogue chord in each) to rock music and the group already had previous experience with most of them. These factors let peers with more experience and knowledge mentor each other as chords were more familiar to some than others. This fact led to expedited rehearsals and more time spent on style and feel for each song as well. The five rock songs were also transcribed in loose ways that allowed many of the students to experiment with improvisation concerning chord placement, rhythms, and harmonic voicings as well as voice their own opinions and interpretations to peers when applicable.

Brian, the group’s bass player, and Aaron, the drummer, took full advantage of

this space for experimentation. Aaron played in various styles and Brian did not always stick to simply playing the root notes of each chord. Other students had room to explore, improvise, and exercise their autonomy when it came to the notes and rhythms they would play because of the malleable system of each song's notation. Jeff was emblematic of this fact in that he would sometimes play melody, harmony, and a combination of both. While he was viewing the same chord structure as the other players, he had room to make up various parts as the songs evolved. The simple notation system of lyrics and chords left room for experimentation and interpretation from all the group's members as discussed and reflected upon by Smith and Gramm (in press) who advocated for a looser and more contextualized approach to learning popular music in formal school settings. As students were given more freedom of interpretation with the music, they may have engaged in peer interactions more frequently due to the less prescribed way of transmitting how a song should be played and who was left to interpret the transcriptions, be it students or facilitator.

When the group began playing "Fly Me to the Moon," rehearsal aspects adjusted greatly and the freedom of interpretation that most students enjoyed up until that point was minimized. This was not due to a directive given by Dr. Anderson, but a reflection of the style of music and interpretation of the transcribed music. The song "Fly Me to the Moon" would be more closely categorized as jazz rather than rock. Brian played a walking bass line that was pre-written, Aaron stuck to a traditional swing jazz rhythm on the drum set and the guitarists played the chord forms that were written above each chord name on the sheet music. In this case, even the guitar chords were more prescriptive,

being written out in a diagram above each named chord. Many of the chords were largely unfamiliar to the guitarists and because of this, they were forced to read them as written and ask for direct help from Dr. Anderson as to where to play them. Even if students were eager to get advice or mentoring from their peers, they may not have had as many opportunities since the repertoire was more unfamiliar than other songs the group had rehearsed and the ways by which the song was written out for students was more regimented. There was little room for experimentation or subjective exploration within the chords for the guitar players. This was an anomaly for the group due to the way it was rehearsed and the unfamiliarity the group may have had with the style. While the genesis of the song's selection is unknown to me, it did not seem to fit as well with the group's apparently well-established learning styles. The song did not leave opportunities for increased engagement, potentially due to student disinterest (Randles, 2018). Through another lens, Clauhs (2020) noted that, "educators have a responsibility to design experiences that meet the needs of learners in their classroom" (p. 101). The students were less involved in peer mentoring and sharing knowledge between themselves as they looked to Dr. Anderson for a significant percentage of tutelage for this jazz standard.

One of the most telling aspects of the contrast between the five rock songs and "Fly Me to the Moon" was how Dr. Anderson instructed and rehearsed the group. During this jazz song, Dr. Anderson had to reference measure numbers as opposed to sections and took on a more directorial approach. He provided exact voicings of chords for the guitarists. This type of music left much less room for creativity and student involvement during that song, as one might expect during a rehearsal of a jazz standard in a popular

music ensemble. While improvisation is a large part of jazz music, the group did not appear to be familiar with standard jazz improvisation and was not able to utilize this creative outlet as those more familiar with the genre may have.

The five rock songs showed a greater level of student agency and voice in the classroom. During those five songs, students voiced many more opinions on the way the song should go, who should play which parts, and how they could make each song work well for the group. During “Fly Me to the Moon,” there was far less student voice in the classroom and the opinion of Dr. Anderson was heard more than during any other song’s rehearsal. Therefore, the opportunities for this ensemble to engage in peer mentoring seemed to be largely contingent upon the style of music being rehearsed as well as how it was presented to them.

### **Modeling as a Foundational Tool for Learning**

Popular musicians learn in ways that may not be completely and authentically replicable inside traditional school settings (Green, 2002b). One aspect of nonformal learning that was found somewhat in its true form in this modern band was the reliance on both aural and visual modeling. The students of the ensemble relied on audio recordings as guides as well as both aural and visual modeling from Dr. Anderson and their peers as pathways of learning. These types of learning-by-ear tactics helped to develop and reinforce aural learning skills for the students (Abrahams et al., 2011). In contrast to their experience in the classical guitar ensemble, this modern band was approached with more active participation from students which more authentically related to how popular musicians learn outside of educational institutions (Green, 2002b). For

example, Brian said, “I feel like the pop songs are easier and people like them more. They’re more confident in them.”

Every song that the group practiced, with “Fly Me to the Moon” as a notable exception, began with listening to the official recording from the band that originally wrote and performed the song. The recording was used as a guide to direct the group to understand the song’s tempo, style, feel, and energy. Students relied on audio recordings to get general ideas of how the song should sound and, on occasion, copied sections note for note. Peers relied on each other to work through the music as well while they listened as further incorporation of peer mentoring being influenced and informed by the modeling that occurred. The integration of these informal learning practices within a formal school setting serves to better understand the dynamics of nonformal learning. As Green and Walmsley (2009) noted, “informal learning practices usually involve learning by listening to records and copying them by ear” (p. 2) whereas “formal music education usually involves learning through notation or other written or verbal instructions” (p. 2). The most obvious instance of this was when Kenny played the guitar solo of “Californication.” He had the guitar tablature written out but relied heavily on the recording to hear the rhythms of each note as well as the telltale note bends that the guitarist performed on the recording.

Audio recordings were also used to determine the form of each song. Students actively listened to understand the song’s form (intro, verse, chorus, bridge, instrumental break, etc.) as well as how they were to transition between those sections. The written music did not make mention of how many beats or measures each chord occupied, so



students used the recordings to better understand the rhythmic breakdown of each section as well. This type of open interpretation left plenty of room for peers to mentor each other and work autonomously without directions always coming from Dr. Anderson. When the group faltered or disagreed, the audio recording was often used to make decisions that the group could not come to on their own. Even when particularly important riffs were learned using guitar and bass tablature, the rhythm was learned through aural modeling from the recordings. As advised by Green (2009), teachers should make sure their popular music students use some traditional methods of learning akin to a teacher, but also rely heavily on audio recordings and work through issues alone and with friends rather than having a sole reliance on a formal director. Students worked together and did not always go to their facilitator to make final decisions on songs but used audio recordings to inform their own decision-making process.

The audio recordings also served to transition the group from play-along to performance. The group used the audio recordings not only as a learning tool, but also to learn by experience. Jones (2015) noted that in the beginning stages of problem solving, students tend to work together towards problem solving, utilizing modeling of recordings and inquisition of the group's facilitator when appropriate. Much like the students in this modern band, Jones found that student reliance on recordings evolved over time. With each song, the group began by solely listening to the recordings, moved towards playing along with them, and eventually began playing on their own without reliance on the recording. During the initial listening phase, students experimented and navigated their parts with the aid of the studio recording. The play-along aspect of their initial rehearsals

forced the group to push themselves to learn and move with the song, much like a metronome, as it did not stop or slow down when a student was having trouble with their parts or had questions. This pedagogical technique gave each student freedom to learn their parts along with peers without the initial anxiety of playing on their own. As students learned their parts along with the recordings, they moved closer to being in a position of self-reliance, having adequately emulated the characteristics of the studio recordings through listening and modeling. The group steadily moved from complete reliance on the recordings to not using them at all. This transitional process took two or three rehearsals on average for each song, but the audio recordings were kept in use for reference throughout the semester. This availability of frequent performance and active participation may have encouraged and led students to engage with one another during each run-through.

Aural and visual modeling from ensemble members also played a key role in how students learned each of the songs they were practicing. Through peer mentoring and sharing knowledge, both the students and Dr. Anderson relied heavily on demonstration to guide, instruct, and mentor each other within the modern band. In addition to recordings, aural modeling was used in the group as a process of guiding the vocalists. When a vocal passage needed clarification, Dr. Anderson and other students stepped in to demonstrate their knowledge and opinion through aural modeling by singing the vocal lines. This method worked well as the vocalists were already familiar with this type of approach. Since Joan and Kenny noted that they often learned the songs by listening, this approach may have been more impactful as it paralleled how they would be learning on

their own. If Dr. Anderson had chosen to reference sheet music or traditional staff notation of the melody and rhythm, it may not have been as easily absorbed as compared to aural modeling. This, in turn, may have limited the opportunities for peer mentoring within the ensemble. The aural modeling aspect of learning the vocal lines made the most sense for this modern band based on how the vocalists had previously learned their songs as well as their use of nonformal learning strategies.

Other types of aural modeling made sense to emphasize beats or rhythmic patterns. This tactic worked well in that many of the students, especially Aaron, were keen to listen and learn through aural demonstrations. The guitarists also benefited from this type of modeling when it came to understanding how to accent their strumming patterns or adjust the dynamics of any given passage. During “Day Tripper,” Dr. Anderson emphasized the dynamic buildup of the bridge by vocalizing the “ahhs” through an increase in volume and intensity in his voice. One might argue, then, that using a standard notation system of documenting changes in dynamics would have been inauthentic to the group’s established approach and learning styles.

Though auditory modeling was important, most of the modeling that occurred in the group was visual. While some students learned through visual modeling more than others, all members of the modern band engaged with visual modeling in some way. The largest group of instrumentalists to utilize this method in the ensemble were the guitarists. In a popular music context, the guitar is a very visual instrument, and many students learn the instrument through visual means (looking at instructional videos, copying left-hand positions, and watching right-hand strum techniques). This also commonly occurs

through mirroring other players, including formal teachers and peers both in-person and online.

When students needed help with chords, their peers, Mr. Falcone, and Dr. Anderson would demonstrate through visual modeling. Phrases like “take a look at this,” “watch where I’m putting my fingers,” and “here’s how you have to finger that chord” were commonplace. In these settings, Dr. Anderson facilitated learning much like a coach (Watson, 2011), stepping in when needed to guide but leaving room for students to operate democratically and autonomously as also recommended by Clauhs et al. (2020). The coach, according to Watson (2011), is best seen as a facilitator who can encourage creativity and student-centered learning. Through these types of interactions, focused specifically on chords, students would finger the chord with their left hand on the fretboard and ask their peers to view what they were doing to measure accuracy. This tactic worked well for the guitar players as it was a quick approach to learning, tactically relevant, and easy to understand for many of the musicians in the group. Other guitar passages were also visually modeled for students such as the riffs for “Day Tripper” and the opening sequence of “Californication” for both the guitarist and the bass guitar players.

Visual modeling aided the learning of non-guitarists as well. Elizabeth, who played the iPad, was heavily reliant on others to show her which chords to play on the keyboard app that she was using. Aurally modeling or writing out the chords in standard notation may not have worked in this context for her. Dr. Anderson, and Jeff on occasion, visually demonstrated the chords that she was supposed to play for each song and showed by

example how to manipulate the sound effects that could be implemented. While Dr. Anderson was not a percussionist or drummer by his own definition, there were also times when he sat at the drum kit to show Aaron what he thought the correct drum part should be. This was best done through visual demonstration where singing the part or writing out rhythmic notation would not have been as authentic, accurate, or well-received. When engaged in peer mentoring, guitarists, keyboardists, and percussionist often used visual modeling to convey interpretations and advice as to what their peers should be playing, and the technique involved. Without the inclusion of visual modeling as a core tenet for learning in the group, peer mentoring may not have been as successful, and students may not have had adequate understanding of how to relay information to their peers.

### **More than Just Music**

It was clear that involvement in the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band, complete with peer mentoring, meant more to its students than the music they were playing. Socializing, a notably important factor, between students was a common occurrence. This was due, in part, to the environment that Dr. Anderson created for students within the modern band. Through peer mentoring and sharing of knowledge between peers, students were engaged in musical and social dialogue that did not, as Goodrich (2016) stated, “always relate to subject matter knowledge being transferred from one person to another” (p. 8). The students’ conversations throughout the year were varied and not prescribed by anyone in the group. For the students in the group, the possibility of social interaction and bonding was a key benefit within the ensemble and

made them excited to participate. Joan was a prime example of this; she noted that, due to her involvement with the group, she made friends and strengthened the bonds of friendship that were already present. The socializing that occurred in the group also enabled members of varying skill levels to form tighter bonds and, in turn, potentially enabled greater musical cohesion in the ensemble. The increase in avenues for socializing within the group may also have had an impact on the comfort level of students critiquing each other and voicing their opinions in a welcoming and empathetic space as they engaged in formal and informal instances of peer mentoring.

In addition to socializing and strengthening of bonds, students developed leadership skills through peer mentoring similar to the findings of Scruggs (2008) and Koenig (2001). Students led their peers informally and formally through the process of giving advice, instruction, and opinion. Through sharing knowledge, students entered an atmosphere where social skills were not only harnessed and refined, but necessary to convey information for whatever context they found themselves in. Through their increased social interactions, students may have developed empathy and a better understanding of their peers.

Students exhibited heightened awareness for their peers as the year progressed. In particular, the most recognizable evidence of this was the encouragement that peers provided each other. As students encouraged one another, not only did their self-confidence increase, but peer mentoring may have been easier to enact when students knew the positive nature of peer interaction in this context. When the ensemble did well as a whole or a student played their part with accuracy and precision, other students did

not hesitate to call out praise, saying phrases like “great job” and “that was awesome.” Kenny benefited from this greatly and it may have made a big difference in how he handled himself within the ensemble. Throughout his time playing the solo of “Californication,” it was evident that the group cheered him on through his successes and even encouraged him during the times when he showed a need for improvement. This type of encouragement was also given to vocalists like Joan, Matthew, and John, and it seemed to bolster their confidence while singing each song. The students fed off this type of peer encouragement and they seemed appreciative. It changed their body language, facial expressions, and subsequent interactions. The direct correlation between peer encouragement and positive attitudes and behavior was evident. These findings were similar to a study conducted by Martino (2014) where the ensemble utilized nonformal learning techniques and focused on the musical preferences of the students. Students in this study’s ensemble and Martino’s study both developed greater confidence in their peer relationships and noted increases in self-confidence as well.

Social encouragement was student-led, but students in this study’s ensemble appeared to feel a sense of community and accountability due in part to the atmosphere that was created by their teacher. Peer encouragement was also juxtaposed with accountability for each of the members for the greater good of the ensemble. The accountability in the group was evident through peer mentoring that was initiated by students who were giving direction and mentorship to others who were playing incorrectly or could benefit from mentoring. The combination of student agency, a relaxed atmosphere, and Dr. Anderson being careful about the balance between formal

and nonformal instruction may have led to students caring for each other, a wish for cohesive ensemble success, and help to those who needed aid.

### **Summary**

Modern band has gained traction in the field of music education (Clauhs & Cremata, 2020; Dorfman, 2020; Powell & Smith, 2020) but remains largely uninvestigated, especially in terms of individual cases and the manifestation of peer mentoring. This study, focused on peer mentoring in one classroom with one modern band ensemble, demonstrates some of the benefits and challenges associated with and afforded by this emerging model. With careful selection of repertoire, a utilization of modeling, and a realization that students develop socially within modern band ensembles, facilitators have a chance to engage their students in a co-constructed ensemble that may impact them in ways that go beyond accurate musical performance. The songs that were chosen appeared to have a direct impact on how students will learn, and which members of the ensemble have influential voices. How songs are chosen can validate the opinions of students and has the opportunity to potentially develop leadership skills and build student self-esteem. As Cremata and Powell (2017) noted at the conclusion of an online music collaboration project, “the teacher/facilitator ... fostered student agency, autonomy, and life-wide/long musical learning spaces for his students. He focused on individual students and their collaborations through deterritorialized student-centered learning” (p. 311). Through modeling, facilitators can come closer to authentic approaches of learning popular music as well. As Green (2006) so aptly wrote, “perhaps we should aim, not for the authenticity of the musical *product*, but for the authenticity of



the musical learning *practice*; in other words, not for ‘musical authenticity’ but more for ‘music-learning authenticity’” (p. 114).

### **Implications for Music Education**

Based upon the findings of this study, there are several implications for music educators to consider. The implications below deal with aspects of facilitation, student agency, peer mentoring, student proximity, authenticity, socializing, and pedagogical balance.

#### ***Development of Autonomy and Student Agency in All Classrooms***

Many school settings are rife with educator models where there exists one voice that delivers information and makes decisions. In some contexts, a formal educator needs to make unilateral decisions about issues such as school-enforced protocol, behavioral concerns, and logistical demands. Based on the results of this study, there is a justification for students to have a recognized voice and space to craft their own learning in modern band ensembles. The presence of student voice and student agency can manifest in a variety of settings. Educators may offer students more opportunities to develop as well-rounded people in contexts where decision-making is a group endeavor and not left solely to the educator. When students are encouraged to participate in the ensemble’s direction through the engagement of peer mentoring both formally and informally, they in turn may become more invested in the ensemble. Heightened investment and care for ensemble members’ whole being may also lead to fewer behavioral problems and more progress towards the greater good of the group where students are considered contributing members on equal footing.

Music education is primed for the types of innovations and interventions in the learning outlined in this study. By encouraging an increase in student voice and the inclusion of learning tactics akin to peer mentoring, teachers and students can co-create environments that develop more empathy, student leadership, and student involvement. In contexts akin to modern band, there are opportunities to foster student agency that should not be missed. As a student in the ensemble noted, “this class isn’t like all of our others, you can just be yourself.” By including students’ voices in multiple ways including peer mentoring, educators show them that they are intelligent, worth listening to, and can be accepted for who they are with their valuable input. If Dr. Anderson had not allowed students to voice their opinions, student engagement may have decreased, and more students may have viewed music class as another formal activity that did not apply to them. Music educators who honor student voices may have a deeper impact on helping students develop students into capable members of society. In contexts similar to modern band, therefore, there are opportunities to foster student agency that should not be overlooked.

Fostering student autonomy in the classroom also leaves room for ensembles to be more student-centered and relevant to the students of the group. Actively cultivating and encouraging independence and peer mentoring can enable each student to have more ownership in the ensemble as they have a hand in crafting its shape and sound through direct interaction with their peers. As an ancillary benefit to the facilitator, trusting students to make their own decisions and mentor each other allows the facilitator to concentrate on problematic areas and avoid micro-management. While students may

make decisions that stand in opposition to the direction given by a teacher, the ensemble's subjective perfection, precision, and refinement may not be as important as building up each student's confidence and encouraging leadership qualities. The director of any ensemble may assume they are the only entity within the group that has a voice worthy of being recognized and an opinion that stands above all others but authentically including student voice and choice in an ensemble serves to break away from this established notion and enable participatory learning through student-centered tactics such as peer mentoring.

***Development of Teachers as Context Builders for Facilitation and Peer Mentoring***

The results of this study suggest that peer mentoring is a beneficial tactic for diversifying instructional methods, socializing, and developing leadership skills in the context of modern band. Therefore, greater awareness and subsequent development of the skills needed for implementation of peer mentoring for both current and pre-service educators is needed. While embracing the idea that facilitating learning and encouraging peers to work with and mentor each other may be an important notion, it may fall short without proper training. Teachers, both novice and experienced, need to explore and investigate avenues and resources to better incorporate nonformal learning tactics if they want to diversify their educational methods and reach students in impactful ways. Dr. Anderson was well-versed in facilitating modern band and incorporating pathways for peer mentoring. If we seek to incorporate peer mentoring as a best practice, leadership tracks should be cultivated for music educators in similar contexts.

For teachers already in classrooms, micro-implementations of peer mentoring

approaches may provide evidence as to how the tactic is beneficial even in the most formal of ensemble settings. By learning from other educators in the field and finding potential inroads for facilitation and peer mentoring, all ensembles may find the approach to be beneficial. Since modern band is very much akin to a popular music ensemble or rock band outside of school settings, learning strategies like these are not unusual when being introduced into the learning landscape. Though some educators are more comfortable with teacher-centered pedagogies, having a working knowledge of how to best incorporate and implement nonformal practices into classrooms may help bring more awareness to educators of the musical and social benefits of such practices for students.

While many studies have been conducted surrounding the musical and social benefits of incorporating facilitation and peer mentoring, teachers may remain woefully unprepared to meet the theoretical underpinnings with practical, real-world application in K–12 classrooms if they have not been made aware of how to encourage peer mentoring, foster student agency, and approach teaching as facilitation. This need may exist, in part, due to the training undertaken at music teacher preparation programs. While teachers that have already been established in classrooms may be searching for pathways to include these types of pedagogical practices, collegiate education programs may still be doing tomorrow's teachers a disservice by foregoing training in peer mentoring and facilitation. Pre-service music teacher programs should move away from a concentration on preparing students for the music education of decades past. With a high concentration of effort towards teacher-centered large ensembles (band, chord, orchestra), little room is left for practical teaching strategies that involve the awareness of non-traditional methodologies

like those mentioned here.

By including nonformal topics in teaching methods within popular music ensembles, collegiate educators lend justification to techniques that may seem contrary to the commonly held definition of a teacher. If the curricula of K–12 schools and pre-service music programs do not adequately represent many different areas of potential learning for students, instructors may not be educating students in ways that have the most potential for long-lasting impact. For every educator that chooses to incorporate facilitation, peer mentoring, and sharing knowledge between peers, the more they choose to educate the entire student, not just one that will become more familiar with specific pieces of music. Leaving room for students to interact with each other, engage in mentoring, and embrace sharing knowledge between peers, has the potential to develop empathy, understanding, and future leaders through experience in teaching and directing in micro-contexts. As Goodrich (2018) stated, “additional time is required of the teacher to implement and maintain the mentoring systems, but once implemented, these systems can aid the teacher with student enhancement of their overall knowledge comprehension and elevation of music performance levels” (p. 18).

### ***Frequent Performance as a Motivational Tool***

As an ancillary finding from the study, it seemed that live performance was a motivator for students to refine their skills of playing and singing the music they had been rehearsing. In modern band, frequent performance can be used as a motivational tool to drive students to be successful. It was clear that Joan and Kenny, amongst others, increased their practicing and refinement of music skills the closer a performance

opportunity came. While it may come as no surprise, the notion of performance, especially in front of their school peers, seemed to be a driving factor for the ensemble members to do well. Jeff, Joan, and Aaron noted in interviews that they felt a sense of nervousness that made them feel more motivated to do well and practice leading up to a concert. Dylan said that the concerts were amazing, and he loved them. An educator who facilitates any ensemble akin to a popular music ensemble, like modern band, could strive to perform as often as possible in front of varied audiences as motivation for student learning. During live performance, students have more chances to deal with performance anxiety and work towards improving their stage presence. The results of this study suggest that, as groups become more comfortable playing music, varied outlets for performance should be provided.

### ***Careful Consideration of Student Proximity***

The physical location of students in the ensemble space appeared to have a direct correlation to peer mentoring relationships. The closer two students were positioned to one another, the more likely they would work together through peer mentoring. While students may still be given freedom to move around and adjust their location based on need, there can be a tactful and strategic approach, at least initially, to the layout of the room and positioning of each student. While some students may gravitate towards friends, it may be prudent to craft seating assignments based on experience levels and opportunities for peer mentoring and sharing knowledge. Elizabeth and Jeff may have benefited from each other more if they had been positioned in a way that provided the maximum amount of opportunity to learn from and mentor each other. Both students

played keyboard instruments but were not in a physical place that facilitated easy communication.

In any ensemble, there exists an opportunity to position students with more experience and knowledge near those with less. This may benefit both parties (in reciprocity), as leadership skills can be developed for one and increased knowledge for the other. Finding this balance may be crucial to helping students develop as leaders but also give them needed help. Elizabeth was a prime example of the need for this type of balance. She may not have understood that she could ask other students such as Jeff for help with her keyboard parts on the iPad but may have been less inclined to do so based on her seating position being apart from him. Instead of relying on peers, Elizabeth gravitated towards Dr. Anderson on most occasions. This may have been due, in part, to her location in the classroom. Therefore, while there are benefits to encouraging students to move around the room as they see fit, balancing these interactions with deliberate strategic placement will likely lead to increased opportunities for peer mentorship, leadership, and musical development.

### ***Finding Balance***

As noted by McPhail (2013), teachers should “continually work to find a balance between the requirements of national assessment, expanding knowledge, and legitimatizing students’ areas of interest” (p. 15). Therefore, educators must also aim to find balance in the utilization of a myriad of tactics, methods, and lenses within each ensemble. Specifically, balance needs to be found between fun and productivity in rehearsals as well as between formal and nonformal learning techniques such as peer

mentoring. While there may exist a temptation for many educators to retain complete control over a well-behaved and calculated ensemble experience for all students, this approach may stifle ancillary benefits. Practicing and performing music accurately, whether internally or externally within a school setting, may seem to be the unspoken and intrinsic goal for most school-based ensembles. By retaining this mentality as the sole focus and goal of the ensemble, students may miss out on other meaningful experiences that come alongside. By moving away from the sole goal of accurately performing music, the joy, laughter, and fun that students may find within school-based ensembles can provide them with experiences that are more long-lasting and meaningful than playing the greatest number of correct notes in the most accurate way. While performing music subjectively well remains a key tenet of every ensemble experience, educators can also find room to implement goals that lead to student enjoyment. This may be accomplished through an acceptance of jovial interruptions throughout rehearsals as well as an outward-facing approach of care for the whole student. When students enjoy themselves within an ensemble space, they may in turn be more productive and dedicated to the goals of the ensemble's facilitator as well. I am not suggesting that educators abandon all aspects of rules and restrictions. As teachers create space for students to have fun and be themselves, students may also in turn give more respect towards the approach as the educational landscape changes to be more student-centered and multi-directional. There exists a need for all educators to consider the foundations of why they teach and the outcomes that drive their instruction. An acknowledgement of the tension that exists between exact replication with a drive toward perfect performance and positive musical



experiences complete with their benefit to students on musical and social levels is necessary for all educators. As Powell (2021a) noted, the embracing of amateurism within popular music education provides connectivity between community musicians and encourages both social and musical goals for ensembles.

Another balance that must be struck in the classroom is that of pedagogical approaches. While many educators are fully steeped in one-sided knowledge delivery from teacher to student, there must be a balance of nonformal educational practices as well. Through the implementation of peer mentoring, learning by ear, and reliance on aural and visual modeling, teachers may see benefits such as increased student involvement, heightened social presence, and the cultivation of leadership skills. Reliance on teacher-led instruction and approaches that situate an instructor as the sole fount of knowledge and experience eliminates the multiple perspectives and possible contributions of the ensemble's students and the experience they may contribute. Implementation of nonformal practices can increase the number of tools that educators can use for successful teaching and the application of meaningful learning experiences. The use of nonformal learning practices like peer mentoring and modeling within a school-based ensemble can also communicate to students that they have a voice worthy of being heard. This can be accomplished through the integration of peer mentoring and peer modeling. By providing opportunities for students to learn from each other and learn in ways that are not unilateral from a teacher there exists potential for diversification of teaching methods in the classroom.

With nonformal educational practices in use, educators should aim to find the

most appropriate amount of time to allow students to work amongst themselves. There exists a subjective balance in any group where productivity subsides when students are left to their own musings for too long. In the rehearsals of the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band, after roughly seven to eight minutes of students working on their own, it was clear that the level of productivity trailed off. This marker is by no means an adequate plumb line to measure other groups against, but it serves to demonstrate the existence of a time where students are the most productive and the point where they begin to move towards inefficiency. But, without student autonomy and agency, facilitation cannot be present. To find balance, teachers should identify the window of time that exists between the productive benefits of facilitation and the times where students may become ineffective on their own.

Lastly, there exists a balance that educators should find between student autonomy and accountability to the group's well-being. In this study, students were consistently late for rehearsal and there was a high level of truancy. Dr. Anderson aimed to make sure that his students were never reprimanded for being late since students took the ensemble as an elective and could have chosen to remove themselves at any time. Dr. Anderson may not have wanted to discourage students from showing up by keeping strict rules regarding attendance and punctuality. This, in turn, hindered the group's level of productivity in that much of the early time in each rehearsal was spent waiting for ensemble members to arrive. Dr. Anderson was quick to adapt each rehearsal to the members of the group that were present but seemed to struggle with the lack of consistency of ensemble members. Educators might consider keeping their approach

relaxed and welcoming but aim to avert tardiness and absenteeism through an increase in accountability. Without consequence and a drive towards group accountability, students may not realize the impact they each have on the group's success.

### ***Implementation of Facilitation in Any Ensemble***

The benefits of teachers taking on a more facilitative role have been established in various contexts inside and outside of music education (Cremata, 2017; Cremata & Powell, 2017; Crow, 2004). Educators can implement aspects of facilitation in any context. Enabling student leaders is one way that educators can relinquish some of the power they hold. In addition to the student leadership utilized in the modern band setting, Dr. Anderson established “guest conductors” to develop student leadership skills in his classical guitar ensemble, much like Hopkins (2017) found in a similar study, removing himself from the typical position afforded him as the instructor. This is one example of how facilitation can occur in other ensembles, but educators should be open to exploring potential opportunities of facilitation whether it be in small or large ways.

As West and Cremata (2016) noted, facilitation can only happen when a teacher recognizes that they may not be the only experts in the room and their students have a wealth of experience and knowledge that can aid in the success of the group. The approach to facilitation within an ensemble bears with it an understanding and acknowledgement that it can exist fluidly on a continuum where at one end there exists complete dictatorship and the other, the absence of any type of authoritative figure. It becomes necessary to bear in mind that both music students and music educators bring knowledge and experience to the classroom, each location, school, student body, and

ensemble experience will differ. Finding ways for students to work with each other to aid in the success of the group will be beneficial to all parties involved. Enabling small group leaders, peer mentoring advisors, and democratic decision-making are all ways that facilitation can find a place in band, choir, orchestra, and a myriad of other groups. Encouraging students to work amongst themselves and learn from one another are ways that facilitation can manifest (Cremata, 2017). This technique, as noted by Cremata (2017), can help a group to work together to become problem solvers and expands the notion of diverse educational practices in the context of music classrooms. If educators seek meaningful music experiences with retention of knowledge through active participation (Rogers, 1969), they must involve their students in active ways.

### *Careful Selection of Repertoire*

The songs that were chosen for the group had a direct influence on the excitement, enthusiasm, and willingness of students to learn. “Say it Ain’t So,” “Day Tripper,” and “Californication” were prime examples of well-suited songs for the group. These three songs had medium to fast tempi, varying harmonic sections, and stylistic dynamics. The song “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran did not fit this criterion as well for the group as it was more monotonous and lacking in contrast throughout. The song initially seemed like a good choice based on its popularity but there was a lack of energy when it came to actual performance. The up-tempo songs “Day Tripper” and “Say it Ain’t So” provided a context for students to get loud, explore their instruments, and progress musically.

Modern band facilitators may glean parameters from these examples, noting that a lack of energy in song structure may equate to a lack of energy with a group's performance. Lack of energy and excitement may then lead to fewer occurrences and opportunities for peer mentoring. Song choices should be made democratically amongst the group's members and a facilitator's role may include narrowing choices and directing students towards the most successful live performance songs. Potential songs that the group mentioned throughout their time together such as "Back in Black" and "Smells Like Teen Spirit" would have fit very well in this context as well. It may also be part of the facilitator's job to understand the students they are teaching and take factors into account like group ability level and individualized instrument capabilities. With all these aspects considered, songs that lack energy may not be the best fit for a popular music ensemble and could bring dissension and an overall lack of involvement from students within the group along with an unwillingness to engage in co-constructing the development of the song through peer mentoring. Conversely, educators may decide to include songs that provide a rich context of harmonic, dynamic, and stylistic diversity which can bring about an increase in attention, involvement, and ownership amongst student ensemble members.

### ***Development of Student Leaders***

It became clear through observations and interviews of students that communication and critique were better received by students when it came from a peer. The notion of speaking a similar language was a salient topic throughout the year as students described conversations and dialogue with their peers being more impactful as

compared with direction and suggestion from their facilitator. Many students in the ensemble also agreed they preferred to hear individual critique from their friends rather than others. To this end, if students take criticism more easily from their peers, teachers might benefit from the creation of avenues to encourage this type of critique delivery among students when the context allows, and it is deemed beneficial. If educators utilize ensemble members to help instruct and critique their peers, it may in turn lead to a more cohesive and empathetic group. Criticism that is poorly received by students from a teacher may result in dissension towards the group and negative attitudes towards the group's director. Students that do not interpret criticism in a positive or constructive way may develop anxiety issues related to their own performance which may hinder development in the ensemble and beyond. Student leaders can help establish clear lines of communication throughout the ensemble and avoid issues of miscommunication that may occur between teachers and students.

### ***Avoiding a False Representation***

As a step towards an authentic approach to learning popular music in formal settings and not a claim to bring about definitive authenticity concerning how popular musicians learn, educators should incorporate nonformal learning approaches within popular music ensembles. In popular music ensembles within school settings, authenticity comes through facilitation and the fostering of student agency. In a popular music ensemble outside of school settings, democratic decision-making is present and there is usually an absence of a director (Green, 2002b). While these characteristics may be impossible to recreate perfectly within a school setting, efforts toward the inclusion of

diverse methods lends to an ensemble's authentic approach and attention to diversification of delivery. As noted by Abeles et al. (2021) in conjunction with the work of Green (2006) concerning popular music in classrooms, modern band is not only defined by instrumentation but also implies a differing of pedagogical approach as compared with more traditional ensemble approaches. Based upon the findings of this study, peer mentoring should not only be seen as an instructional tactic that benefits students socially and musically within modern band but as a key facet of the methodology of modern band itself. Peer mentoring has been established as a means for developing students to become more comprehensive musicians but to also help them develop socially. While these benefits stand alone as apt justification for its utilization, the implementation of peer mentoring is arguably a necessity for the execution of modern band. Peer mentoring should not be understood as simply a method in which to teach a modern band, but a foundational way in which learning must be crafted in modern band ensembles. Peer mentoring is not supplemental to modern band but one of modern band's defining pedagogical characteristics.

In addition to the utilization of peer mentoring, a way to bring about a level of authenticity within a popular music ensemble in educational settings can be accomplished by not solely relying on written notation as the most common method of conveying information. The incorporation of aural and visual modeling may be a step towards authenticity of popular music ensembles within school settings. Reliance on recordings as a method of aural learning is also a way to avoid a popular music ensemble that learns in ways that would be inauthentic outside of a school setting. The students of this ensemble

relied heavily on audio recordings as well as visual and aural modeling from their instructor and, even more so, from their peers. The majority of written notation used was authentic to how popular musicians learn. These were comprised of lyric sheets with basic chords written above where they occurred rhythmically. Other important riffs, or small note passages, were written out in tablature having been downloaded directly from the internet. To avoid learning popular music in a setting that largely resembles more traditional ensembles, aspects of nonformal learning like modeling and reliance on aural learning must be included.

### ***The Encouragement of Socializing***

The findings from this study suggest that social development is both possible and important within modern band ensembles. An increase in socializing has potential to bring about group cohesiveness, which in turn may lead to empathy and a better understanding of peers. This can be accomplished through the encouragement, within reason, of student socializing during modern band rehearsals. As with many other topics within this narrative, each teacher must find a balance between student freedom and guided direction within their ensemble. At some point, much like the freedom of students working amongst themselves, there exists a point where socializing may inhibit the progress of the group and potentially occupy too much time apart from musical endeavors. The students in the Washington Ave. Arts High modern band bonded through socializing and this may, in turn, have had a positive effect on the group's ability to work through other issues they faced. The bonds that were created and strengthened through socializing may have also made peer mentoring and critiquing easier to deliver and



receive for students. Students, therefore, may be more apt to develop musically if they are given the freedom to interact socially within the group.

### **Future Research**

Future research is needed to determine whether factors that appear in this study are present in other modern band contexts. This study was conducted in an urban-centered magnet, public high school. Factors such as the location and grade level of students may have had an impact on the success of the implementation of peer mentoring, facilitation, sharing knowledge, socializing, and autonomy in the classroom. As the context of modern band is a relatively new approach to teaching music, there may be multiple benefits to understanding how these approaches manifest themselves in other types of school locations (e.g., rural or international) and grade levels. Peer mentoring in modern band ensembles needs to be studied in elementary as well as lower secondary grade levels as well. In addition, research should be conducted within non-magnet schools where students may be less focused on the arts. A gap also exists in the literature concerning how students communicate with each other regarding feedback and criticism as compared to communication with their facilitator in modern band. While facilitation has been studied in depth in other contexts, this aspect of modern band has yet to be exhausted. Lastly, future research concerning modern band is needed to determine the accuracy in which information is conveyed from student to student while engaged in peer mentoring and the role that gender plays for students within modern band.

## Coda

As Goodrich et al. (2018) stated:

...peer mentoring proved to be a powerful strategy...for this study, and one that may be effective in other settings. Study participants had multiple and varied opportunities to act as both teachers and learners during peer mentoring experiences. They valued opportunities to display music and pedagogical capabilities in different ways, which some described as enhancing their sense of confidence. Over time they grew comfortable in their changing status as mentor or learner, then became more willing to be vulnerable and learn from each other, and eventually became collaborators in their own learning.

The students I have taught, and those that I observed in this study, benefited from peer mentoring in many ways. Through the inclusion of peer mentoring, educators may see positive impacts on their students' lives in ways that may not be immediately identifiable.

By incorporating this pedagogical technique, we, as educators, may not only find heightened musical success in our ensembles but also greater success in positively impacting the lives of those we are tasked with educating. While education takes many forms, peer mentoring has the potential to educate students in worthwhile endeavors akin to empathy, understanding, compassion, kindness, and care for their peers in similar contexts, regardless of ability, experience, and knowledge. In times where empathy, understanding, compassion, kindness, and care are needed, peer mentoring may serve to be a catalyst that brings about much needed positive change.

Protocol Title: Peer Mentoring in Modern Band
Principal Investigator: Warren Gramm
Description of Subject Population: 11–17 year old children
Version Date: 06/25/19

## Introduction

I (Warren Gramm) am a doctoral student at Boston University conducting a study to better understand democracy in the classroom and how students help each other learn within the context of modern band. The term peer mentoring implies that students with more experience help those with less. My faculty advisor at Boston University is Dr. Andrew Goodrich who can be reached at any time via email (■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■) or by phone (■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■).

The person in charge of this study is Warren Gramm. Warren can be reached at ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ or by phone at ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■. I will refer to this person as the “researcher” throughout this form. “You” refers to your child throughout this document.

Please take your time in reading this form. I am always available for consultation if you have any questions related to the study and/or how you will be involved. Participation in this study is entirely up to you. If you find it to be acceptable to be involved, please sign the form at the bottom. I will provide you with a copy of the signed form as well.

## The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how students mentor each other within the context of modern band at your school. I am asking for parental consent since your child is currently enrolled in the modern band class that I wish to study. Somewhere between 15 and 20 students will be taking place in this study.

## How long will the study last?

This study will last approximately 6 months from August 2019 to March 2020. Your participation would entail being observed in a classroom setting and potentially being interviewed at some point throughout the study either on your own or in a small group setting. The interviews will be conducted to gauge your experience with helping and being helped by classmates in the learning process. The interviews will last approximately 20 minutes.

**Will my instruction be altered based on participation or the choice not to participate in the study?**

No, the instruction that you will receive will not be altered in any way based on your choice to participate in the study or not.

**How will you keep my information confidential?**

I will be keeping all of the observation recordings (audio only) on a password protected computer accessible only to me. You will receive a pseudonym (fake name) when I document any answers to interview questions or observations made of the classroom experience. Your real name will never be published or made known to anyone besides myself. The audio recordings and interview answers will be deleted once the study is complete and the findings have been documented.

**Study Participation and Early Removal**

Participation in this study is entirely up to you. You will receive no penalty for deciding to withdraw from the study for any reason if you decide to do so after initially agreeing. There will be no pressure put upon you from any party to continue in the study after expressing concerns or reservations.

**What are the risks of taking part in this study?**

The only minimal risk that you agree to with participation in the study is a potential loss of privacy. I will be making every effort to maintain strict confidentiality of all participants through password protected files on a password-protected laptop and through the use of pseudonyms. I will be making every effort to remove information that would identify you throughout the course of the study.

**What are the benefits of participating in this study?**

There are no direct benefits to you through participation in the study. The only benefit of participating in this study is that it may help educators in the future to better utilize peer mentoring within their classrooms.

**Will it cost me anything to participate in this study?**

No, there are no costs incurred to you if you choose to participate.

**Who should I contact if I have questions about this study?**

Please contact me at ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ or ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ if you have any questions regarding the study or your participation.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or want to speak with someone other than the researcher, you may contact the Boston University Institutional Review Board directly at ■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■.

**Statement of Consent**

I have read the information in this consent form including risks and possible benefits. I have been given the chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study.

**SIGNATURE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Warren Gramm  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

6/25/19  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date





**Name (Please Print)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ADULT PARTICIPANT

Peer Mentoring in Modern Band

Warren Gramm

1. Tell me about your musical background.
  - a. What types of musical experiences did you have in school?
  - b. What types of musical experiences did you have outside of school, if at all?
2. How long have you been facilitating a modern band here at this school?
3. In what ways does the approach to a modern band differ from the more traditional ensembles/instructional methods you've had experience with?
4. Can you describe a typical modern band rehearsal in your school for me?
5. Do you find students helping each other in the ensemble during school rehearsals of modern band? What about rehearsals outside of school?
6. Do you feel it beneficial at all to have students mentor each other within modern band? If so, why? If no, why?
7. What is the level of musicianship like among your students after mentoring each other?
8. How do the students interact with each other (socially) during and after mentoring each other within modern band?
9. For an educator with limited time and resources, how does peer mentoring affect your ability to conduct rehearsals of modern band?

10. When you are rehearsing in school what is the interaction like between your students during rehearsal time?
11. What are some ways that you have been impacted personally in how you look at your career now after facilitating modern band?
12. What is the experience like for you as an educator when you have given students a larger role in their own educational experiences as compared to traditional ensembles or classroom settings?
13. Has the integration of peer mentoring impacted your working relationships with students at all?
14. Imagine yourself a few years into retirement. If someone came up to you and asked what you remember from your work with modern band in school, what would you tell them?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CHILD PARTICIPANT

Peer Mentoring in Modern Band

Warren Gramm

1. When did you first start playing an instrument or singing?
  - a. Please tell me about those early musical experiences.
  - b. What gave you the motivation to do so?
2. What ensembles do you play/sing in currently at school?
3. Do you play or sing in any ensembles outside of school? If yes, what types of ensembles?
4. What were your reasons for wanting to join your school's modern band?
5. Can you describe a typical modern band rehearsal in your school for me?
6. When you are rehearsing modern band in school what is your interaction like with your other peers?
7. If you find yourself helping your classmates play songs and learn parts, what is that experience like?
8. If you have had other students help you to learn how to play something (song, part, chord, etc.), what was that experience like?
9. What is it like to have someone besides the teacher helping out with the instruction in the classroom?
10. What are some ways that you have been impacted personally in how you look at your classmates now after being part of the modern band?

11. Has participation in modern band impacted your friendships at all?
12. Imagine yourself a few years further into high school or even in college. If someone came up to you and asked what you remember from being part of modern band in school, what would you tell them?
13. Besides music, what are some things that you learned while being part of modern band?
14. Imagine yourself graduating from school. You go to write in the yearbook of some of your closer band mates from modern band, what would you say?

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