Music education and the well-rounded education provision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act: A critical policy analysis

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Music education and the well-rounded education provision of the Every Student Succeeds Act: A critical policy analysis

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Critical approaches to policy analysis, though common in general education, are rare in arts education literature. By adopting critical approaches, researchers can produce scholarship that will be transformative for policies that impact arts education and for the profession as a whole. In this article, I present a framework that allows researchers to incorporate critical theory into policy analysis. This ideological work can expose sources of power and help reveal the ways in which the targets of policy are complicit in their own domination. Adopting this framework, I examine the well-rounded education provision of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 to better understand the policy's origins, its development, and the potential implications for music education.

Keywords: education policy, critical policy analysis, music education, Every Student Succeeds Act, well-rounded education

Introduction

Critical approaches to research in the social sciences challenge traditional assumptions regarding knowledge and power. Researchers adopting critical perspectives concern themselves with who is privileged and who is marginalized by social structures and social institutions; their aim is often to engender change (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997). Although critical approaches are relatively common in educational policy research (see, e.g., works by Michael Apple, Stephen Ball, and Wayne Au), they are unusual in research examining policy in music education (see Benedict, 2006, for a notable exception). Critical policy analysis as a methodological approach, defined here as an analysis in which "policy is positioned as an outcome of historical and social contexts and power relations" (Eppley, 2009, p. 1), is rare. Policy researchers working in music education should consider adopting critical policy analysis in order to better highlight problematic policies and potentially engender change. In this article, I articulate a framework for a critical approach to policy analysis and justify its use in music education research. I then apply that framework to an analysis of the Every Student Succeeds Act's well-rounded education provision, specifically as it relates to music education. First, it is necessary to situate this approach within the larger field of policy work in music education.

Review: policy studies in music education

Nagel (1980) defined policy studies as the systematic study of "the nature, causes, and effects of…public policies" (p. 391). The reference to *public* policy emphasizes studies that have as their central purpose the examination of formal government policies. Mead (2005) stressed the importance of field research in policy studies, arguing that it made such work more "realistic." Weimer (2009) suggested that research in the policy sphere can be categorized in three ways:

disciplinary research, policy research, and policy analysis. *Disciplinary research* "informs our understanding of human behavior" (p. 93). It tends not to be grounded in any sort of policy framework and becomes part of the policy landscape only when authors draw implications for various policy actors. *Policy research* answers questions that are directly related to some aspect of policy. Examples of true policy research include studies that identify the nature of a problem, or that address the effectiveness of a particular policy. Studies of the policy implementation process, including research examining actors' perceptions of policies would also be categorized as policy research. According to Weimer, *Policy analysis* is the systematic investigation of the various ways in which social problems can be addressed through policy. Traditionally, policy analysis has as its outcome recommendations for policy-oriented solutions (Dunn, 1981). Taylor et al. (1997) noted that policy analysis might also be used for political purposes.

In music education literature, "good policy research," as Weimer (2009) called it, has been limited. Although many authors identify policy implications in their discussions, those studies do not necessarily meet the criteria for policy research, though they are an important contribution to the music education literature. Until the mid-2000s, most policy research studies were related to the National Standards for Music Education. Since that time, both the quantity and scope of policy research in music education has expanded. Areas of study include legal analyses, analyses of federal or state policies, descriptions or evaluations of policy implementation, and awareness of policy. The vast majority of these studies in music education relate to the use of sacred music in schools (Gianuzzi, 2014; Kasparian, 1997), policies related to disabilities and inclusion (Hammel & Hourigan, 2011), assessment policies, No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top, National Standards, ESSA, Charter Schools, and teacher evaluation.

Disciplinary research

In a review of articles in prominent music education research journals, a considerable amount of disciplinary research was found that addressed issues that could have been related to policy; in some cases, the authors even made mention of potential implications for policies. Because those studies were not *about* policies or did not frame the issues as a *policy problem* or the authors did not make a policy recommendation, they did not meet Nagel's (1980) definition of policy studies, or Weimer's (2009) definitions for policy research or analysis. For example, Abril and Gault (2006, 2008) and Abril and Bannerman (2015) studied perceptions of factors impacting music programs. Each study included policies among the possible factors, but the studies themselves were not about any particular policy and did not draw policy implications. L. N. Walker (2015a, 2015b) conducted studies to examine the state of music education programs in Utah. Although the author suggested some implications for policy, it was not framed as a policy topic. Hash (2013) and Perrine (2016) each conducted studies of the validity of large group contest ratings. Each challenged policy makers to consider the appropriateness of using contest ratings in teacher evaluation. Teacher evaluation is an important policy issue, but these studies were not about teacher evaluation *per se*, and the authors did not frame contest rating validity as a policy problem. Likewise, Elpus's (2015) analysis of licensure examination scores illuminated a potential policy problem—the differences in licensure scores between White and non-white candidates—but did not make specific policy recommendations or frame the study as a policy issue.

The review also revealed a number of articles that were *about* policies, but were not based on systematic research. For example, Hourigan (2011) discussed potential implications of Race to the Top for arts education; Beveridge (2010), did the same with No Child Left Behind,

basing her discussion on a few early studies of NCLB. Gates, Hansen, and Tuttle (2015) described teacher evaluation policies in three states, and Branscome (2012) presented an historical overview of education reform policies and a discussion of how they impacted music education. Although informative for readers, these studies did not address the "nature, causes, [or] effects" (Nagel, 1980, p. 391) of the policies or problems they described.

Policy analysis

A few examples were found that could be considered examples of policy analysis. Each framed a policy problem, discussed evidence that would inform a solution to the problem, discussed alternative solutions, and made a policy recommendation. For example, Elpus (2011) and Vagi (2014) both looked at merit pay. Vagi drew primarily on psychological studies of motivation whereas Elpus drew on practical issues. Parkes and Powell's (2015) analysis of edTPA presented a strong overview of the problems associated with the assessment and made policy recommendations.

Policy research

Policy research, as defined by Weimer (2009) and by Nagel (1980), includes empirical studies that illuminate the nature of a policy problem, investigate policies' effects, or describe implementation. Aróstegui (2016) contrasted the decline in school music and the importance youth place on music outside of school, arguing that the problem is one that is connected to and can be solved through policy. Robinson (2015) illuminated a number of problems related to the ways in which data is used in teacher evaluation. Several studies have addressed the effects of polices. Shaw (2016) studied the effects of accountability reforms on teacher stress. Elpus (2013) examined the effects of the labeling of the arts as a core subject in federal legislation on music

programs. Other studies focused on No Child Left Behind, including its effects on course enrollments (Elpus, 2014) and overall program quality (Gerrity, 2009). A number of studies addressed various aspects of the implementation of the National Standards for Music Education, including Bell's (2003) study of teachers' beliefs about the standards, Byo's (1999) study of teachers' ability to implement them, and Fonder and Ekrich's (1999) study of the standards' impact on teacher education programs. Kos (2007) and (Spohn, 2008) described music programs during the process of implementing reform policies. Recently, teachers', students' and teacher educators' beliefs about and knowledge of policy has been a topic of consideration (Aguilar & Richerme, 2014; Burton, Knaster, & Knieste, 2015).

The research reviewed here is directed primarily at an academic audience rather than at decision makers. This focus has certainly played a role in its limited impact (Weimer, 2009). Additionally, the authors primarily adopt a value-neutral stance, which Prunty (1985) argued is inappropriate for work in educational policy. Instead, authors should conduct policy research "from within a moral and ethical stance" (p. 135). This concern requires a consideration of critical approaches to policy research.

Framework: critical approaches in education policy analysis

Critical studies in education specifically look for sources of power and domination in education (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). Torres and Van Heertum traced the history of Critical Policy Analysis (CPA) in education research. They noted that one of the first applications of critical theory to education was Paulo Freire's (2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* in which Freire argued for an education that is emancipatory. Freire's views were later developed and applied to United States contexts by scholars such as Michael Apple (1978, 2004) and Henry Giroux (1983, 1985), who critiqued the educational system for its role in the reproduction of inequitable social

conditions. These and other authors have focused their critiques on three broad areas: claims of objectivity in research; professionalism in teaching, particularly with respect to teacher education, teaching practices and unions, and high stakes testing (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). Educational policy analysis first became a part of the critical theory agenda in 1981, at a conference of educational policy researchers in Australia (Prunty, 1985).

Prunty (1985), as well as Taylor et al. (1997) argued that educational policy analysis should adopt critical perspectives. Integrating critical theory into policy analysis will add critical issues to the research agenda and will allow researchers to frame questions in terms of power, justice, and the role of the state (Marshall, 1997). Torres and Van Heertum (2009) argued that because of the questions they raise, critical approaches lead to a more compelling research agenda than other approaches. Although Prunty's early discussions of critical policy analysis were directed towards applied policy analysis that could directly influence policy decisions, much critical policy analysis is undertaken by academics, to be read by academics, and is often theoretical in nature. Torres and Van Heertum do not discount these types of analyses, but do stress the importance of not marginalizing empirical research. In fact, critical theories provide theoretical tools for empirical studies of policy that can lead researchers to recommend reforms in policy and in practice.

Critical policy analysis is particularly appropriate in the field of education because education itself is political: It is inherently connected to systems of power (Stovall, 2009). Furthermore, in schools, power is derived from and legitimated by policy (Prunty, 1985). Policy researchers engaged in critical work consider the politics that lie beneath reforms, looking for connections between power and education (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). In doing so, they try to understand the values that lead to polices and their effects. It has been well documented that

many current education policy trends are based in the tenets of neoliberalism, which favor free-enterprise and position education as part of the market (Apple, 2001). Critical approaches are ideal for studies of these policies because they challenge that assertion and consider the alternate philosophy of education for the common good (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). Additionally, the concept of rationality is prevalent in contemporary education policy. In a discussion of professional development in music education, Schmidt and Robbins (2011) problematized rationality, noting that it focuses on efficiency and outcomes, rather than recognizing schools as "a delicate ecosystem in which educative acts are complex, interrelated, erratic, and emotional" (p. 96). Likewise, in describing the impact of policy implementation on music programs, Kos (2007) described schools as "complex adaptive systems." Borrowing from Schram, Marshall (1997) pointed out that "traditional policy analysis is 'grounded in a narrow, falsely objective, overly instrumental view of rationality that masks its latent biases and allows policy elites and technocrats to prevent analyses and plans as neutral and objective when they are actually tied to prevailing relations of power'" (p. 3). She noted that critical policy analysis, by contrast, considers whether a policy will empower or democratize *as well as* whether the policy actually works or is efficient. Similarly, Richerme (2016), adopting a framework of "cosmopolitan ethics," highlighted the values that are evident in both contemporary education discourse and in the National Core Arts Standards.

There are a number of concerns that make it difficult to bring critical approaches to policy analysis. One challenge is the "strong technocracy" in K–12 and higher education (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009, p. 235); that is, upper level decision makers are being chosen based on their technical knowledge rather than their experience as educators. This trend is particularly evident in the shift away from autonomy and toward business-oriented models. This change has

been brought about largely as a result of a general preference in government for reducing the role of the state in favor of an expanded role for markets—a favoring of private in lieu of public (Apple, 2001). A second challenge is the almost overwhelming influence of positivist epistemology on the development of education policies, particularly those related to education reform (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009). This influence is evident in calls for teaching practices that are grounded in "scientific" research and in attempts to tie student learning outcomes to teaching and even teacher education (for a discussion of this particular issue applied to music education, see Robinson, 2015). These positivist tendencies are contrary to one of the primary tenets of critical policy analysis, which is that—like other critical approaches—it is not value neutral (Prunty, 1985). Overcoming these challenges requires changing the social discourse, which can happen only through public conversations in which we critique the assumptions upon which these trends are based (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009).

Prunty (1985) provided a number of suggestions for those engaged in critical educational policy analysis. First, it is important to be "overtly political" (p. 36). After all, critical policy analysis is inherently ideological. Second, a primary goal of a critical policy analysis is to expose the sources of domination that are inherent in policy. That is, the analysis needs to act as an advocate for the underrepresented. Third, the critical policy analyst needs to pay particular attention to what counts in terms of knowledge, transmission, and realization. In educational work, that means curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation. Fourth, it is important for an analysis to consider how the targets of policy consciously and subconsciously assist in their own domination. That is, they need to help targets of policy achieve a sense of what Freire (2000) termed *conscientization.* Fifth, analysts must be committed to praxis; they need to seek to meld theory and practice. Finally, analysts must actually be knowledgeable in the policy arena. Prunty

further argued that educational policy analysis should take a moral and ethical stance, that it should consider both school *and* society.

A critical policy analysis can address a number of questions that are relevant to education policy, questions that address who, what, how, and why. First, it is important to ask who authored the policy (Edmonson, 1999) and who benefits from the structures a policy creates (Marshall, 1997). Although the stated purpose of a policy may be to help a particular population, there may be other beneficiaries. For example, The No Child Left Behind Act was ostensibly intended to help students, but undoubtedly helped testing companies and other corporate entities who were able to offer privatized educational services to schools, as well. As important as *who* wrote the policy is *why* it was written in the first place (Edmonson, 1999). Another question that critical policy analysts typically address is, what are the politics that underlie reforms (Torres & Van Heertum, 2009)? Policies are the outcome of a political process in which competing interests make compromises, making once concession in order to gain another (Stone, 2002). Inevitably some of those participating in the policy process hold more power than others, and may yield some of that power as part of the process. Still others are left out of the process altogether. It is important to consider, then, the shifting power dynamics and the give and take that lead to the enactment of particular policies and the resulting structures. Finally, just as some individuals are more or less involved in the development of policy, policies themselves include some people while excluding others. Therefore, the critical policy analyst must examine how policies and structures exclude certain individuals (Marshall, 1997). At the same time, the analyst should consider how new policies might restructure power and reconstruct those political arrangements in favor of a more socially just structure. These questions form the basis for a critical policy analysis framework. The framework can be summarized as follows:

- What are the origins of the policy?
- Who was responsible for the policy's development?
- What was the justification for the policy's development?
- Who stands to gain and lose because of the policy?

Other frameworks exist, but they all share the aim of illuminating how policies function to reinforce and reproduce existing power and knowledge structures. A complete review of critical policy analyses in education is beyond the scope of this article; however, it is worthwhile to note some of the ways in which CPA has been used.

Stevens (2003) analyzed discourse used during training programs surrounding the rollout of the Reading First program, which was tied to the No Child Left Behind Act. Stevens adopted a framework that revealed how specific ideas about reading and teaching were present or missing in the policies. Using discourse analysis allowed Stevens to note how readers, teachers, and the entire Reading First program were defined by policies.

Critical policy analysis can reveal disenfranchisement and marginalization among those who most affected by a policy. Using Taylor et al.'s (1997) framework, Kretchmar (2014) examined transcripts of public hearings surrounding school closings in New York City. This framework considered the motives and justifications for the closures, whose interests were considered when making decisions, and the consequences of the closures. Kretchmar acted as a "secretary" to record the speakers' critical policy analyses, which largely took the form of stories. Community members, parents, and teachers spoke, but were not heard, at the hearings, in part because they were only invited to participate after decisions were made. (Franzak, 2008) adopted a similar framework and studied the interplay of written and understood policies in a reading classroom, finding that readers and teachers were marginalized. Unwritten—or

"phantom"—polices mattered most; written—or "inscribed"—polices were not always actualized. Teachers did not see themselves as influencing or creating policy. This final point is noteworthy, because they did not recognize the agency they actually had. In this case the teachers were responsible for implementing the policy at the ground level; therefore, they were in position to influence the policy's outcome, which is a method of creating policy (Lipsky, 1980). Both Kretchmar and Franzak concluded that policies need to be developed in collaboration with those that will be enacting them and those that will be most impacted.

School discipline, and in particular zero-tolerance (ZT) policies, have been the subject of a number of analyses (e.g. Kennedy-Lewis, 2014; Sullivan, Larke, & Webb-Hasan, 2010). Kennedy-Lewis adopted a framework that focused on the values inherent in policy, and noted that ZT policies are grounded in a number of assumptions: Students are rational actors, and teachers and administrators are objective and consistent. In addition, ZT policies favor safety over equity, and presume that schools should teach academics while excluding behavioral outcomes. Sullivan et al. conducted a quantitative analysis to highlight the disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates of African-American students compared to other students of color, as well as the rates of male students of color compared to females. Having illustrated the problem, they adopted a critical race framework to critique the color-blind nature of ZT policies and their assumptions upon which policy makers based them.

CPA has been applied to studies of rural schools, which researchers note are inherently different than urban and suburban schools. Johnson and Howley (2015) noted that those differences are contrary to policy makers' idealized, industrialized vision for American education. They acknowledged that, particularly for rural issues, CPA may do more for teachers than for policymakers. This point again underscores the role that teachers play in the policy

process not just as recipients of policies, but as creators of policy. Eppley (2009) conducted a CPA of NCLB's highly qualified teacher provisions, noting that policymakers do not recognize the unique needs of rural schools, and suggest that it is important that educators provide policymakers with an understanding of the various, context-specific meanings of what it means to be highly qualified.

Critical policy analysis is sometimes participatory in nature. Like Kretchmar (2014), Tuck and Gorlewski (2016), who as teacher educators were preparing their students to complete the edTPA, employed a story-telling approach. Adopting critical race theory as a framework, the researchers discussed the adoption of the assessment in New York, finding that the exam and the policies surrounding its implementation largely ignored race. They raised questions as to the possibilities of success for candidates who were teaching in settings—such as schools with largely poor and minority populations—in which students do not match the vision of the test makers' and scorers' ideal student. They recommended adjustments to the scoring rubric to lessen the impact of teaching context on the outcome. Chase, Dowd, Pazich, and Bensimon (2014) included an action research element to their CPA, which focused on issues of racial and ethnic equity in state policies regarding transfer from community colleges to 4-year state Universities. Asking what elements were absent or silent in policy, they found states' policies to be color-blind, that is, they had no explicit consideration of race or ethnicity. The actual outcomes—lack of access to transfer for racial and ethnic minorities the policies were supposed to help—is evidence of institutional racism, and suggested that policies need to explicitly address issues of race.

Two studies in music education are particularly relevant to this review. Benedict (2006) applied a critical theory framework to an analysis of the 1994 National Music Standards. She

noted that the standards' developers avoided controversy in the interests of politics, fearful of being left out of the educational reform discourse. In so doing, she concluded, it became impossible for the discipline to grow and to change. Just as the National Association for Music Education (known at that time as the Music Educators National Conference) championed efforts to include music and arts education in federal legislation and the standards music, recently they participated in the movement to maintain—and potentially bolster—music's status in the most recent education policy, the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. It is unclear, however, if these political decisions were in the best interests of music education. Despite the application of a framework that considered questions similar to the ones I posed above, it is not clear that Benedict intended for the study to spur any sort of action or change; thus, it may not meet the definition of a critical policy analysis.

A second example is Salvador and Allegood's (2014) study of access to music education in Washington, DC, and Detroit, MI. They first compared access to music education by race. In Washington, schools with a high non-white population had significantly fewer extracurricular music offerings that those with a low non-white population at both the middle and high school levels. In Detroit, schools with a high non-white population had significantly fewer curricular offerings at all levels; at the middle and high school level, there were also fewer extracurricular opportunities and a higher student/teacher ratio. Noting that their data contradicted that of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), they "critically analyzed" policies related to the measurement of race. They determined that how race is defined in policy can have implications for the outcomes of those policies. This second part of the study might be considered an example of critical policy analysis, although the authors did not label it as such, and it did not apply the critical theory framework to the extent that the other studies described in this section have. In the

following section, I present an analysis of a policy that applies a clear critical framework and is intended to motivate change, both key factors in a critical policy analysis.

Application: an analysis of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015

In late 2015, following a lengthy process of policy proposals, negotiations, and discussions, the U.S. Congress adopted the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). These acts, the latest in a series of amended versions of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), define the federal government's role in public K–12 education. ESEA authorizes a number of federal programs and sets responsibilities and limitations for the Department of Education, as well as for the states that use federal money to help fund their schools. One of the specific aims of NCLB was to ensure all students had access to a high-quality education, and to close the achievement gap between various populations (United States Department of Education, 2005). Rigorous standards and test-based accountability were two hallmarks of the law. Under ESSA, the focus is shifted toward college and career readiness; additionally, much of the control of the educational system is returned to the states (United States Department of Education, 2016a). Considerable scholarship exists on the effectiveness and consequences of ESEA generally (Murphy, 1991), and specifically NCLB (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009; Darling-Hammond; Dee & Jacob, 2011; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008). A number of NCLB's provision applied specifically to "core academic subjects," which included "the arts." Under ESSA, the "core" designation was eliminated and replaced with the concept of "a well-rounded education," which included all of the previously-defined core subjects, plus a number of additional subjects, including music. In the remainder of this article, I address the four questions associated with the framework I described in order to analyze the "well-rounded education" provision of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, with particular attention to the

naming of music within the legislation.

What are the origins of the well-rounded provision and music's inclusion in it?

The notion of "well-rounded" is so engrained in popular discourse that it might be assumed to describe the ideal education or individual. Even disregarding the possibility that postsecondary institutions and employers might prefer students who have demonstrated a focus in a particular area of interest (Thys, 2013), the term is problematic in light of its origins. Although an in-depth discussion of this point is beyond the scope of this article, I summarize some of the main points here. The well-rounded concept is based in a classical education, which had as its outcome the complete person capable of both reason and spiritual completeness (Puolimatka, 2008). This approach, which was popularized in 19th century Europe, was reserved for societal elites and intended to reinforce the existing social hierarchy (Kamens, Meyer, & Benavot, 1996). Kamens et al. (1996) contrasted this approach to a comprehensive education, which they defined as a program that addresses multiple purposes from preparation for post-secondary education to occupational training. This approach was popularized in the 1950s in the US due in large part to its efficiency and its alignment with the ideal of equality. In both Europe and in the US, elementary education has been more general in nature, while students would begin to specialize during secondary education. More recently, though, especially in the US, secondary education has become more generalized, essentially becoming an expansion of elementary education (Kamens et al., 1996). It might be argued, then, that the privileging of a well-rounded education, at the expense of specialization, will contribute to the furthering of inequitable outcomes in public education. Although this critique is somewhat tangential to this analysis, it is important to consider given the importance of understanding policies' inherent—and often unseen—assumptions.

The well-rounded education provision, and music's inclusion in it, has a long history, dating at least to a meeting of the nation's governors in 1989, a meeting commonly referred to as the "Education Summit." Concerned about the state of American education, the governors established a number of goals for education and created the National Goals Panel to monitor progress toward those goals. The third goal, as originally written, was that by 2000, "American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, history, and geography" (National Education Goals Panel, 1991). The goals eventually became the cornerstone for President Clinton's Goals 2000 legislation. By the time the law was adopted in 1994, the language of the third goal had changed, to include additional subjects: "All students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, *foreign languages, civics and government, economics, the arts* [emphasis added], history, and geography." These nine core subjects were also included in the 1994 reauthorization of ESEA, the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA). Under NCLB, the core definition was expanded yet again to include "reading or language arts." Finally, under ESSA, the core academic subjects were relabeled as part of a well-rounded education, and the list of subjects expanded from 10 to 18:

> The term 'well-rounded education' means courses, activities, and programming in subjects such as English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, career and technical education, health, physical education, and any other subject, as determined by the State or local educational agency, with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and educational experience.

Two changes in the framing of these subjects are noteworthy. First is the list of subject areas. By including some subjects and not others, the policies reveal the knowledge that is valued by policy makers and those who are in the strongest position to influence policy. The subjects traditionally at the center of the curriculum are the five subjects initially included in the National Education Goals. Yet, when it came time to label them as *the* core, policy makers felt it necessary to expand the list slightly, suggesting that other subjects were also important. The addition of reading and language arts in NCLB corresponded to a renewed focus on reading as a skill, and as an area of importance in schools. The final expansion includes nearly every conceivable school subject, suggesting that all knowledge is valuable (Apple, 2000). In the case of NCLB and ESSA, however, it is important to consider the provision in the context of the rest of the law. As I discuss below, other aspects of the law provide some subjects with higher status.

Furthermore, I would argue that the second change in language, from "core" to "well-rounded," may actually be more important: The former term implies that some subjects—those included in the definition—are more important than others. In remarks to the Arts Education Partnership National Forum in 2010, then-Secretary of Education Arne Duncan specifically referenced the notion of a well-rounded education in suggesting that all school subjects are an important part of a child's education. I suggest a contradictory reading: *No subject* is elevated above the others, a claim that is ridiculous. In fact, other aspects of the law make it clear that some subjects do have special status. This is a continuation from legislation dating back to Goals 2000, under which the US was working to be "first in the world in math and science." Under IASA, challenging standards in math and reading or language arts were required for states to receive Title I funding. Most recently, NCLB privileged math, science, and reading by singling them out for testing and adequate yearly progress goals. Those subjects remain a focus in ESSA:

They are the only subjects required to be tested, and they are only subjects for which states are required to develop standards. A final aspect of the change in language is worth noting: It signals an apparent change in the purpose of education away from improving the nation's ability to compete in the global economy (Hursh, 2007) toward a broader purpose of college and career readiness for individual students.

Who was responsible for music's inclusion in the well-rounded provision?

In January 2015, Senator Lamar Alexander released a discussion draft for a rewrite of ESSA, titled the Every Child Ready for College or Career Act of 2015. The proposed bill would, among other things, eliminate all references to core subjects. Within days, NAfME issued two press releases in which they outlined the implications of the bill for music education and urged teachers to submit comments to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) expressing concern for this and other legislative priorities (National Association for Music Education, 2015a, 2015d). Shortly thereafter, the League of American Orchestras, which is a member of the NAfME-led Music Education Policy Roundtable, posted an "advocacy alert" to its website with a more focused request asking their members to respond to the draft and express concern at the elimination of the core subjects provision, arguing that the provision was necessary to protect arts education (League of American Orchestras, 2015). A search of press releases and other archived postings on websites of some of the more prominent members of the policy roundtable revealed no additional references to this initial draft.

When the bill was officially introduced to the Senate on April 7, 2015 as the Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA), the definition of core subjects had been returned to the bill, and music was listed separately from the arts. Although we can speculate that as the sponsor of the bill, Senator Alexander was directly responsible for that language, we do not know who influenced

that decision or what his motivations were (although, as discussed below, his decision to include arts as core in Goals 2000 was purely political in nature). In a press release, NAfME Assistant Executive Director Chris Woodside (National Association for Music Education, 2015c) credited the efforts of advocates who sent 10,000 letters to lawmakers, although the discussion suggests those letters encouraged congress to retain the arts as a core subject, not to add music. In fact, in an article in *Roll Call* published fewer than three weeks prior to the filing of ECAA, Woodside himself argued only for the retention of the arts as a core subject (Woodside, 2015). We also do not know who influenced the decision to expand the definition of core subjects to include writing, technology, engineering, computer science, or physical education (Senate records do record who proposed amendments to include career and technical education as well as health, but not on whose behalf those amendments were made). I could find no evidence in news articles or legislative reports from arts advocacy organization that the inclusion of music by name was a possibility, raising questions as to their role in influencing that particular question.

In a blog post, Morrisson (2012) recalled the long-forgotten story of the political struggle to get the arts included in Goals 2000. He concluded that the eventual success was due more to then-Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander's attempts to avoid political embarrassment than concerns for students' experience in schools. His story is a reminder that *policy* decisions are about *power*, not necessarily about *problems*. I find it unlikely that 10,000 letters are sufficient to effect such a shift in federal policy. The question, then, is what changes in the power structure happened because of the inclusion of this provision? Who else would have the motivation to do so, and what might their motivation have been?

What was the justification for the well-rounded provision?

Absent data from legislative aides or transcripts of hearings and public comment, in order to

answer this question, we must depend on depend on secondary sources, such as news articles or commentary from advocates, as well as reading the provisions in the context of the entire policy and other contemporary discourse. From the phrase "demonstrate competency," we can ascertain with some degree of certainty that the delineation of math, English, science, history, and geography in the National Education Goals in 1991 was meant to identify the knowledge which was most important. The initial refusal of the federal government to consider adding other subject areas is further evidence that the unnamed subjects were of secondary importance. One of the major critiques of NCLB was that it narrowly focused the curriculum on math and reading. Although it was the emphasis on testing that was largely responsible, it is possible, if not likely, that the initial exclusion of a "core" provision from legislative drafts was an attempt to move away from that focus. Two quotes from Secretary of Education John King support the idea of expanding the curriculum: "A more well-rounded education is critical for a safe, supportive, and enjoyable learning environment." (T. Walker, 2016) and on a separate occasion, "[These regulations] give educators room to reclaim for all of their students the joy and promise of a well-rounded educational experience" (United States Department of Education, 2016b). This argument is further supported by the near doubling in the list of subjects that were part of the core in the first draft of S. 1177.

The designation as a core subject in 1994 accomplished two things. First, and most practically, it allowed federal resources to be used for school programming. However, it also serves to identify *what is valued*. Following the definition of the arts as a core subject, it was argued by some that the label would make the arts "as important to education as English [and] mathematics" (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994). Other aspects of the law, however, made it clear that the focus was still on those subjects that were more traditionally

considered core. Given that, it is reasonable to ask why the arts were included in the first place. One only need remember that policies achieve a *political* outcome, and expanding the list of core subjects helped to build support for the legislation. By expanding the list of subjects in the Every Student Succeeds Act, congress and the DOE clarified the *purpose of education.* Consider this quote from secretary of education John King: "a well-rounded education prepares [students] to succeed in college and careers" (United States Department of Education, 2016b). Together with the idea that schools should be supportive and enjoyable, it is evident that the government is trying to move from the oppressive, penalizing nature of schools under NCLB to welcoming, supportive, schools with a "program of instruction that meets the needs of all students" ("Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015," 2015).

Who will gain and who will lose due to this provision?

Identifying winners and losers—or, less colloquially those who benefit and those who are harmed by the policy—is an important aspect of critical policy analysis, as is the related question of who a policy includes and who it excludes. At the most explicit level, the subjects that are named in the well-rounded provision are included; those that are not are excluded. Indeed, to read many of the celebratory emails and post from NAfME and other music advocacy organizations, one could assume that it is "music" that was included. It is telling that in a Google search of "ESSA" and "well-rounded," 21 of the first 50 returns were about the inclusion of music and/or the arts in the definition of well-rounded. But, what does it mean that music benefitted or was included? Depending on the context, music might refer to a school subject or an activity in which both young people and adults can participate, whether in- or out-of-school. It could also refer to individuals or groups like music teachers, students, or advocates. Alternately, music might refer to non-profit organizations that depend on music audiences, such as symphony

orchestras, or for-profit corporations, who depend on music programs for continued sales of publications, instruments, and the like, to remain strong. I focus my discussion here on a smaller subset: music as a school subject, music teachers, professional performance organizations, and corporations. These are groups that are represented by the membership of the Music Education Policy Roundtable, a NAfME-led coalition that was an important contributor to advocacy effort on behalf on retaining the arts as a core subject (National Association for Music Education, 2015a). If, as advocates hope, music's inclusion as a well-rounded subject improves the condition of school music programs, then each of these will benefit. There may well be scenarios, however, that harm all or some.

A strict reading of the policy text would suggest that *music* refers to the actual presence of music as an area of study and/or a participatory activity. These two aspects can overlap, but the distinction is important. The term *core subject* implies an area of study, or a particular body of knowledge, or skills. On the other hand, it is important to highlight a key phrase in the definition of well-rounded education: "courses, *activities, and programming*…with the purpose of providing all students access to an enriched curriculum and *educational experience* [emphasis mine]." It could be argued, then, that *part of a well-rounded education* is actually a lesser status than a *core subject.* Consider that the term well-rounded was adopted during conference as the Senate and House attempted to reconcile two different bills. The Senate's bill included references to and a definition of core academic subjects, whereas the House's Bill, the Student Success Act, did not. Logic suggests that the result of a political process of negotiations and trade-offs resulted in a compromise of some sort; therefore "well-rounded" was determined to be somewhere between the two. The change from core to well-rounded and the associated distinction between courses and activities might be problematic, then, particularly for a

profession that advocates for a high-quality program of music instruction, taught by a certified music educator (National Association for Music Education, n.d.).

In its role as an advocate for music teachers, it could be argued that any positive outcomes for school music would be beneficial to music teachers. However, if the shift away from a core subject and all that implies to well-rounded results in fewer curricular opportunities in favor of before or after school activities or other musical experiences, then there may be less need for music teachers. This is particularly concerning when coupled with the elimination of the highly qualified teacher provision that had been included in NCLB. Consider that ESSA provides funding for programs that integrate arts instruction into other curricular areas. Such a provision might be seen as paving the way to include music and the arts as part of a student's education, but without the structure of arts-specific instruction or without the inclusion of arts teachers. Whether teachers benefit or are harmed by this provision will depend on how districts ultimately choose to interpret and implement it.

Professional performance organizations and corporations that profit from music programs will not, I believe, be harmed and might benefit from the inclusion of music in the well-rounded education provision. Should school music education in its present form benefit and grow, those organizations can only benefit. Should the model shift more toward experiences, that would open a space for new collaborations between professional musicians and professional musical ensembles and public schools. These connections can be leveraged to build appreciation for various musical experiences and to foster a lifelong interest in those types of musical experiences.

There is one additional consideration regarding the question of who might be harmed that is important to consider, particularly for readers of AEPR, whose interests extend beyond music

education. NCLB did not specifically define which subjects were included in "the arts"; states typically considered them broadly. Although the text of ESSA also lacks a clear definition, the report of the Senate HELP committee that accompanied their version of the bill stated: "the term 'arts' may include the subjects of dance, media arts, music, theatre and visual arts, and other arts disciplines as determined by the State or local educational agency" (S. 114-231). The word "may" suggests, however, that in addition to including subjects not listed, states could choose not to include one or more of the delineated subjects in their own definitions of the arts. Thus, extracting music from the other arts privileges music over the other arts. This represents an apparent departure from the various arts education organizations functioning as a coalition as they did when developing both the 1994 National Standards and the more recent Core Arts Standards. If the naming of music is indeed "game changing" for music (National Association for Music Education, 2015c), it is reasonable to imagine that any positive changes could come at the expense of the other arts.

Conclusion

Christopher Woodside was quoted as saying that music educators and advocates should celebrate the explicit inclusion of music in the Every Student Succeeds Act (National Association for Music Education, 2015b). I agree that it represents a victory for advocates; however, whether music—or music students, or music teachers, or music businesses—benefit will depend on one's perspective and how the law is ultimately implemented. My own analysis is that for those desiring a "a well-balanced, comprehensive, and high-quality program of music instruction" (National Association for Music Education, 2016), there is cause to be concerned that in some cases it could be reduced to an ancillary subject.

The well-rounded education provision codifies a shift in what the federal government deems important. As with any definition, it is also notable for what the definition excludes. On the one hand, "core subject" implies knowledge that should be at the foundation of a child's education (although other aspects of Goals 2000, IASA, and NCLB made it clear that some of those subjects were valued more than others). Compared to "core subject," "well-rounded education" represents a lesser status. Although music is specifically included in ESSA, it was always understood to be part of "the arts." Advocates for music education are declaring victory, but it is not clear how much impact they had in the process. In focusing their attention on maintaining the arts'—and later music's—role as a core subject, they may have overlooked the fact that the proposed elimination of core status was a response to concerns about the narrowing of curriculum.

A key objective of critical policy analysis is to motivate change. That change can be effected only by those in a position to influence the development or implementation of policy. As Johnson and Howley (2015) noted, in some cases, such as in rural settings, critical policy analysis may have more implications for teachers than for policy makers. The same may be true of arts education, because policy makers understand little of arts education. Taylor et al. (1997) went further, stating that critical analyses have less impact in the short term than more traditional approaches. It is essential that music and other arts educators recognize that being identified in federal legislation as part of a well-rounded curriculum is not a panacea. Music teachers and advocates celebrated the inclusion of the arts as a core subject in NCLB, but that status did not protect music programs because the strongest inducements and rules (Stone, 2002), as well as the priorities of those who implement the policies in schools (Kos, 2007) privileged other subjects. Yet, advocates are again optimistic—I believe overly so—as they celebrate what NAfME's Chris

Woodside described as “game-changing news” (National Association for Music Education, 2015c). In a recent survey of music teachers, a large number of teachers indicated a belief that core statues hurt music in some way; yet, nearly all respondents were optimistic that the well-rounded provision would be helpful, and almost none felt that it would hurt (author forthcoming). But, as NEA’s Tim Walker (2016) noted, “the well-rounded education won’t be delivered on a silver platter.” States have flexibility, as do schools. Thus, I would argue that at best, music will be no better off than it was before.

Individual words in a policy will mean little if the overall positions contradict them. Furthermore, they will have little effect if real actions are not taken by those implementing the polices. Therefore, it is important for teachers, and particularly advocates, to take steps to ensure that at the local and state level, music and the arts are not simply one experience out of many experiences that a student will have. Meaningful action will be required to ensure that the arts are represented as a part of the curriculum, taught rigorously, and sequentially, and by well-qualified teachers.

I conclude by returning to my initial premise: Critical policy analysis is essential to our field. Many articles have been and will be written describing ESSA, and much will be made of the fact that music is, “for the first time ever” included in federal legislation. Eventually, sufficient time will pass for someone to determine whether music’s designation as part of a well-rounded education had any effect, as Elpus (2013) did with its designation as “core” as part of Goals 2000. But a critical analysis that gets at the reasons for the policy, that considers who will benefit, who will lose, who is excluded, who is included, who was responsible for the policy, and why it was adopted, can motivate those on the ground level—teachers, advocates, teacher educators, parents—to action.

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