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Developing the Identity of an Elementary General Music Teacher: Perspectives of Veteran Music Educators

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DEVELOPING THE IDENTITY OF AN ELEMENTARY GENERAL MUSIC TEACHER:
PERSPECTIVES OF VETERAN MUSIC EDUCATORS

by

Shawna C. Greunke

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING THE IDENTITY OF AN ELEMENTARY GENERAL MUSIC TEACHER: PERSPECTIVES OF VETERAN MUSIC EDUCATORS

by

Shawna C. Greunke

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016
Under the Supervision of Associate Professor Sheila J. Feay-Shaw

Developing a teacher identity is an essential component for the career of an elementary general music educator. This study explored existing literature on teacher identity, elementary music teaching, challenges for beginning music teachers, and experiences of veteran music teachers. Common themes found were the process of constructing an occupational identity, the value of mentorship to support beginning teachers, defining professional roles and expectations, and the master teacher's focus of keeping students at the center of teaching. For this study, eight experienced elementary general music teachers participated in semi-structured interviews with eighteen questions, where their responses were audio recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. It was determined that developing a strong sense of teacher identity happens over time and is an important component of success, fulfillment, and longevity in a career. Successful experienced elementary music teachers generally 1) have strong performer backgrounds, 2) value positive attitudes and collaboration, 3) are organized yet flexible, 4) set high learning goals and expectations for their students and themselves, 5) reflect regularly on their teaching, and 6) pursue professional growth opportunities. Those who cultivate a master teacher mindset seem to have an even clearer plan of action for student engagement. These teachers achieve high levels of

student learning because they intentionally organize their knowledge and apply important principles through their teaching attitudes and practices. The findings suggest that new and early-career elementary music teachers can greatly benefit from 1) building professional relationships with veteran music educators, 2) regularly asking questions of students and themselves about learning, and 3) taking the necessary time to organize their knowledge to plan high-quality instruction in order to best serve their students' unique learning needs.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Rationale

New graduates from music teacher training programs leave college with the understanding that they have been prepared and are qualified (in their concentration or specialty area) to teach music to students anywhere. Upon beginning your first teaching job however, many gaps in knowledge, both musically and educationally, are discovered (Conway, 2003; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995). Although individuals may be strong musicians, teaching music to a class of children is very different than performing music or teaching musician peers (Natale-Abramo, 2014). Beginning teachers may face challenges of new responsibilities, balancing professional and personal roles, and coming to grips with expectations versus reality in their schools (Abril, 2006; Frierson-Campbell, 2004; Smith, 2006). Additional stressors can include racial or cultural differences between a teacher and their student population (Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Natale-Abramo, 2014), trying to develop a teaching craft and identity while working every day, as well as being responsible for imparting knowledge and guidance to students (Olsen, 2016). These many factors contribute to the construction of a teacher's sense of identity.

The topic of teacher identity development for in-service music teachers is an expanding area in research, since previous research examined the construction of teacher identity in primarily pre-service and novice teachers (Frierson-Campbell, 2004; Gray, 2011; Wagoner, 2015). Forming and cultivating an occupational identity is a key contributor to job satisfaction and personal motivation to teach. Being confident in the role(s) of music teacher, instructing students with intention and direction, helps to create success as realistic challenges arise. After all, most music teachers joined the profession to make a positive contribution to their students and school community (Smith, 2006). Palmer (2007) wrote, "No matter how technical my

subject may be, the things I teach are things I care about – and what I care about helps define my selfhood” (p. 17). Another component to consider for beginning teacher identity is that many teachers leave their schools or the teaching profession altogether within the first five years on the job (Scheib, 2003). It is important then, to consider whether job attrition of novice music teachers occurs primarily because they do not grasp the elements of creating successful music programs, or because of a lack of support in facing challenging student behaviors and high job expectations.

There are many elementary music teachers who have remained in their teaching positions for decades, sometimes within just one or two school districts. What sets these individuals apart from others is the success they find at their work. What inspires or motivates them to continue teaching elementary general music? What behaviors, professional perspectives (mindsets and attitudes), and teaching practices do these experienced elementary music teachers possess or show regularly that result in high student engagement and learning?

Often beginning music educators are assigned a music mentor in their district from whom to learn. Besides being a source for specific questions and issues that arise during the instructional year, how does a novice determine what questions will help them to grow from an unsure, possibly insecure, teacher who is learning and developing on the job to a confident musician-teacher with strong occupational identity? The purpose of this study, then, is to investigate the identity path of veteran elementary general music teachers for strategies and attitudes that can be applied to novice music teachers’ instructional preparation and delivery effectiveness. Additionally, this study can provide guidance to early-career elementary music teachers in developing teacher identity.

Review of Literature

The literature reviewed for this study encompasses multiple facets of the music teacher experience. Topics explored include teacher identity, elementary music teaching, challenges for beginning music teachers, professional roles and expectations, and a look at experienced music educators. Veteran music teachers' intentional focus on students at the center of teaching and how instructional time is used sets up this study to investigate the role of professional identity and teacher mindset in elementary music educators.

Teacher Identity

Teacher identity is described as the distinctive person you are in a given educational context (Trent, 2010) or "a merger of teacher-musician and self-other dimensions" (Russell, 2012, p. 148). The combination of primary socialization (influences and attitudes gleaned from parents, friends, and teachers) and secondary socialization (influences of university teachers and peers) is foundational to an individual's unique identity development (Haston & Russell, 2011; Palmer, 2007). Once in the classroom, teaching experiences continually contribute to the developing sense of self as a quality educator.

Haston and Russell (2011) stated that for many undergraduate music education majors in college, the need to develop a performer identity is often emphasized over developing a teacher identity. It is important to have strong musical skills, particularly singing and piano or guitar accompaniment, for elementary general music teachers' work with children. It is equally important for beginning teachers to have the confidence to know how to prepare and teach lessons that build musical skills in students, as well as how to assess student learning. Thus, getting enough quality pre-service music teaching field experiences can also significantly contribute to a teacher's identity development. Authentic context learning experiences while in

college grant pre-service teachers valuable practice working with students (Haston & Russell, 2011), and getting involved in action research can help teachers reflect more thoughtfully on their teaching in order to improve (Moore & Albert, 2007; Trent, 2010).

Recent studies theorize that a teacher identity or occupational identity is constructed as an active process, rather than predetermined by choice of profession (Trent, 2010). Factors that influence development of teacher identity include knowledge of self, developing pedagogical knowledge, professional perspectives, and the symbiotic relationship between 'teacher' and 'performer' (Haston & Russell, 2011).

According to Palmer, “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher...*good teachers share one trait: a strong sense of personal identity infuses their work*” (Palmer, 2007, p. 10-11; emphasis mine). The author implies that self-identity is all encompassing and that teacher identity is just one part of, not always easily separated from, a person’s unique personal identity. Character, personality, and life experiences shape an individual (their identity) and contribute to why and how teaching is approached (their teacher identity). Do these ideas allow an individual to change or improve as a music educator beyond what he or she knows and has experienced as a student?

Socialization factors that contribute to forming occupational identity for secondary music teachers include having positive relationships with other music educators and music students, as well as valuing live music-making experiences (Russell, 2012). A study in Sweden found that music teachers viewed music as an avenue to creating a fun and social experience for students rather than a means to instill them with musicality (Georgii-Hemming, 2011). The five music teachers involved in the study thus saw themselves "more as teachers (creating the positive group experience) than as musicians (focusing on the technical elements of playing music)" (p. 208).

Educators who have both a music performer identity and a teacher identity are more likely to remain committed to their careers, so both elements should be nurtured in teacher programs and throughout the educator's career (Russell, 2012). Few research studies have investigated in-service teacher identity (practicing educators), as most have focused on pre-service (college) teacher identity development (Russell, 2012).

Elementary Music Teaching

One area to consider in the literature is the unique characteristics that music teachers in elementary schools demonstrate. From my own experience and observation of colleagues, elementary general music teachers are flexible, often teaching seven to eleven class periods daily (ranging from early childhood to fifth or sixth grade), with class times ranging from 20-55 minutes. They may teach each class group once or twice a week, or once every six days. Like many secondary music teachers, elementary music specialists often work with elective student ensembles and individuals before and after school, sometimes during their preparation and lunch periods. The settings vary, from one school with a designated music classroom to multiple schools with music rooms, to one or more schools where music instruction is offered from a traveling cart in the classroom.

Elementary music teachers can be as different as their instructional settings: some subscribe and teach solely following a particular curricular method or approach (i.e. Orff-certified or Kodaly-certified teachers), while others select from multiple methods or create their own model (technology-centered, drum-centered, singing-centered) of teaching music to engage young students. Campbell (1998) states that a good “teacher is one of the key motivating factors of (children's) continued progress toward becoming performers, composers, and careful listeners” (p. 272). Therefore, regardless of instructional methods used, music educators need to

be enthusiastic “for what they do (music) and who they teach (children)” by sharing their singing, instrumental, and movement skills with students in developmentally appropriate ways (Campbell, 1998, p. 273). According to Campbell (1998), other helpful traits for elementary music teachers include a sense of humor, flexibility in lesson planning, and fairness toward all.

Music teachers at the elementary level teach every student and often have the privilege of working with the same children each year as they grow and mature, from prekindergarten or kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade. This creates the possibility of deep knowledge of children and their families. Campbell & Scott-Kassner (2010) stated, “The music teacher is in the unique position to affect the climate of the entire school” (p. 288). It should be noted that;

The research demonstrates the need for music teachers to assess their beliefs and attitudes toward diverse populations (as student populations in schools nationwide are becoming more heterogeneous), and to recognize the impact that their life experiences have had on their beliefs and attitudes, to ensure (music teachers) are delivering instruction and choosing materials that benefit all students. (Kelly-McHale, 2013, p. 197)

In addition, teachers should know their own motivations, and they should use only kind, respectful strategies for motivating students to learn (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2010).

Challenges for Beginning Music Teachers

The first five to seven years of teaching can be a distinctive, and at times challenging, experience. Music teachers who are just entering the field learn so much new information every day, month, and year that they spend with children in the classroom. Alongside balancing the roles and responsibilities of the job, with such ideas as assessing children’s skill levels, aligning the curriculum across time and student learning needs, learning students’ names, and establishing a system for classroom management, beginning teachers often may need reassurance that they are suited to the teaching profession. According to Smith (2006), pre-service music teachers could be better prepared to enter the field by their colleges and universities offering more

classroom management training and more onsite music field experiences in schools before being placed for student teaching. Once hired, new teachers can benefit from their school districts providing them with induction services and suitable mentor teachers. Strong induction programs can support teachers through mentorship in techniques for teaching so that students may better learn. An experienced educator stated, “Induction is absolutely necessary, but not widespread enough” (Conway, 2012, p. 69). As of 2012, induction programs nationwide for new music teachers are still offered inconsistently (Conway, 2012). Feiman-Nemser et al. (1999) wrote, “What happens to beginning teachers during their early years on the job determines not only whether they will stay in teaching but also what kind of teacher they become” (p. 4).

Mentorship as Support

Novice teachers benefit from support provided by universities, school administration, and professional organizations for resources and strategies to assist them in becoming successful educators. Conway (2003) found that initial educators generally perceived being assigned a district mentor, particularly a fellow music teacher, provided a valuable support. Conway stated that, “Early in their teaching careers, beginning teachers need to be asking curricular questions and interacting with experienced music mentors in meaningful ways,” but they need to be given both a music mentor (someone who understands what the novice is facing, who likely works in a different building) and a mentor familiar with their building, as well as time (by administrators) to develop to their potential (Conway, 2003, p. 18). However, it is more important that 1) the mentor teacher has training in how to help the novice, than that they have music education in common, 2) the mentor can be available to observe the mentee teaching in the classroom, and 3) they communicate regularly with each other (Conway, 2003). Novice teachers who develop positive relationships with fellow music teachers and music students are more likely to form an

educator identity (Russell, 2012). Professional organizations for musicians and music educators can also provide support by reaching out to involve teachers in music-making and music-dialoging communities in order to combat the isolation many music educators experience (Russell, 2012).

Roles and Expectations

Major stressors that can impact music teachers' job satisfaction include role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, underutilization of the individual's unique skills, and inadequate resources (Scheib, 2003). Some role conflicts include balancing personal and professional lives, focusing on the process versus the product in directing ensembles, and completing administrative duties like fundraising. Music teachers can intentionally communicate with school administrators to ensure the roles expected of them are clearly defined and to build support for their programs (Scheib, 2003; Smith, 2006). A study of early-career secondary school music teachers in England revealed that balancing performer identity with that of being a beginning teacher was the most significant challenge (Welch et al., 2011). Music educators with role overload can feel stretched too thin based on classroom duties including teaching and conducting ensembles as well as responsibilities beyond the classroom such as directing ensembles at sporting games, graduations, musicals, parades, and festivals (Conway, 2003; Russell, 2012). Conway (2003) stated, "These are tremendous responsibilities for any teacher, but particularly for a beginning teacher" (p. 12).

Experienced, Master Music Teachers

For the purpose of this study, I will classify experienced, master music educators as those who have been teaching for over ten years in their field (elementary general, choral, or instrumental music) and who are considered by their music colleagues to be master teachers.

These individuals are those who have high levels of student engagement and learning in their music classrooms, and they may also use innovative teaching practices to attain this type of learning environment. Experienced teachers are also likely to be strong at managing classroom behavior, thus allowing more time to teach and engage students in learning activities.

Master educators can often pinpoint specific keys to their long-term professional success. Abril (2006) noted that veteran music educators in urban schools stressed the importance of teachers being well prepared before a lesson so that other issues which arose during a class period could be addressed. They also endeavored to build caring relationships with their students and administrators, stay positive in the face of challenges, and continually pursue professional development to help make music instruction engaging and relevant for students (Abril, 2006). Other experienced music teachers suggested techniques such as prompt communication when responding to parents and administrators, moving around the room during instruction, varying teaching strategies and musical accompaniment strategies to maintain close teacher proximity and attentive, active student engagement (Luppens & Foreman, 2010). A 2013 study by Kelly-McHale found that “the teacher's view of the self as musician and educator, combined with the choice of instructional approach, created a music classroom environment that successfully met the teacher-directed goals for sequence-centered instruction” (p. 195). The data also showed it is important to teach with an awareness and responsiveness to the cultures (popular music and ethnic musical traditions) of students (Kelly-McHale, 2013).

Teacher identity and practice develops and strengthens over time. Success has shown that, “When teachers stay in the profession past the first few years, they solidify their teaching skills in ways that translate to better student outcomes” (Thompson et al., 2005, p. 1). Over a ten-year period, Conway (2012) found that teachers identified a shift in their educator mindset as

they grew as teachers; they became more focused on the students and less focused on themselves. One teacher said,

Early on, I was trying to just float and survive, so it was all about me. What to say, how to pace, what is that fingering? Those were all of the things that I was concerned with. Now I think about: What are my students getting out of this? What did they learn today? How can I reach every student more effectively? (Conway, 2012, p. 71)

Another teacher stated that (after ten years teaching) he believed “that his role in teaching a ‘comprehensive student’ is more important than his role as a director ‘putting on a concert’” (Conway, 2012, p. 71-72).

Students at the Center of Teaching

Teaching and shaping students to be well-rounded individuals should be the goal for all teachers. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (1997), “As students (learn to) apply their knowledge both within and across the various curricular areas, they develop the concepts and complex thinking of an educated person” (Wisconsin DPI, 1997, p. ix).

Georgii-Hemming (2011) found that teachers’ main objective for music education was to give students opportunities to sing, play different instruments, and to continue to engage in music throughout their lives; “Education should develop ‘whole,’ open human beings with plenty of self-esteem” and it should also “develop (students’) social skills and cooperation” (p. 204-205). Music is a mode for teaching culture and “‘building bridges’ – between past and present, and between life inside and out of school” (Georgii-Hemming, 2011, p. 205).

Instructional Time

The way an experienced teacher uses instructional time to the fullest is a skill to which beginning teachers should aspire. Music teachers who successfully engage students in learning have strong communication skills and are effective educators (Howard & Seaver, 2013).

According to Goolsby (1996), experienced music teachers spend less time talking and more time

engaging in instruction and rehearsal than novice or preservice teachers: “Experienced teachers devoted more than twice as much time in nonverbal demonstration and modeling behaviors than other teachers (p. 292-293). They “also modeled more...and spent less time verbally disapproving of students’ social behavior” (Goolsby, 1996, p. 295). Master teachers often start rehearsal or class time more promptly and spend less time transitioning between learning activities than student teachers or novice teachers do. These results may indicate the ability of master teachers to verbalize more efficiently, or they may be a reflection of the experienced teachers’ greater use of nonverbal instruction (Goolsby, 1996).

According to Campbell (1998):

Making the most of minimal time necessitates running the class efficiently, with every moment jammed with musicking and directed listening experiences. A well-paced music class for children can provide far more music than what many classes average, particularly when we cut the long verbal discourses about music, clip back the extensive tirades on behavior that is/is not appropriate...and channel our own and children’s thoughts and actions toward musical matters.... One of our primary and ongoing tasks as teachers is thus to gain and maintain their attention; this requires our high energy, frequent vocal modulations, continuous eye contact, and meaningful gestures...(as well as filling) the class time with the substance of the subject: more music to listen to, to sing, and to play. (p. 271-272)

Summary

Do experienced music educators see themselves as having a strong educator identity? Do these attitudes and behaviors motivate and drive them to continue growing and pursuing personal excellence in their instruction? The research studies explored three main questions: 1) How is teacher identity discovered and developed by experienced music teachers? 2) What is the relationship between developing a strong general music teacher identity and establishing a strong music program? 3) What practices and mindsets or attitudes do master elementary general music teachers show regularly that result in high student engagement and learning? The following

chapters will outline the process and results of the study, and offer insight to how the resulting information can support the development of novice elementary general music teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

The purpose of this study was to discover the mindsets, experiences, and effective teaching practices of veteran, master elementary general music educators, and how their understanding of teacher identity could provide insight to early career candidates in the field. The participants' combined decades of teaching in the field of elementary music education uncovered a wealth of wisdom that could guide others in any stage of their teaching career.

Methodology

Eight veteran elementary general music teachers from southeastern and north central Wisconsin were interviewed in this study to learn about their perceived identity as a teacher and their experiences teaching music. The educators in this study have over ten years of experience teaching music and are considered by their music colleagues to be master teachers because of their musical expertise, innovative and/or effective teaching practices, and enduring strong school music programs. Seven interviewees were female and one was male, indicative of the prevalence of female over male teachers at the elementary level (Greger, 2014). Each teacher was interviewed in person, via phone, or via video chat across the span of five months (November 2015-March 2016) using 18 semi-structured questions (See Appendix A) (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The conversations, which lasted between fifty minutes and two hours, were recorded with a digital audio recorder and transcribed for analysis. The resulting interview responses were coded for conceptual ideas including marginal notes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) and compared to determine common themes (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

Study Participants

The elementary general music teachers interviewed consisted of four who are presently teaching at the time of this study and four who have retired. These teachers' careers range from

eleven years to forty-one years in music education. Most have earned their Masters degree, and one earned a Doctoral degree. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants.

Theresa retired from teaching after being in her elementary position for thirty-six years. She taught at various schools within one suburban school district during that time, though over her career she experienced many issues common to urban districts such as high poverty, student behavior management challenges, insufficient resources, violent tragedies, unsupportive school administration, and isolation from district colleagues. Theresa has taught first grade through sixth grade general music and chorus. Throughout her career she was very involved with local and national Orff-Schulwerk associations, and she used that training regularly when teaching her students. She also taught the technology-based Yamaha-*Music in Education* program to all her students in multiple schools. Theresa has a Masters degree in Education. She currently is a local accompanist and adjunct professor in music education at a large university supporting the development of the next generation of elementary general music teachers.

Erin has taught for eleven years, and is in her sixth year at her current position of teaching kindergarten through fifth grade general music at one school in a suburban district. Previously she taught four-year-old kindergarten through eighth grade general and choral music and dance in an urban parochial school. Erin holds a Masters degree in Music Education. She has a background in general education, dance, and theater, all of which she uses to support her music instruction and community partnerships like choreographing and serving as vocal coach for local high schools' show choirs and musicals.

Martha recently retired from teaching music in an urban district after thirty-six years, at various elementary schools and one middle school. Music teachers in her district are transferred to new schools regularly. Martha's last position was kindergarten through fifth grade general

music, and except for her final year, she traveled between two schools each year. She has a Masters degree in Music Education. She found it important to collaborate with other music educators, classroom teachers, and music therapists to learn various ideas and strategies to engage and help her students be successful. Martha is also active as a church organist and choir director.

Sharon taught for twenty-five years, then retired last year only to come back this year as a long-term substitute for half the year. She refilled the position she left when it remained vacant. Sharon's last position was kindergarten through fifth grade general music at two schools. She taught at various elementary schools in this rural district for twenty-two and a half years. Previously she taught elementary music in an urban district. Sharon taught music "on a cart" for many years and traveled between two schools each year. At her schools she led multiple all-school Sing-Alongs each year. She is an active church musician.

Katherine has thirty-three years total teaching experience. She is currently in an urban district, where she has taught elementary music for sixteen years. Her position is kindergarten through sixth grade general music. Before that, Katherine was teaching in the Catholic schools for seventeen years for both high school choir and elementary music. She is actively involved in running the Very Young Composers program at the local university, where teachers and music majors coach local elementary students in music composition. She accompanies for school choir concerts, community theater productions, and music festivals. Katherine also is very involved in her local Orff-Schulwerk association and uses what she has learned in her teaching.

Jennifer has been teaching music in an urban area for twenty-one years, ten in the public elementary schools and the remainder in the Catholic schools. Her current position is kindergarten through fifth grade general music at two public schools. She has taught at the

majority of her district's elementary schools, each year traveling between two schools. Her district transfers music teachers to new schools frequently. In her previous positions Jennifer taught choral and general music to students from kindergarten to twelfth grade in Minnesota. Jennifer holds a Masters degree in Music Education and directs a church choir. She is active in the state Music Educators' Association, through which she has led the listening project with her students and has contributed lesson plans for conventions.

Lisa is retired after twenty years teaching, fourteen of which were in a rural district where she taught elementary and middle school music. Her last position was kindergarten through fifth grade general music at two schools. Her position varied between full-time and part-time over the years. She also previously taught in an urban parochial elementary school and in a small town public middle school in Iowa. Lisa pursued extra certification in Learning Disabilities mid-career to aid her instruction of children in the special education program and she has a Masters degree in Music Education. She successfully developed her own general music curriculum and recorder method to teach all of her students. Lisa is a long-standing member of an ecumenical community choir.

James teaches in a suburban school district where he has completed thirty years of teaching. He holds a doctoral degree in music education and has consciously chosen to remain in a position teaching young children. His current position is kindergarten through fifth grade general music at one school. Previously he taught in an urban district and at a university lab school. After teaching at all levels, kindergarten through twelfth grade, he chose elementary music because he felt he could have the most impact on young students' lives and learning. He regularly creates innovative lessons and projects that challenge his elementary students to higher-

level thinking and music making. He is also an adjunct professor in music education at a large university and directs an adult church choir.

Summary

The interview material from the eight participants provided a glance into the musician and music teacher development, and personal history of each individual. In the next chapter each of these teacher's career paths will be explored more in depth to gain understanding of how their identity as a musician developed into becoming a music teacher and particularly an elementary music specialist. Chapter four will examine the idea of master teacher mindset and how it can enhance the professional identity development and practice of elementary music teachers and positively impact student engagement and learning.

CHAPTER THREE

Developing Teacher Identity in Elementary General Music

Building a professional identity is key for individuals pursuing careers in various professions, especially education and the medical fields, as evidenced by the vast amount of research literature available on professional identity in these fields (Apker & Eggly, 2004; Frierson-Campbell, 2004; Helmich, et al., 2016; Olsen, 2016; Wagoner, 2015). Such service occupations require repeated interaction and relationships with those served, necessitating that the practitioner is confident in how they perceive their role and knows how to continually improve professionally for the benefit of others. Having a clear professional identity can be key to building a successful career. Sullo (2009) wrote about teacher professional identity saying, “You will benefit from determining the kind of educator you want to be and the kind of contribution you want to make to the profession you have chosen” (p. 153).

I will define music teacher identity here as a combination of having a musician identity (personal musical performance influences, training, and experiences), having the pedagogical knowledge and skills to be considered a quality educator by oneself and others, and having a growth mindset that includes regular self-reflection. Acquiring this professional identity is a process that can span many years. Olson (2016) describes teacher identity as the unique, coherent, successful whole (attitudes and practices) each teacher assembles as they learn to “systematically examine their own personal and professional teaching influences and work to adjust and assemble them in conjunction with educational research” (p. 2). In this chapter the experiences and perceptions of eight elementary music educators are included to illuminate the ways in which their self-identification as a musician led them to pursue becoming a music teacher and more specifically, identifying as an elementary general music specialist. Over the

course of their careers, various mindsets and practices were established and fostered which gave participants self-assurance in their educator role and guided them in effectively teaching their students foundational skills and concepts both within and beyond music. Teacher identity is also impacted by unique teaching experiences which shape the teacher's personal viewpoint and teaching practice. No two teachers in elementary music are exactly alike because their backgrounds and teaching situations are different; however there are quite a few commonalities among these elementary music educators.

ERIN

Identity As Musician

Looking back, Erin stated that music was “something that (she had) always done” during her childhood. By the time she finished high school, she was a skilled pianist and singer with training in dance and theater. She had a secure musician identity, due to a combination of having sung and played piano for so long and as she said, “there (were) probably...moments when I had teachers influencing me, and...all those things that I didn't even realize were happening at the time.” She knew that performance was “something (she) could fall back on” even if she did not pursue it as a career. In preparing for college Erin said:

I just always knew music had to be a part of whatever I was going to be studying...(I) had it in my life for as long as I could remember... Yeah, I'd say a lot of it was just I'd always done it. It was always an important part of my life.

During college Erin decided to pursue an education major, and that fit well with her music studies.

Identity As Music Teacher

Erin went on to earn degrees in secondary education and music education in college, and her first position was music instructor for K4 through eighth grade students at an urban Lutheran school. There she taught choir, general music, and dance. Although Erin originally planned to

teach secondary students, the positive experiences of her first teaching position opened her up to the idea of continuing at the elementary level. She said that as she continued to teach she “figured things out”, which helped build and strengthen her sense of teacher identity. During that time she also began offering her services as choreographer and vocal coach to local high schools putting on musical theater productions. Erin’s view of her teacher identity is broader than some, because she sees her role as a music educator as encompassing both elementary general music and secondary musical theater, including the vocal coaching and dance aspects. Her multi-faceted performer identity greatly influenced her teaching practice. Erin describes:

I think (theater is) just another way kids can find success and such a different way like nothing else really. The experiences they get from that they can’t get anywhere else. You know, just like in music. The things you can learn and do in music you can’t get anywhere else.

She engaged her students in learning through building relationships with them and through varied, interactive lessons and authentic, original musical drama productions that she wrote for them. Erin is a proponent of intentionally making herself available throughout the day to interact with students individually and in groups in various contexts and settings around school besides music class in order to foster lasting connections with them.

She strongly identifies herself as a teacher, which developed on the job as she worked to find solutions to a variety of problems that arose. Olsen (2016) notes, “by better understanding (your teacher identity) you will improve the kind of teacher you are in the classroom, the kind of learning you can offer your students, and the professional satisfaction you receive from your career” (p. 2). Erin said of this progression:

I feel like when you start (teaching) you’re so afraid to just do things like you’re supposed to. I found myself needing to relax because I was trying to be stricter than I needed to be and I found myself needing to go, “It’s okay. Let them just experiment with the instruments. Who cares if they’re not playing it right, they’re not hurting anything. It’s fine.” So I feel like...you want to do everything just exactly the right way, and as you

go through you figure out some things are okay because personally that's not important to me as a teacher as much as this. I feel that you are constantly evolving as you are figuring yourself out.

Early on in her career, Erin had opportunities to develop a solid classroom management plan, which may also have contributed to her teacher identity and strong practice within her inner-city school setting. She had the chance to observe various other teachers and programs similar to her own and to be advised in handling behavior management issues. Classroom management tends to be one of the biggest struggles for beginning teachers, one that can potentially impact the process of teacher identity development (Smith, 2006). This wealth of ideas Erin gained from others gave her a toolbox of management strategies: "I had those kinds of (classroom management observation) opportunities, but I never really had a (music) mentor teacher to work with to just kind of bounce music questions off of." In addition, Erin earned her Masters degree in music education about seven years into her career, which she said, "makes a huge difference" in becoming a better music teacher because there she was guided in how to do that. She could immediately apply information learned in her graduate classes to her teaching practice and then the next week she could report how things went to her fellow graduate students and professors, who provided her with feedback as she formed and augmented her teaching ideas.

Identity As Elementary Music Teacher

When Erin changed schools after five years of teaching, she had to reevaluate her teaching approach. She moved from an urban (K4-8) setting to a suburban (K-5) setting, and in her first year at the new school, she decided to give herself freedom to teach differently and try new things. Her new student population, in a district "with a lot of that rural mentality", included individuals with backgrounds, interests and significant cultural differences from Erin's previous

students in the city school. It was a big change for Erin that showed her the need for new teaching techniques. She determined, “‘I’m just going to do whatever works for me then and the kids will figure it out. We’ll make it work,’ versus feeling like I needed to subscribe to a certain way of doing (teaching).”

Currently, Erin utilizes songs and teaching ideas from a variety of textbooks, methodologies (i.e. Kodaly, Orff-Schulwerk, and Feierabend), and teaching resources to help the children learn important concepts and skills. She has evolved as a musician-teacher through trial-and-error and by taking good notes about what did and did not work with her students. Her professional identity has grown through this process of learning and using pedagogical knowledge and skills; sometimes she even creates new instrument parts if she needs an accompaniment for students to play to a song where none exists. Erin also learned that getting to know each group of students’ strengths, weaknesses, and interests through observation and dialog could help her develop ideas and strategies to help all students be more successful learners. She noted:

Every class is going to be different. I have one group of fifth graders that just loves to sing, so if I get them singing they’re going to be right with me. And I’ve got another group with a lot of boys that singing is the most painful thing I can ask them to do. So if there’s a different way I can get the same concept across without asking them to sing a lot, then I know that will be a more successful lesson for them.

The elementary music program at Erin’s school is strong due to district support and the positive relationships she has built with her students. Erin intentionally developed a learning environment of mutual respect in her classroom and established bonds with students across their elementary years. She said:

The cool thing about being a specialist and not a classroom teacher: we get to see them grow up for so many years. So by the time they get to fourth or fifth grade it’s your sixth year teaching them, the bond that you’ve created is so cool!

She believes because of these bonds, “they trust me and they’re willing to do what I ask them to.”

Erin asserted that having a mindset that focuses on students and being a team player at her school helped her identify more as a confident elementary music teacher. With her upper-elementary students especially, Erin felt compelled “to help them connect to music...(and) find some way to buy in and make it personal...so that...wherever they go, that music can at least have a special place in their heart.” As Smith (2006) noted, many music teachers like Erin joined the profession to positively impact their students and community. She also expressed the attitude of “being open to anything” and intentionally establishing positive relationships with classroom teachers.

I’ve...found that when you have these strong relationships with classroom teachers and you show a willingness to say, “Well you’re teaching (the states) or whatever you’re teaching, and that naturally fits in with what I’m doing”, they’re really willing to reciprocate. So you get an opportunity to create a really strong bond, and the kids see that and I feel like they take things more seriously in a different light then too because it’s more meaningful than just, “This is what I do in music or this is what I do in gym or this is what I do in my classroom.” It becomes more of an experience than just that one thing.

Collaborating with classroom teachers can enable elementary music teachers to help children make connections in their learning. In addition, Erin found that regularly conversing with classroom teachers helped her understand her colleagues’ reality, as well as understanding her students and her own role in the school better. She stated, “If we’re really there for the kids then we need to really understand the kids, not just for the thirty minutes that we see them, but for who they are.”

Erin’s story shows evidence of the progression of identifying as performer to music teacher to identifying as an elementary music teacher. She used challenges in her practice to help establish a teacher identity, which she defined for herself in her daily work. She kept notes and

reflected on what worked and did not work in her lessons to help her improve her teaching choices. Erin continually works to build respectful, caring relationships with her students and colleagues, which has created a strong support network in her school community for music education.

JENNIFER

Identity As Musician

It was during high school that Jennifer realized music “was something (she) really wanted to pursue” in college. While there she was encouraged to study performance but to get a degree in education to fall back on. Jennifer earned her Bachelor’s degree in music education and then went on to teach choral and general music after getting married and starting a family.

Identity As Music Teacher

Jennifer knew from a young age that she wanted to become a teacher when she grew up. When she was young, Jennifer’s mom worked as a paraprofessional at a school and would bring home old grade books and other school materials with which Jennifer excitedly played “school”. According to Jennifer, “I guess the teacher part was just always a give-in...the music part just came in high school” when she decided to take her interest in music further.

Although elementary music was Jennifer’s first choice when she initially applied for jobs, raising a young family at the time necessitated she accept whatever job was available. So her first few years, Jennifer taught fifth and eighth grade general music, middle school and high school choir, and various high school general music classes in the Catholic schools. When her position was reduced to part-time she started a new job teaching kindergarten through fifth grade music. Following further position cuts, Jennifer moved to a public school position to teach elementary music. In developing her teacher identity, she said, “I feel that when you’re in a

place awhile, you kind of establish your identity...it's an ongoing process." Jennifer did not feel she secured a strong teacher identity until just the past six or seven years out of her twenty-one years on the job. That may be because she has been moved around a lot to many different schools over the years, because she notes that at different points she did have an identity, i.e. "I was the Catholic schoolteacher" or "I am (John Marshall Elementary's) music teacher." Jennifer said:

That identity changes based on where you are in your life, what's going on in your personal life, but (also) the dynamics of the school you're in. And every school has an interesting dynamic; there's always something that's different...So it depends on your climate, your clientele that you're working with, your administration in the building, the rapport. So you identify, but then it sometimes has to evolve into what goes with the building. I would say, yeah, I know who I am but it took awhile.

Jennifer realized that developing a teacher identity for her has taken time and experience, and that occupational identity for educators is ever changing due to various factors like the dynamics of a school, support or lack of support from administration, make up of student population, rapport with coworkers and students, school transfers, and teaching experience.

Greger (2014) also found that elementary music teachers agree it takes multiple years in the same position to develop a solid teacher personality (identity). Greger wrote:

From personal experience, I worked in three different districts during my first four years of teaching, and each time I changed districts or schools, it often took a year or two in order to develop my own teaching personality (identity). I do feel, however, that the longer I teach, the amount of time it takes to feel comfortable in a new place decreases with experience. (p. 32-33)

For some, becoming an effective, master teacher is a journey that may span over the individual's entire career. As Jennifer said, "it's a growing process forever...I don't think I'm ever going to be where I think, 'Yep, I know exactly what I'm doing.' Sometimes I do. Sometimes we're all doing it by the skin of our teeth." It is important and helpful for teachers to have a growth mindset and regularly reflect on how they are doing in their practice. Gehrke (1987) wrote about

the importance of professional reflection: “The process of growing includes constant self-examination, reflection, and change at all stages...Becoming a better teacher means becoming a better learner” (p. xii). Teachers should be lifelong learners willing to embrace change.

Identity As Elementary Music Teacher

Jennifer has always had a preference for teaching elementary music and describes it as her niche. The children themselves motivate Jennifer to continue in the field. Interacting with and getting to know elementary school students, with their curiosity and creative ideas, has been both positive and inspiring for her. Jennifer feels grateful when greeted enthusiastically by young kids “like you’re a super-star or some kind of super hero” or when she eats lunch with kids who have earned that behavior incentive. She said of working at the elementary level:

No matter how bad the day is...Halloween parties or whatever, there is always something that’s good every day, and that makes it worth getting up every morning and looking forward to going. Kids are amazing!

Building positive relationships with and working with primary-aged students is a major intrinsic reward to teachers that strengthens them for the challenge of managing high expectations with sometimes-limited resources, limited time and legislative mandates required of them.

Teachers aim to become confident and successful in their jobs so they are doing their best work for the benefit of all their students’ learning. Children’s growing understandings and actions can be proof to a teacher of their success. In some of her previous schools when Jennifer put together a program, every child got a part, and the kids understood that every part was important. She taught them that each role, whether singing or speaking or moving instruments on stage or having a non-speaking role in the background, was needed for the success of the whole team. Jennifer spoke about achievements in the classroom saying:

It’s those little successes, not (always) that you have to put on this grand show, but the way (the kids) feel when they succeed or when they finally get the B, A, and G on the

recorder, or “I get it now, I get it!” Those are the successes that I celebrate the most, the little things, because they mean the most. That’s what they’re going to go away with.

Teaching experiences and continued professional learning can be great guides for making educator decisions. Reading more about child development levels can improve a teacher’s music instruction. Jennifer learned to be realistic about whether the content she taught or what she asked students to do was really age- or developmentally-appropriate. She said,

I will be honest with you that (understanding child development) didn’t impact me right away until I had kids...but (teaching in developmentally appropriate ways) is so necessary, because I feel like when I was a new teacher I had really high expectations of some pretty little kids.

Earning her Master’s degree in Music Education helped Jennifer mature as a teacher. Today she tries to plan learning activities with kids’ interests in mind so they can engage in and relate what they are learning in music to their lives. She also stresses the need to be aware of what is going on with students in the classroom and be flexible with teaching plans: “You have to some days just (let go), like three weeks in with cold weather or whatever. Sometimes it’s about what they *need* more so than what you are supposed to be teaching.” Jennifer realized from experience that sticking to a lesson plan, even if it is not working, can be personally frustrating and limiting:

You drive yourself crazy trying to make (a lesson plan) work. And sometimes it works without us controlling it. I think as we get older and more experienced in this profession, we are learning to (let go a bit and) just kind of get laid back.

She noted that having consistency, high expectations, and structure for students in her professional practice has helped her create a strong music program and develop her teacher identity. She said, “Children need to know what to expect and (have) consistency that it’s always the same consequences...because it’s when they don’t know what to expect that they act out.” She advocates for elementary music teachers to establish good relationships with their peers, as they may have new strategies and ideas to improve a teaching situation. Jennifer said, “Any time

you can find something good to say to anyone, a coworker, the janitor, anything, (say it), because the positive will go way farther than the negative.” Even after twenty-one years of teaching, Jennifer still has days where she can identify an area she can improve on or look at and try a different way. She said, “As teachers we are life-long learners, and...stealing ideas from other people, that’s the way to go because that’s how we all grow.”

Jennifer’s strong teacher identity is linked to her very organized and structured preparation and delivery of instruction. She does detailed planning, regularly takes notes, keeps good records, and reflects on her classes, all of which allow her to give students more responsibilities with routines and classroom jobs. Her passionate identifying as an elementary music teacher who is entrusted with young lives helps her to show her students that she cares about and values each of them.

The development of Jennifer’s performer identity, teacher identity, and professional practice seemed to happen fairly naturally (not marked by clear events per se) over her career. Staying organized, learning more about child development levels to plan lessons that are developmentally-appropriate, maintaining structure and consistency for students in her classrooms, and teaching social inclusion have been important to Jennifer’s practice and educator identity. Some common themes emerged between Jennifer and Erin’s experiences, including their emphasis on building respectful, encouraging relationships with colleagues and students.

KATHERINE

Identity As Musician

Katherine was raised in a musical family, where she was surrounded by different types of music and had many performance opportunities at home and at church. She started taking piano lessons in elementary school and often played for her family and their friends. In high school her

choir director encouraged her talent and helped her prepare a piano solo to perform in the Solo & Ensemble festival, where she was quite successful. Subsequently, Katherine decided during her high school years that she should pursue music in college in order to develop her “good skill in piano and a good ear too.”

Identity As Music Teacher

Why someone chooses to teach can indicate a lot about that person’s value of her content area and education. Music teachers like Katherine are intensely devoted musicians excited about their craft that are committed to sharing music with students. She said:

I think there is a desire for the person who is teaching, and it doesn’t even have to be music, to teach others about their skills and their passion. I think passion has a lot to do with it, and if you know that you’re pretty good at it you want to share it with people because if you have something that’s really heart-felt of course you want to share that.

At first, the idea of teaching was out of Katherine’s comfort zone, as a self-identified introvert, but the enthusiasm of sharing her musical skill and passion with others won out in favor of a career in music education. Although Katherine’s original intention was to teach elementary music, her first job was in a parochial high school teaching the choirs, directing the musicals, and preparing and accompanying student Solo & Ensemble performances. She discovered over the course of that year that teaching high school music was not the best fit for her strengths. After that, Katherine went on to teach elementary music for sixteen years in the Catholic schools and then sixteen years in the public schools.

A focus on producing student success is key to building a positive, inclusive, well-managed classroom. Concentrating on meeting students’ learning needs, and tying the curriculum into student interests may give teachers more fulfillment which can contribute to a more welcoming and productive classroom learning environment for students. Eventually teachers stop focusing on improving themselves as teachers and start focusing more on the

students' needs. Katherine described how teaching adaptive music to a class of special needs children a number of years ago impacted how she instructs all of her students today:

(Teaching adaptive music classes) was where it was really not about me writing lesson plans. It was about them and, "How can I service them?" I mean music is really, "How can you service everybody in your class?" That's what it is. It's the world's largest service project...It's all about them.

Conway's (2012) findings concur that over time music teachers' focus often shifts more toward students. She referenced the Fuller model of teacher development, a process of learning to teach in which the first stage involves beginning teachers focusing on themselves and later as they grow professionally, entering the next stage that shows stronger concern for students' needs (Conway, 2012).

Unfortunately, Katherine discovered that her perception of her teacher identity could ebb and flow depending on where she taught and even how politics restricted and determined aspects of the job for teachers. Like Jennifer, Katherine started her career in parochial schools, where she felt that she was valued for preparing children to contribute musically in Mass, and her identity as a music teacher was clear. But since switching to the public school system, Katherine generally felt less appreciated for her work, even though she provided a lot of music opportunities for the students. Katherine said:

When I was in the Catholic schools, I was it, and I was the one who determined what my curriculum was. I had more of an importance of a role in the Catholic schools because of the liturgies and so on, but here in the public schools, not so much and that was because of all the change going on. I lost that.

Katherine commented that, though she felt a sense of her own teacher identity grew and strengthened over time, it plateaued and even dwindled at points of her career. She linked strong teacher identity to her perception of the school's regard for her position and to the autonomy she had in the role of music teacher. For example, in recent years Katherine's district made decisions

that limited the amount of time the music teachers have to work with children during the school day, and sometimes she felt frustrated that a less-educated public, which has lower standards for musical excellence than her, devalued her work and that of her colleagues. Budget cutbacks in recent years put a strain on music teachers' time and resources for their programs. Katherine said:

Things changed so much that we didn't have stability in our program any more, and yet the public doesn't see that because they still see the musicals, they still see kids perform. Nothing has changed in their mind. But the caliber of music is going down...we know that in time (that) hurts your department.

It is evident in Katherine's story, just like for a teacher in Olsen's study, that "multiple strands of her personal history (are) being invoked, reassessed, and employed as active influences in what (is) an ongoing construction of her teacher identity" (Olsen, 2016, p. 45). Therefore, occupational identity is really not a fixed point that teachers should hope to reach, but rather an ongoing process for every teacher that may change and develop over the course of a career.

Identity As Elementary Music Teacher

As an elementary music teacher, Katherine found it important to collaborate with mentors and peers, and to ask for help in planning lessons in a curriculum that works for her. She advocates for brainstorming a variety of teaching ideas with district colleagues and gaining new ideas from Orff-Schulwerk workshops as well as sessions at state music conventions. In fact, Katherine serves as a board member of her local Orff-Schulwerk chapter and says that the teaching approach, together with that of John Feierabend, provided her with a strong collection of creative, engaging lessons for all of her age-levels of students.

Music teachers need to prepare well, really knowing the content and how it will be presented before delivering instruction. It can help teachers to have concrete learning objectives and a reason to ask students to do something. Katherine suggested that teachers determine what

they think is important to teach and then plan out how they will do it. She said, “Prepare, prepare, prepare! Never be caught unprepared and know your music inside out.” Keeping things moving during a lesson may also help teachers manage their classes. Katherine consistently does four “high-level, hands-on” things for each of her forty or forty-five minute lessons for all grades, “with drumming or Orff (activities) or notating or movement.” Her pacing is quick and succinct, with little time lost in transitions between activities. She said:

That’s just my elixir of music right there. And with (kindergarten) I might do six (chunks during a lesson)...you can cover a lot with those four. And you have to ask yourself, “What do I find important when I teach? What do I want to do?”...For other people it may only be three...it depends on who you are and your pacing of students, which is so important for beginning teachers. “How much can I do?” And every year it changes because of your class loads.

By high school or college Erin, Jennifer, and Katherine had decided to pursue a career in music education; an extension of the “music is a way of life” mindset through which being a musician gave their lives purpose. Katherine’s movement from identifying as a musician to a music educator, and what continued to drive her as an elementary music specialist (even in the face of outside challenges) was her passion for making music and her commitment to share that with young students.

LISA

Identity As Musician

Lisa had inspiring music teachers in school and for private lessons when she was growing up. One educator in particular shared a love and passion for music with his students and encouraged them to try new things and be leaders or performers. Lisa’s middle school choir and general music teacher, who also taught her piano and organ lessons, was a great model for how to teach well. She said:

He was my big influence, seeing the joy that he had for teaching...he got me involved in church when I was older, accompanying the younger kids. And I took organ lessons from him and he got me into playing the organ at church. So he was my big influence.

Lisa started developing keyboard skills early on, starting piano lessons in second grade and later adding organ lessons. By high school her mentor got her accompanying younger children in church, and she was guided into playing the organ at church.

Identity As Music Teacher

Her teaching experience is almost split half and half between middle school and elementary school music, though Lisa noted that originally she had planned to teach elementary. Over her career, Lisa taught in three school districts with teaching assignments ranging between elementary general, middle school choir, and middle school general music. About seven years into her career Lisa worked towards extra certification in Learning Disabilities to help her better teach children with special needs. This was at a juncture between finishing one job and starting another in a new district, and that timing was beneficial to her. She noted that at the point of the job switch she was open to starting fresh and trying new things in her teaching, and she started focusing more on her students' needs than on herself.

Lisa felt it was important to train her students for a lifetime of musical enjoyment, whether they might choose to participate in band or chorus in middle or high school or even have music making as a hobby in adulthood. She said, "One of my biggest successes was to come up with my own (elementary) curriculum that made sense to me and seemed like it flowed from grade level to grade level to prepare the kids for what was coming later." Maintaining close, collaborative relationships with her music colleagues at the middle school, she could check in on how her former students were doing retaining and using the knowledge and skills that she taught them.

Identity As Elementary Music Teacher

Lisa enjoyed teaching elementary students, largely due to their inquisitive mindsets and willingness to try new things and find out how music works. She would regularly give her classes a brief preview of what they would be learning in the next music class, which she found helped peak their interest for learning. She said:

I would try to introduce things like just give them a little bit of it, “Tomorrow we’re going to learn this fancy Italian word ‘fortissimo’! Do you want to learn some Italian?” Try to do something to spark their imagination, spark their curiosity and not think, “Oh, they’ll never want to do that and think ‘that sounds boring.’” Positive mindset!

When she taught her students about topics like opera, she got them interested by doing a unit with fun activities, helping them concentrate on the opera’s storyline, and viewing the Bugs Bunny cartoon version of Rossini’s *Barber of Seville*. Lisa intentionally brought opera and other musical topics down to a level her young students could understand. One year they became so engaged with the opera that they begged her for permission to come in during recess to watch more of the opera video. Her positive mindset and personal interest in what she was teaching helped her achieve high student engagement and learning:

I had the mindset that every student is going to be curious about (the topic), whether they show it or not. There’s something inside every student that even if they put on a front, they really want to know more about it, and I guess not shying away from things, like the opera, because I think they aren’t going to like that or they aren’t going to want to learn that...if you have an attitude that you like what you’re going to teach them, they pick up on it and their curiousness will carry them through.

The sequential elementary curriculum and subsequent recorder instructional method that Lisa put together for her teaching practice employed songs and musical resources compiled from a variety of sources. Her goal was to help the students learn concepts and skills more thoroughly than they had before or what the textbook series set forward for lessons. She said:

To be honest, I did my own thing more than I used the textbook. I mean I used songs within the textbook, but I found my own curriculum to be more successful. Same thing

with recorders, I found my own to be more successful. Just taking all of the Dalcroze, Orff, Kodaly, the MIE...all those different methods, and pulling out the best parts of it and putting it together in an eclectic approach. To me that was more successful than any individual resource.

Her curriculum was supported by the work she and her fellow arts educators in the school district did to unwrap the state standards and find connections between their music curriculum and the core subjects of math, reading, science, and social studies. Lisa used the results of this collaborative work and current music education research of the time to backup the value of her music teaching to her school and community peers. She said:

Just to be able to have that (list of the connections between the music curriculum and the core curriculums) written down...made me feel like I had something that proved (to non-music colleagues) that “You may feel like I’m just ‘prep’, but I do steady beat in my class and steady beat has been researched and shown to improve reading.”

She referenced the research of Phyllis Weikart that links children’s development of steady beat to their development of beginning reading skills, and she used this professional development to help her collaborate with and support classroom teachers by linking the lesson concepts she taught to what students were learning in other settings. Lisa said that her exposure to research and pursuing professional development music workshops and resources, as well as “working as a group with our music people” led to her sense of growth in teacher identity over time.

Her understanding of child development helped Lisa craft her curriculum into a sequential plan of concepts too:

I’d say the biggest thing is introducing concepts at the right time and preparing them ahead of time...So just taking a look at where they are developmentally and seeing how it ties in, and when is that prime time to introduce something to get you to the next step? (Knowledge of child development), I would say yeah it did (help develop my own curriculum). Because especially looking at the end result, “Okay how do I get there?” and making sure that you had a plan (of how) to get there, you didn’t just all the sudden go, “Oh, I’m going to teach them to play recorders but they don’t know how to read notes.” Yeah it did. It helped you look at the whole picture.

Over her career she took personal ownership and responsibility for the learning of her students. A close relationship with her middle school music colleagues allowed Lisa to keep track of the progress her elementary kids made at the next level and how well they had retained knowledge concepts and skills she had taught them. In this way, she was making a long-term investment in the musical success of kids in her community.

Lisa also noted that her teacher identity changed as she gained experience over time, from survival behaviors to using her own learning to better her situation (both her teaching behaviors and the students' learning). She said:

I guess that over time you accumulate more (experience) and you don't have to focus so much on getting your lesson plans done. "What am I doing to survive the day?" and "How am I going to make sure this class behaves?" All those things kind of go in the background because it becomes part of your natural teaching and then you're able to focus on "What did I learn and how can I use it in class to better what's going on (with my teaching and the student learning)?"

The growth mindset and actions Lisa took in her teaching helped keep things fresh and focused on students' learning and success.

Lisa and Katherine both wrote their own curriculums that proceeded successively from grade level to grade level and prepared children with musical skills and understanding for the future. Like Katherine, Lisa also found that teaching students with special needs helped her learn to teach concepts in many different ways to meet all the students' needs. Lisa's strong musician identity greatly strengthened the formation and progression her music teacher identity over her career.

SHARON

Identity As Musician

Music was a part of Sharon's life and an interest for her from an early age. Growing up in a German-Polish family she was expected to learn the accordion, so she started taking private

accordion lessons at age five. Sharon sang in choirs at her family's church during her youth and eventually, as an adult became a choir director and piano accompanist. To strengthen her piano skills once becoming a teacher, Sharon agreed to play piano regularly at her church's mid-week worship services, giving herself incentive to practice and a smaller group to accompany as she learned. She noted that hymns and patriotic songs are a great place to solidify skills in accompanying. Her interest in actively making music at home and at church has remained strong over the years.

Identity As Music Teacher

Sharon's teaching career began later than some: she stayed home with her children when they were young and then later earned her Bachelor's degree in music education. During her career she taught elementary music first in an urban and then in a rural school district. Elementary music was always her goal career. Sharon said that her "identity as a good musician (being able to sing, play, and teach) has helped develop the program" as a school music teacher. She realized that she needed to select the songs she would teach in her lessons with intention and really learn the music well in order to teach it confidently. Over her teaching career she built up a reliable "bag of tricks" and a large volume of teaching resources from which to pull songs and materials.

Sharon stressed the importance of staying positive, modeling and making music along with her students, and looking at concepts and learning situations from different angles to make her instructional preparation and delivery more effective. She said:

I love music and I let that show in my lesson, in what we're doing. I get up and I dance; I'm involved in the whole thing too. It's not like I tell them to run three laps and just sit there and watch them. I move when I ask them to move, so just by my attitude and trying to always be positive (I set an example)... Sometimes you make assumptions; you talked about this and you assume that (students) remember that. So then you need to go, "Well,

let's try this another way. Remember when we talked about this thing. Let's build off of that a little more."

Sharon also realized that working with young children would need to involve lots of repetition to help them learn a song or concept well and a willingness to give herself the flexibility to change her lesson plans in response to students' needs or situations in the classroom:

(Sometimes) you have to go and do a song from before and bring it back...And if it doesn't work that day then maybe the next day we can find a better way to do it. Don't worry if you don't get the lesson done. There's always tomorrow.

Identity As Elementary Music Teacher

Singing with children every day and doing fun learning activities to get them excited about music was what Sharon viewed as her motivation and reward for teaching elementary music. Seeing her students develop and perform successfully was "icing on the cake." She called teaching music "the best job in the world." One of Sharon's biggest challenges teaching elementary music was trying to hook in and reach children who were unmotivated or uninterested in music. She tried various solutions as she considered, "How do I get (those kids) engaged in something I'm so passionate about?" including offering extra one-on-one help to struggling students during recess and during class-time adding instrument parts for the non-singers in the group to get them participating and engaged.

Sharon's confident sense of teacher identity developed over her first five or six years of teaching as she began to focus more on what the kids needed to learn, than on fixing her own practice. She said that building routines, a system for discipline, and a curriculum helped so she "knew what to teach and how to teach it and be successful." The colleagues in her district music group were a valuable support to her over her career. Together they examined the state music standards to develop what to teach and what students need to learn and be able to do musically at

each grade level in order to thrive in the next grade. The whole music staff collaborated to create a standards document that Sharon then built her elementary curriculum off of.

She liked how helping people learn to engage in music, especially singing, could bring people together, like in concerts and “all-school sings.” Sharon was inspired to continue teaching elementary music because of the feeling of accomplishment she had seeing the end product of her students performing after much learning and hard work. She said:

I think it’s the rewards you get when you see the finished product. When kids do really well at a concert, or...we do ‘all-school sings’ and you see the whole school participating and enjoying and being engaged in something that I helped them learn...those are my rewards...When you look at where they start out from and you look at how far they’re progressing, you see those little bits of progress. If it’s playing an instrument maybe they’re finally getting it right, or they’re playing the instrument musically, or they’re remembering the words, or whatever it is. They’re adding some expression and they’re smiling and having fun, you know that it’s reaching them. Things like that (are why I teach).

For Sharon, being an elementary music teacher for the duration of her career seemed a good fit. She expressed confidence and security there in the work she did and the impact she was making, through music, in children’s lives. Even though Sharon did not elaborate as much on her attitudes and roots of her teacher identity as other participants, the high regard given to her teaching practice by her students and colleagues spoke for her effectiveness as a quality music educator.

MARTHA

Identity As Musician

Martha identified as a musician early in her life. She studied piano with a private instructor from her elementary years on; later in high school she also studied organ with local teachers. Listening to and making music excited Martha, and a talent for playing the keyboard fueled her progress. In middle school, two music educators in particular greatly influenced her;

the learning and experiences she had participating in their music program in fact led her to consider music as a career. Martha said, “They were really, really great people and did an amazing job with their music program! And I knew in middle school that my dream would be to be a music teacher.”

She spoke enthusiastically of her lifelong dream to teach school music as well as being a church organist and possibly giving occasional recitals. In college Martha completed a double major in music education and organ performance. She wanted a life where she could both teach children the joy that music brings and contribute to musical worship in the church.

Identity As Music Teacher

Martha started teaching in a long-term substitute music position in the public school district of her hometown. As a new teacher, she came into her district mid-year and effectively “turned the program around at the middle school” using strong classroom management skills and discipline. The following year she was hired for an elementary music position and remained teaching in the district for the next thirty-five years. Martha seemed to have a clear vision for the structure, variety, and learning objectives her students needed to be successful learners. For example she said of variety,

To keep it engaging I always tried to...keep things moving. For thirty minutes we didn't do one activity. We would start with our welcome and our warm up and do some activities. We might do a rhythm activity, we might do singing, and we might do instruments...depending on what we were working on for the music concept that day, I tried to keep a variety of things. And of course it was based on their age: a fifteen-minute activity for fifth grade is completely different than doing a fifteen-minute activity for kindergarten, when their attention span is so much shorter. So looking at their age, trying to include a variety of things...and you build that as you continue teaching.

Martha had the ability to plan creative and engaging music lessons. She sometimes came up with her own learning activities and original dances to teach or reinforce concepts with students. Martha also got ideas from looking through music catalogs and books, going to other

elementary music concerts, and talking with her music colleagues. She said, “I think that’s always valuable to catch (the kids’) interest” and she noted:

Sometimes you just need to think about different things or walk through some place (like Walmart). Ideas sometimes, amazingly, come to you when you’re not expecting it. Like when (students are) throwing yarn balls to the beat, which is kind of silly, but the kids had a blast.

Martha had the mindset that it was okay to try new things in her instruction, and if they did not work then she discarded them and attempted something else. She said:

You can try something and it (doesn’t) work, so then it’s like, “Well, chuck this, I’m not going to that again.” It was a great teaching example for the kids, because then I can say, “Let’s stop and take a look at this for a minute. Is every single thing we try for the first time going to work?”...And they would look at you like, “Well, no.” A great teachable moment...“That’s how we learn and grow. Some things are going to work and some things are not.”

Over time Martha perceived herself as having a strong educator identity because she was constantly learning on the job. She saw every day of teaching as a brand new experience, and even teaching a song from a previous year was not exactly the same because the students and situation are different. She said, “When you’re teaching...it is always fresh. So in order for you to be a successful music teacher you are growing every single day.” Martha stated that becoming a successful music teacher involved her setting goals for herself and her students and then continually learning and developing “in a way to reach (those) goals.” She had a growth mindset. She would consider ways to improve herself professionally, suggesting:

Maybe during the summer time I need to take a class on drumming. I’m not quite as secure in that as I would like to be. Or maybe I would need to take a class on recorder ensembles...Okay, yes I could improve on that; I will go ahead and do that. Or maybe there’s a workshop for a weekend (I) could go to.

She also realized that often a teacher’s professional evolution might not be evident in the midst of their daily responsibilities until looking back on it later. Of this personal growth, Martha

reflected that she noticed, “at times you far surpass what you thought the goal was to begin with.”

Identity As Elementary Music Teacher

While her first teaching job included both elementary and middle school music, Martha was clear that her preference was always to teach elementary-aged students. She appreciated young children’s eagerness and willingness to try new things, rather than the tendency of preteens and teens to have a fixed mindset and narrow preferences toward music. Her enthusiasm for music remained very strong throughout the years, and as her musician identity grew it contributed to her music teacher identity. Sharing music with her students and finding different ways to teach music to them were Martha’s continued motivators for teaching. She found fulfillment in elementary general music and continued to be mentally stimulated in the career because of the range of topics and depth of learning possible within general music. Martha said,

With elementary...you do movement, and you do such a variety of instruments, and you study different kinds of music. I mean, they get to explore it in so many ways... You have such choice when you have your curriculum and the concepts are listed... I would choose music that I’d think would be beneficial to the kids, but yet I could keep such a balance. If we wanted to do a calypso, or if we wanted to do a rap, or if we wanted to...put together a musical, I had such freedom to share and to develop those plans for the kids. There weren’t the restrictions that some (non-music) teachers had, so because of that it was constantly new and refreshing.

Martha stated that her successes as a teacher were actually when the students experienced success. When their faces showed the satisfaction of a concept finally making sense or they worked together to put on a concert and realized their preparations had paid off, Martha felt like she had accomplished her job. She enjoyed seeing her students express pride in what they had practiced at final rehearsals and performances. She said, “they didn’t do it for me. I was just...the catalyst, I kind of set them off, but they were able to share with their parents and their grandparents...concrete learning.”

For Martha, a positive attitude and the willingness to readjust her perspective helped her tremendously to remain in elementary music for a long career. She acknowledged that challenges, discouragements, and doubts happen in education just like in other fields. But by being patient with herself when lesson plans did not work out or when a situation with students was mishandled, and instead adjusting her attitude, Martha found she could maintain rapport with kids and become re-inspired by the valuable work she was doing as an educator. Martha kept a notebook in which she wrote three positive things that happened at school every day, and on days she struggled or was discouraged she could read the notebook entries to be encouraged and readjust her mindset toward teaching, the students, or the situation. She said:

We are never going to be perfect, but yet you are perfect for your kids because you're the one that knows them. So by just taking those few minutes to change your attitude, it will make a difference beyond what you could even believe, because suddenly you've flipped that around...It will start clicking, "You know, I could try this"...So...we just need to make sure that (we check) our attitude also, that we remember all the great things we do, because it's a very difficult journey.

Sometimes this reflection and adjustment of perspective even led Martha to determine new teaching ideas to try or help her evaluate what was or was not working with her teaching. Martha learned to look at the bigger picture, putting aside distractions and personal feelings to focus on students' needs. She said,

There's going to be things that happen, and that's how we learn and grow and move on from there...You don't realize the profound importance you play in these kids' lives. We get so bogged down in everything, and the kids very often will smile at you but they won't share that with you. But they're thinking it in their heart and soul. So your attitude (with the kids makes a difference).

Martha's teaching experiences in elementary music and her church organist role strongly supported one another over a full career that she looks back on with gratitude. Her teacher identity developed out of her commitment to positivity, compassion for students, confidence as a musician, and use of variety in her instructional planning and delivery.

THERESA

Identity As Musician

Theresa is a trained pianist with many years of accompanying experience in various settings. In addition to keyboard, Theresa also plays the soprano, alto, and tenor recorders. She noted when she was teaching, “I probably play(ed) piano better than anybody in this building, but I (didn’t) have the singing...I was more of an accompanist on piano...(and) I was a pretty dang good accompanist. I knew my music skills.” While she sang and taught her students to sing, she did not identify herself as a singing teacher, but rather as a general music teacher who should teach a variety of musical skills.

Identity As Music Teacher

She felt strongly about her abilities as a musician, noting that as an educator, “I valued and felt it was difficult to become a music teacher and I always knew in my heart, ‘I can be, anybody can be a classroom teacher. Not everybody can audition and be a music teacher.’” Theresa gave her best efforts to teaching effectively and actively pursued musical professional development opportunities, building relationships with other music educators, being a leader, and providing a variety of learning experiences for her music students (i.e. keyboard instruction, Orff-Schulwerk lessons, and her choruses performing in racially diverse neighborhoods of the city).

Her teaching career spanned more than three decades of elementary music (grades 1-6) in a single school district. From Theresa’s early days as a music teacher, she actively took leadership rolls in her district, community, and in her local and later the national Orff-Schulwerk Association. She recognized early on the importance of teaching music language and training children to be informed music performers and/or consumers; she said that she “wanted students

to have a lifelong relationship with music.” Theresa intentionally crafted her teacher identity from her passion for music making and her philosophy that all children could learn the language of music, which reflects Sullo (2009):

To be an inspiring teacher, you need a strong professional identity. You have to know what you want and who you want to be...Most importantly, your students will be better served when you determine the kind of teacher you want to be and take reflective, effective action. (p. 161)

Theresa had a clear goal of who she wanted to be as a teacher and what she intended her students to learn. She indicated that for her, developing a strong music teacher identity helped her build her program. She said:

Yes, absolutely (the teacher identity contributed to establishing a strong music program). That’s a good point. If you’re too hung up on being a performer or...if you don’t understand the teacher role that you have, and you don’t understand how you interpret it, you won’t have a strong music (program).

Although Theresa did not experience much positive collegial collaboration from other music educators in her district (even though she reached out to them), she found connections, friendships, and teaching assistance from people in Orff and MENC (now NAFME) circles and at music conventions, as well as receiving support from her music-teacher husband. At one point she also had a music mentor in her district, which she found helpful.

Theresa’s successes in teaching over time, as well as being true to herself in and out of the classroom, reinforced her career choice and strengthened her sense of identity as a music teacher. She said:

I tried to be ethical; I tried to tell them that I never smoked...I drink responsibly. I don’t drive and drink. I always tried, when appropriate, not to lecture but just say, “This is who I am, this is what I believe.” And I felt that is what helped me see myself as a teacher.

Actually, her students experiencing musical successes are what gave her a feeling of accomplishment. Theresa endeavored to equip each of her students, including those in special

education or gifted & talented programs, with felt-achievements in learning. She viewed every child as valuable and treated all with respect, regardless of ability. As she described, she had “an affinity for not neglecting the special ed. (kids).” Theresa also responded to her students’ abilities by celebrating and encouraging strengths they had in any area of music. She said:

I became stronger (in teacher identity) as I saw the success of my career as a teacher. See, not as a power career...It was success with students. It was, “Who got the lead in the musical in my district? They were my students. I must be doing something right.” As I said that was my mission statement, to have some be performers and some go and enjoy a Garth Brooks concert.

Identity As Elementary Music Teacher

Though licensed to teach a wider range, Theresa’s first choice was the elementary level, and that is where she spent her entire teaching career. Theresa directed many elementary choirs at her schools in the district over her career that performed at school functions and in the community. She felt that it was important to teach kids to give back, to contribute to society as citizens. Theresa said:

I firmly believed I had to give back to my community. So my choir, I tried to get them to perform in the city of Milwaukee, preferably to an audience that wasn’t the same color as my students...I really felt that helped me be seen as a teacher because here I’m making them grow musically but also as citizens. So we would perform at Washington Park, which was basically all African American, and we were basically an all-white choir. But I always said, “These concerts are to give back to the community.” I wanted to be a teacher who didn’t just do music.

Her strong keyboard skills enabled her to teach piano playing to her students at multiple schools using the Yamaha – Music in Education technology-based keyboard curriculum. Theresa believed elementary general music classes should incorporate a balance of singing, composing, playing instruments, and listening to and analyzing music. Her students did not focus mainly on developing singing skills, unlike those of some of her colleagues. Theresa said:

My students learned early on I’m not a singing teacher. You earned your music grade by doing music activities, not singing activities...I would have to review that time and again:

“I’m not a singing teacher.” They’d come from singing teachers. “No, no, no. You’re expected to do so much more (than singing) in this room; this is a music room.”

Theresa saw her music-teaching role as quite broad.

Professional growth was a regular element of Theresa’s long career in elementary music. She always strove to set high goals for her students’ learning while remaining realistic about their abilities and asking herself, “What’s the most that this class can do?” She celebrated even their little accomplishments, like being able to play four solid notes on the recorder. Theresa frequently refined her lessons and wrote new lessons to meet her students’ needs and teach the concepts in ways they could relate to. She did not hesitate to abandon plans that were ineffective with the kids, and she used storytelling as another tool to engage them in musical learning.

I just did things intuitively: it wasn’t working so I changed it, I modified it, or I eliminated it...I learned how to story tell. I know the value of story telling now, I can be very engaging as a storyteller and I wasn’t before I got my Masters...I learned how to be a better teacher...I learned how to do cooperative learning from them, and I like cooperative learning. I had projects (too).

Theresa pushed herself past her comfort zone to learn new teaching methods and unfamiliar strategies, including cooperative learning and student projects, to better help her students learn.

Theresa viewed her teacher role largely as the facilitator of learning and knew how to practically make sense of that. Mutual respect between teacher and students was a hallmark of her classroom, and she developed strong music programs at the various elementary schools she taught in over the years. Theresa made her kids and their learning the focus instead of herself, and she regularly approached them with humility to seek their input, ideas, and even their assistance (with technology). She said understanding and accepting her role as teacher helped her build her practice and rapport with students:

I saw myself; I never walked into a classroom and (said), “I’m the boss.” I was the classroom manager, I was the bottom line, but I could ask a second grader to help me out on a computer. Do you understand how much respect I had for that second grader to help

me out to learn computer skills? Do you see how I had such high respect for all of my students?...Do you understand how they felt good enough to ask the teacher to help out and be part of the teaching experience?

She was continually motivated to teach elementary students because of the joy they expressed through their musical accomplishments. Some successes she noted include students happily performing on their recorders at concerts, realizing through exams all that they had learned, and being able to read music over time. All these student achievements gave Theresa satisfaction that she had contributed to make it possible. She made her classroom environment one where individual and community accomplishments were celebrated, like “a sixth grader playing their 12-bar blues and having the class all have to give positive comments.” She realized the students “become filled with joy that they did it” and stated, “that’s what, honest, continued to drive me.”

Theresa became strong and secure in her teacher identity over time, though she had to be more intentional than some in finding professional music outlets and developing supportive relationships with music educators outside her district. Her commitment to starting where her students are at (with skills and knowledge) and equipping each child and class to make learning gains, like Erin, contributed to her becoming greatly appreciated by students and those in her school communities.

JAMES

Identity As Musician

James has been surrounded by music and music making for as long as he can remember. He said, “I guess music has just always been such a part of the fabric of my life and my family’s life that I just couldn’t imagine what (else) I’d be doing.” He is a pianist and organist, and he has earned a Master’s degree in organ performance. James currently directs an adult church choir. He

is passionate about music and musical performance. James enjoys learning and expanding his understanding of music, cultures, and history.

Identity As Music Teacher

James taught music for a number of years in middle and high schools of Chicago, but he discovered that was not the best fit for him. About ten years into his teaching career, James went through and completed a Ph.D. in Music Education. The mentors and colleagues he studied and worked with during that program challenged him to think differently and more deeply about how and what he was teaching in his music classroom, thus greatly impacting his sense of teacher identity.

He relishes the intellectual challenge of creating “out of the ordinary” music lessons for his students. His passion for personal academic growth continually helps James expand the depth to which he can instruct topics and answer student questions. For example, throughout his career James has sought out information and training on composing and now includes it actively in his curriculum. His fourth graders learn to play recorder via the oral tradition, and linking it their social studies learning of Native Americans, they compose their own melodies in the Native American style. James’s fifth graders this year learned to use compositional techniques of theme and variation, augmentation, diminution, and retrograde to compose their own musical scores for short films.

Prior to his current elementary music position James wrote educational curriculum for the Milwaukee Symphony’s Arts in Community Education (ACE) program. He has also taught music methods courses at the university level. James sees himself as having a strong teacher identity. Olsen (2016) wrote:

Teacher identity (is) a term to describe both the *active process* of using personal and professional, past and present influences in order to enact one’s teaching and teacher

learning, and the *resulting product*: that dynamic assemblage of influences-and-effects...that is always guiding a teacher's perspectives and practices...It shapes how a teacher views himself or herself in relation to the world. And such self-understandings, in turn, guide how the teacher navigates his or her way through the world both personally and professionally. (p.33)

For James the combination of active process and resulting product in his teaching have indeed shaped his self-understanding and continue to influence his approach to his teaching practice.

James believes that "the kids will learn what needs to be learned when there is a reason that they want to learn it." So, when he teaches them to read note names on the staff, the emphasis is making it usable to students so they can make or record their own music. He said:

The purpose in reading is to make music or is to record their music, rather than being "I'm going to teach you how to read notes so you can make music"...The musicianship and wanting to express yourself and record yourself, that becomes the motivation for doing the theoretical pieces...but they find meaningful ways to notate and then they may take that notation and translate to standard notation...they make really good music, and then they're excited because they want to make it real now. It is just kind of through the back door.

He feels successful when his students experience success reaching their goals. James noted:

The things I consider to be a success are the things that happen in my classroom...(I) giv(e) my kids the credit for the collaboration...It's a rather unconventional approach; I would say it's pretty musically satisfying, and they get to what they need to know through kind of the back door.

As James described his teaching attitudes and practices, it is evident that he has clear self-understandings that guide his choices about what and how he teaches in his elementary general music classroom. The active process of using his personal and professional influences in his own teacher learning and instruction and the resulting product in students' lives both shape James's perception of his journey teaching music. He believes in the importance of teaching students to develop internal motivation for their work and learning, and he said:

I think that...intrinsic motivation (to learn) is foundational to all humans and a lot of education does a disservice to that. And so we get short-term gains getting them to achieve what we want them to do, because they're trying to please us or get a good score

or they're to get into college or whatever, but ultimately it's an external drive. So (my teaching is) a very different approach and a very different way of thinking about education than (that of) many music educators.

Identity As Elementary Music Teacher

James confidently identifies himself as a music educator with a strong teacher identity. He made a later decision towards wanting to focus on teaching *elementary* music than most of the other interviewees, and for him it was an intentional selection of that level after experience teaching at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary school levels. The writing of Sullo (2009) support James's choice of career focus:

Even though you are part of a large "system", it's important to be more than just another cog on the wheel. Creating a strong, unique professional identity and professional goals will help you satisfy your innate drive to be powerful and competent. Meeting the expectations of others may be necessary, but defining and meeting your own expectations are equally essential if you hope to have a satisfying professional experience. (p. 153)

Although James started his career in a fourth and fifth grade music position he said,

I think earlier on I had visions of myself doing something that was more, from what I perceived at the time, more prestigious or valuable. I saw broader pastures, but over time, especially after the (organ) performance degree business, I decided if I'm going to be devoting myself to education I want to be where I can do the most good, and the gate is the widest at the elementary level...I wanted to be where I could potentially have the most impact.

For James, the impact he hopes to have through educating elementary students is essentially equipping them with manners and developing foundational musical knowledge and skills. Also, in elementary music he can reach all students in the school, versus just influencing the secondary school students who elect to participate in music classes. He believes that to help children be successful and get ahead in life they need to first be taught manners. He said:

The way that I...choose to (approach my job), is 'manners before music' and "If you don't have good manners there's no point in teaching you music. Music education isn't going to help you nearly as much as good manners. I would love to get to the music part because that's the fun part, but I can only (do my part when you do yours)...What I am

trying to do through music is to help you develop the life skills of focus and discipline that you're going to need to be successful at whatever you do."

James's strong teacher identity is linked to the observed positive impact he feels he can make teaching music to children. He is intentional about making connections with students and adults at his school. He said,

I developed interpersonal relationships with colleagues and administration and parents and children themselves...I think first of all being a person that's perceived as being something that people want to be on your team is a prerequisite and sometimes the most overlooked thing among teachers because they want to make a musical mark and they want to be an "artist." And being an "artist" will only get you accolades from some, but it sort of becomes an impediment to really become 'an artist' because you don't get people playing on your team.

James works to find ways in his teaching to be more of a supporting framework than the primary leader and source of all knowledge and to move himself out of the way in order to get the students doing learning tasks and activities more independently. He said:

I'm excited by the intellectual challenge of it, doing things in ways that, I don't want to say I'm experimenting on the kids, but just seeing how I can serve more of a scaffold and get myself out of the way to get them to do stuff.

James prepares thoroughly for teaching his lessons so that his focus in the classroom can be on empowering students to take ownership of their own learning. Olsen (2016) stated that, "the many contexts and histories of teaching interact with your own personal history to influence the kind of teacher you are becoming, or can become" (p. 6). The guidance and model that James had from his graduate school mentor led him to ask the big questions and to think educationally about what and how he teaches.

James's continued academic pursuit of new knowledge and finding ways to give the responsibilities of learning over to his students have made him an example in elementary general music to be respected and emulated. He approaches his job with intentionality and a vision for the big picture of developing children to be inquisitive, creative, and disciplined in order to be

successful in musical and/or life pursuits. James's own confident performer identity was the foundation for developing a teacher identity, and teacher mentors taught him to approach his instruction with purpose and a new mindset that led to his secure elementary teacher identity.

SUMMARY

The progression of a teacher's career in music, from the point that he or she self-identified as a musician, to their early years teaching music and realizing their identity as a music educator, to the point of becoming settled as an elementary music teacher, for these interview participants played a significant part in their satisfaction and longevity in their careers. Most of the participants agreed that it generally took five to eight years of teaching for them to develop a strong teacher identity. This journey also led some down the path of becoming master elementary music teachers. Master teacher status does not simply happen after an educator has a certain number of years of experience, and it is not attained by all teachers. As the following chapter will explore, becoming a master teacher in any field requires the individual to intentionally adopt certain attitudes and thought patterns (a master teacher mindset) about students and teaching that impact how and why the job is undertaken.

CHAPTER FOUR

Master Teacher Mindset Ideas

The previous chapter examined each participant's journey of developing their identity as a musician, music teacher, and elementary music teacher. In this chapter, ideas about master teacher mindset are referenced from Jackson (2009) in order to expand the reader's understanding of continued professional growth for teachers toward excellence. According to Jackson, "The master teacher mindset is really a disposition toward teaching. It is a way of thinking about instruction, about students, about learning, and about teaching in general that makes teaching fluid, efficient, and effective" (Jackson, 2009, p. 2). Jackson (2009) stated that educators generally progress through different mindset levels during their career, based on how their thinking about teaching develops and impacts practice: 1) novice teacher, 2) apprentice teacher, 3) practitioner teacher, and 4) master teacher. Those educators with a master teacher mindset are working toward or have become master teachers.

Some elementary music teachers intentionally pursue mastery teaching (through the adopting of a master teacher mindset) in conjunction with the development their teacher identity, whether aligned with a particular pedagogy or not. This contrasts with practitioner-level teaching, where most veteran teachers remain for the duration of their careers (Jackson, 2009). The difference lies in master teachers' ability to purposefully integrate mastery principles into their daily teaching practice. Jackson wrote that, "Mastery teaching...is a gift you become and a gift you give. When you consistently apply the mastery principles to your own teaching, you *will* become a better teacher and as a result, your students will become better learners" (p. 204). The following three overarching descriptive categories provide structure for organizing and sharing

data from the qualitative research interviews of this study and can guide the reader to a clearer understanding of what a master teacher mindset may look like in elementary music teachers.

Teaching is Questioning – You Do Not Need to Have All the Answers

Having a master teacher mindset involves questioning of oneself, of others, and of the students. Jackson (2009) wrote of this mindset that, “Knowing that having all the answers isn’t nearly as important as knowing what questions to ask...Good questions reveal what information is relevant, when information is sufficient, and how that information should be used appropriately” (p. 2). How teachers question themselves changes over the course of their careers.

Erin said her growing understanding of child development greatly impacts her teaching:

I feel like if you don’t understand (child development levels) how do you know if you’re teaching something that (the kids) actually get?...Something that often gets overlooked...is just the importance of exposure when you’re little, so I think that understanding what’s realistic and what they’re capable of and understanding that they’re okay if you don’t teach them what a quarter note is by the time they’re six; they can still be good musicians. So it’s almost not just a matter of understanding their development and what’s appropriate, but also giving yourself permission to do what’s best for them.

Erin, who has eleven years of experience, has determined that elementary music lessons should be supported with rationale for the choices. As she guides her student teachers in lesson planning, she challenges them to consider, “Why are you doing (a certain activity) and what’s the point?” Structuring a lesson around a clear learning objective and then making sure students are successfully working towards and meeting that goal is the reason for teaching the lesson. She said:

I think that’s a big thing for young teachers to learn...You don’t just do (something) because that’s what the textbook says (to do)...That was a big conversation I had with my student teacher this week, “Okay I get you’re going to have them sing and you’re going to do this and this. What do you really want them to learn from that? Because then that’s what you need to make sure that they’re doing well and everything else doesn’t really matter that much.”

Theresa, now a university instructor since her retirement from decades in elementary music, also discovered the value of taking time to plan quality lessons that will engage young students. She challenges pre-service teachers to consider the purpose of reading a certain book or having elementary students play a particular song. Theresa evaluates the lesson plans of her university students in elementary music methods classes and says to them:

You read the book but you had no engagement for the whole book. You played that piece but you had no engagement. What were they supposed to (be learning)?...Trust me, if these weren't college kids you'd have the discipline problems. And that may be why I still had discipline problems; I wasn't fully immersed in how valuable engagement was. Lesson planning takes time.

Pre-service and early-career in-service music teachers need to have a clear vision for why they would choose a particular learning activity and communicate that learning objective to their students, or discipline problems may develop from students being idly disengaged from learning.

According to Jackson (2009):

Master teachers spend more time unpacking standards and objectives than they do planning learning activities because they understand that clear learning goals will drive everything else they do...They then break these goals down into steps towards mastery that become their daily learning objectives...master teachers effectively communicate these goals to students and parents and hold students accountable for achieving them. (p. 58)

James considers and thinks through many factors and details of his teaching setting to determine the best way to teach elementary music. His instructional approach leans more toward student-driven than teacher-led, and he frequently engages students in learning through projects.

He said:

Given the premise of the kind of approach I take for teaching, I consider the skills and their ability to hang with me, the size of a project, the open-endedness of a project, how you have to frame things so that it's manageable, how tightly do you need to control this? Or do you as a teacher need to be in charge of things? And child-developmentally that's also a question of what the class is like, what you're able to do and not do, and how they will manage.

Questioning and reflecting are important components of James's teaching. His mentor professor in graduate school taught him "how to think and to reason in educational ways, to ask the really big...important essential questions...of 'What's happening here?'" so that he could accurately evaluate trends in education, make decisions about methodologies and teaching strategies, and gauge the long-term and short-term effects of teaching choices. James recognized that nothing is certain when working with children, so music teachers need to be flexible and change rather than approach teaching with a behaviorist mindset. He said:

Always keep questioning and avoid the plague of certainty. I think there's a tendency in humans, and especially in education, to develop that presence of, "I am the authority. I know about these things."...Ultimately there is not a definitive right way; there are many right ways, and there are many paths to the same ends. But it's natural and comfortable for humans to be reassured they're doing things the right way; then they know for certain that they're doing the right thing. And I think that certainty is the plague of education...it gets in the way of people being truly creative, being truly responsive, being truly human...Young teachers and experienced teachers, I think there is a natural tendency to want to belong and to want to be certain about things and wanting self-affirmation, and sometimes that's not the best way to lead other people.

This constructivist attitude is open to various perspectives and ways of knowing, putting students in control of their own knowledge acquisition and facilitating that learning with higher-level, open-ended questioning. For James this approach seems to have positively impacted student motivation and the ownership they take of their work. He credits his students for the collaboration that allows him to take their learning deeper. He experiments with new ideas and researches new topics to find how he can be more of a supporting framework for students so they take more of a lead in their learning. He is continually motivated to teach when he can meet his kids' curiosity and they are interested in learning more. James said:

I feel fulfilled when I am able to answer their questions or address their curiosity because I know a lot about it, and that's fun for me. And (it is motivating) to see them interested as well.

Jackson (2009) stated that purposeful questions can guide a teacher to relevant

information, show when it is adequate, and reveal how the information should be properly used. Asking questions of other elementary music colleagues, learning from their experiences through brainstorming and feedback can be very helpful for less-experienced teachers, whether through a formal mentor program or informally through district peers or networking at conferences and workshops. According to Jackson (2009):

Meeting with other colleagues can help you remain focused, consider other perspectives on the principles and how they can be applied in the classroom, brainstorm ideas about how to apply the principles or solutions to challenges you are facing, and create a study group around a shared purpose. (p. 200)

Lisa suggested that novice teachers talk with experienced colleagues often:

Get as much mentoring as you can from anybody who has more (teaching) experience and take advantage of them. And don't be afraid to ask for suggestions or resources. "I'm having this problem, what do I do?" You'll do better going with another music teacher than you will getting help from a principal or general ed. teacher. Reach out to those people.

Martha also advocated for asking for help from colleagues. She would go to school counselors, classroom teachers, and aids for suggestions or strategies that worked for them in interacting with and engaging a certain student. Sometimes gaining insight into a student's home life or hearing about their behavior in different learning settings can build a music teacher's understanding and possibly inspire guidance for teaching that student. Erin suggested, "to not be afraid to ask for help and admit that (your kids are) struggling." She would talk with special education aids that traveled with individual students in order to communicate her expectations for their involvement (helping a child participate or just be present in case an issue arises), as well as talking with those students' teachers.

Having a master teacher mindset "means knowing how to ask students the right questions, the kind of questions that lead to deeper thinking, increased motivation, and more student ownership over their own work" (Jackson, 2009, p. 2). Master teachers continue to refine

their questioning skills and to stoke their own curiosity. Theresa gave her students lots of voice in concert preparations because she valued and respected their ideas and felt they should have input in their performances. She reflected:

I always felt concerts were not for me; they were for the students. So I heard from the students and from parents...how vested my students were in their concerts...I (would) say things like, "Ok, let's work on this song. Let's just sing through it today," and the next class I say, "What do you think about doing this for your parents?" and I would listen. "We've worked on this (piece) for a month and we drop(ped) it...What do you think about bringing it back (for the concert) and maybe adding some props to it?" My students always felt they had chosen.

Erin and Martha highly valued building rapport with students and getting to know them, their interests, and comfort level with different activities in the music classroom. For example, Martha would ask her students if they wanted to audition for a certain part in a concert rather than assigning them, thus she kept their comfort zone in mind to keep things engaging and moving. She regularly questioned her students, with compliments and assessments, and tried determining:

Was it just a few kids who didn't get it? Then it might be their problem. If it's...the whole group then it's my problem, because it meant something I told them wasn't quite enough or I didn't explain it right.

Erin observes her students, talks with them, and establishes a level of trust with them where she can ask them deeper thinking questions and give them more ownership over their own work. She said:

I think building relationships with my kids, that they trust me and they're willing to do what I ask them to, has made my program (better). I will say I feel like I have a very strong program in my district and my kids come out of my elementary school in very positive place, and I think it stems back to the relationship that I build with them as people within my room. I've worked really hard to build a mutual respect for each other.

Erin said of managing her classroom: "I have the relationship with my kids that I can say, 'You say this is how you learn better, but I'm not seeing it. You can either fix it or I'm going to find a

better solution for you.” So when children trust and show respect toward a teacher, then more freedoms can be given to them. But in the same way, students not being responsible with those freedoms issued in the classroom can have them taken away.

By engaging in ongoing cycles of questions about your own teaching practices and the impact that these practices have on student performance, you will refine your own teaching practice and make better decisions about what you teach, how you teach it, how you determine whether students have learned it, and how you will respond as a teacher...when students experience difficulty learning it. (Jackson, 2009, p. 236)

Reflecting on the impact of your questioning and relationships on students’ depth of learning can help one identify what works, with whom, and when in the classroom. Finding answers to queries may not always be a guarantee, but just pursuing new understandings can help an educator grow professionally.

Questioning is a huge component of teaching and has a place before, during, and after teaching a lesson. In planning, educators need to consider why they will lead students in selected activities, because the learning purpose can give instruction focus and help students both understand and reach learning goals by the conclusion of the lesson or unit. By regularly asking oneself questions about what is going on in the classroom or in the education field, and by evaluating the benefits and shortcomings of different methodologies and strategies, an educator can offer their best efforts to guide students in ways that meets needs while keeping within the teacher’s own teaching style. Questioning elementary music colleagues can facilitate learning from their professional experiences and their feedback. Asking students deeper level questions is possible once a trusting relationship has been established between the teacher and those students. Therefore, educators do not need to have all the answers because teaching really is a constant series of questioning.

Build and Organize Your Music and Educator Knowledge

Master elementary music teachers build up a large body of knowledge about both music and pedagogy for teaching. According to Jackson (2009), having a master teacher mindset requires becoming an expert in their subject area and how to teach it, knowing both a variety of instructional methods and best-practices.

Performer Identity as Teacher Identity

Music educators should first of all continue to participate in active music making, whether as a member of an instrumental or choral ensemble, a solo musician, a composer, or an accompanist. Regularly engaging one's musicianship through performing may fuel continued personal and professional growth and keep alive the passion for music that teachers need to excite their students about music. Russell (2012) stated that cultivating a performer identity as well as a teacher identity throughout one's career could strengthen a music educator's commitment to the field. Participants in this study are practicing musicians in the following ways: accompanying on piano or organ (Martha, Theresa, Sharon, Katherine), serving as vocal and dance coach (Erin), performing in a choral ensemble (Lisa), and directing a church choir (James, Jennifer, Martha, and Sharon).

Musical Pedagogue

Becoming an expert involves the individual developing mastery of their musical specialty (voice or instrument) and of how to teach it, which Korthagen (2004) wrote about as competencies. He said:

Very influential to the level of (teacher) behavior is the...level of competencies (such as) subject matter knowledge...competencies are generally conceived as an integrated body of knowledge, skills, and attitudes...they represent a potential for (teacher) behavior, and not the behavior itself. It depends on the circumstances whether the competencies are really put into practice, i.e. expressed in behavior. (p. 80)

Theresa recognized early in her career that she needed to utilize teaching strategies that engaged the multiple learning styles of her young students, were realistic, and were age-appropriate. She said:

I seemed to understand how important engagement was early on in my career, that to ask a student to sit and listen, to ignore their visual (is not okay)...we're so highly aural; that's not a problem for music people. We can (say), "I'm going to sing to you; sing back to me." We struggle with providing visual support, and I learned as soon as I could how valuable that was.

Theresa would look back later on the effectiveness of her lessons, and this reflective practice, as well as participating regularly in Orff-Schulwerk workshops and committees, helped her to improve professionally as an educator. Theresa and Katherine both engaged in many professional development opportunities to expand their musical and pedagogical knowledge and skills. Katherine indicated that attending Orff workshops and other music conventions have helped her form a collection of assorted, engaging lesson plans that use barred and percussion instruments, singing, speaking in rhythm, and movement. She said:

By going to Orff workshops...now I've got a binder of all Orff lesson plans, that if I'm like, "I want to do something bluesy today," I just go to that binder and remember what we did...I think a lot has to depend on the person who is delivering the lesson to go out and seek (teaching resources)...But those workshops are very important.

Curriculum Choices

Master teachers need to determine or "learn how to organize their teaching knowledge into meaningful patterns and from those patterns develop a set of key instructional principles" that govern their entire instructional practice (Jackson, 2009, p. 3). Katherine does long-term lesson planning, determining way in advance what she will teach and in what sequence. She noted, "Before I even attempt to teach the first lesson during the ten weeks, I gauge when and how I want to teach that song." Instructional principles such as "Know where your students are

going” (Jackson, 2009, p. 54) are elements that teachers consider essential to produce student learning. According to Jackson (2009):

Thinking about planning this way – learning goals that lead to objectives that lead to assessments that lead to learning activities – helps you make sense out of both your curriculum and your state and district mandates. And it helps you plan lessons, units, and semesters that are more likely to help your students meet the learning standards of your grade level or course (p. 57-58).

Lisa determined what level of knowledge her students were at and their developmental level, and she planned her curriculum and instruction with big picture learning goals in mind. She said:

The biggest thing is introducing concepts at the right time and preparing them ahead of time. So taking a look at, well if you use the standards for example, “What do they need to know by fourth grade, and how do I get them there?” So if they need to know note names by the end of fourth grade, how do I introduce it? I’m not going to wait until fourth grade to introduce it. So at kindergarten, we’re just looking at, “This is a note and this is a staff” and trying to figure out with development, how much they can handle to the next level...So just taking a look at where they are developmentally and seeing how it ties in, and when is that prime time to introduce something to get you to the next step?...Especially looking at the end result, “Okay how do I get there?” and making sure that you had a plan (of how) to get there, you didn’t just all the sudden go, “Oh, I’m going to teach them to play recorders but they don’t know how to read notes.”...It helped you look at the whole picture.

Jennifer also shared the importance of organization in teaching elementary music, which allows a teacher to then be flexible in response to students in the classroom. She said:

I...strongly believe that you have to be very organized and have a plan. That to me is kind of the best of both worlds, where you have that plan, you have that structure, you know what you’re going to do, but because you know what you’re going to do you can go with what’s happening in the room.

Lisa made it a point to stay apprised of developments in research in music education and so continued her own professional learning. This helped her to write her own elementary music curriculum and deliver effective instruction using it. Starting with the skills listed in the Wisconsin Music Standards for fourth grade (i.e. students should know how to read music notation), Lisa used a “thinking backwards” process to determine what knowledge and skills she

needed to teach in each prior grade in order to help students achieve that goal by fourth grade (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). She said:

One of my biggest successes was to come up with my own curriculum that made sense to me and seemed like it flowed from grade level to grade level to prepare the kids for what was coming later, even if that meant preparing them for middle school band or something in high school or even in life after high school, something as a hobby or a general interest.

Classroom Management

Organizing knowledge and strategies for classroom management is essential for music educators. As Lisa grew professionally, she learned to do discipline and routines in the back of her mind while teaching so that she could focus on the present and, if necessary, problem-solve teaching strategies in the classroom in order to present a concept to students in different ways. Other teachers acknowledged that learning to effectively manage a classroom of students and build a learning environment rooted in mutual respect are key components of educator knowledge. Theresa saw herself as the manager of the classroom, but her respect for students allowed her to humbly ask and accept help from them sometimes as well. Sharon found that developing her skills in classroom management helped produce better student learning outcomes. She said:

There are days when (a lesson) doesn't always work, but if you keep everybody in line, deal with the problems as they come up and kids know what the expectations are and sometimes you have to go over the rules (like saying), "Is that being very respectful?"...I think getting rid of that problem of discipline helps you teach and be successful at teaching. But you have to be doing both at the same time, you have to be managing and teaching.

Veteran music educators shared various classroom management strategies that they use. For example, Katherine will sometimes "Stop and wait" for students to finish talking and give her their attention. Thorough lesson planning and quick pacing of a lesson are also great tools to help a teacher manage their students' behaviors. Jennifer advocates for giving classroom jobs to

active or ADHD students who cannot sit still. She has adapted her management response to match the fast-pace that today's children are used to. Jennifer also assigns students to move instruments and materials, and she teaches clear routines and expectations to keep her classes running smoothly. She said:

(I might say to a student) "Can you straighten out my books while you're waiting for the rest of the class?" that kind of stuff, so just anything to keep them moving, because we don't live in a slow-paced society. Twenty years ago, my kindergarteners would sit when I told them to. Not anymore.

Jackson (2009) stated that many teachers work too hard in classroom management. Perhaps instead, clearly teaching, reinforcing, and practicing student behavior expectations with them can teach them personal responsibility. She wrote, "We cannot control how students behave. We can only influence it. Your job is not to manage student behavior; your job is to teach students how to manage their own behavior" (p. 176).

Teaching Strategies

In addition to meaningfully grasping classroom management concepts, teachers also organize their music and teaching knowledge through the use of instructional principles. The mastery principles that Jackson (2009) states are key to developing an effective teaching practice are:

1. Master teachers start where their students are
2. Master teachers know where their students are going
3. Master teachers expect to get their students to their goal
4. Master teachers support their students along the way
5. Master teachers use feedback to help them and their students get better
6. Master teachers focus on quality rather than quantity
7. Master teachers never work harder than their students (p. 4)

Master teachers intentionally, consistently, and "rigorously select strategies and teaching approaches based on these principles," rather than following every new trending strategy or technique (Jackson, 2009, p. 3). Martha expressed that she selected musical materials that were

interesting, research-based, and had substance, as well as a variety of strategies and methods to build a strong elementary music program in her schools. She always used a variety of learning materials and activities in her lessons. She said:

In trying to put together a solid music program, I number one wanted to have solid materials that I used...I'm not saying that I never did some of those fun, silly songs with the kids...For a fun thing or having a little sing-along I put those in, but that was not the core of my curriculum. I tried to make it as solid based as I could, from my learning. Then I got my Masters, and from reading, from professional journals, from talking with teachers...I tried to incorporate just a solid basis for the music I chose and the variety of what the kids did, whether it was Orff or some kind of movement thing or whatever.

A strategy based on the principles that “Master teachers know where their students are going,...support their students along the way,...(and) focus on quality rather than quantity” (p. 4) was Sharon’s regular reflection on student learning during and after a lesson. In order to make her instruction more effective, Sharon often considered, ““What can we do differently? Let me think of a new way to explain this.’ And (then) we’ll go at it from a different angle.” She was willing to examine her assumptions about what children should know and remember, and she adjusted her attitude to think about challenges in new ways. Lisa learned through experience to let her students discover the answers to her instructional questions on their own, rather than feeling like she had to always give them the answers. These educator’s reflections on their teaching practice are evidence of Jackson’s point about how focusing on principles can improve professional practice and support student learning:

Master teachers take the time to reflect on their teaching in order to expose unwarranted or harmful assumptions they may hold, reveal fallacies in their thinking, illuminate problems, and determine directions for new growth. They see reflection as a necessary part of their day.” (Jackson, 2009, p. 3)

Gehrke (1987) backs up that idea by writing: “Teachers who do not engage in this self-examination, reflection, and change may be considered amateurs only, even if they ‘teach’ for thirty years” (p. xii). Gehrke also wrote:

Reflective practitioners...regularly question what they are doing in the classroom, whether their actions are justified in relation to some rational theoretical model, and whether their actions are not only technically skilled, but also ethically sound...it appears (in research studies) that teachers who are reflective, who function at a higher level, are better teachers. (p. 67-68)

Students at the Heart of Teaching

Master teachers focus on the students. The central focus of all that they do, according to Jackson's principles above, is to help students make learning gains throughout the school year. Part of that objective is to find the balance between pushing students beyond what they know, but doing so in a way that they still feel safe to give effort. Sullo (2009) wrote:

Students need to believe that success is within their grasp if they put forth sufficient effort. When students think that they cannot succeed even when they try, their drive for power typically leads them to seek power in less responsible ways, such as class disruption and the adoption of an "I don't care" attitude. Successful teachers offer an academic experience that is challenging without being overwhelming. (p. 97)

Jennifer and James frequently challenge their students' learning in creative and unique ways, allowing kids to demonstrate what they have learned in various ways. For example, James teaches his students to play the recorder musically through a "master (and) apprentice" aural model that supplements learning note names and reading notes on the staff but emphasizes the musical information they learn being useful to them. He said:

It's a rather unconventional approach; I would say it's pretty musically satisfying, and they get to what they need to know through kind of the back door...we do staff reading and note names, all that normal stuff, but a larger emphasis is "Can it be usable?" So they learn to play musically some songs that would be way beyond their ability to learn by themselves. I kind of teach some of the pieces in the aural tradition, and I always contrast the aural tradition with the written tradition, and both of these are important. But I expand their musicality by kind of teaching them through "master (and) apprentice".

Teaching innovatively and allowing children to be creative in their learning can transfer more of the responsibility for learning onto the students, rather than the traditional educational model of teachers assuming all the responsibility for student learning. Pedagogy is how to use your

knowledge of teaching to help students learn. Jackson (2009) writes that master teachers know and plan what content to teach and how they will teach it and assess students' learning of it, saying:

Not only do (master teachers) make conscious decisions about what students need to know and how well they need to know it, they decide early on what evidence of student mastery they will collect and use this feedback to inform their instructional decisions while helping students move toward reaching their learning targets...master teachers base their expectations not on what their students can do, but on what *they* can do to help their students. (p. 23)

Master elementary music teachers are very skilled musicians who have become experts in how to effectively teach general music to children. These individuals organize their knowledge into meaningful patterns, based on a handful of foundational principles that guide their teaching. The principles of thinking like a master teacher, set forth by Jackson, are essentially common sense ideas that many educators already know; what sets those with a master teacher mindset apart is how they intentionally apply the principles to their practice by organizing the teaching knowledge that is continually being built around these essential elements.

Teach With Your Own Style

Another aspect of having a master teacher mindset described by Jackson involves teachers adopting a unique and flexible teaching style. She wrote, "The master teacher mindset means not trying to teach like anyone else. Instead, you teach in ways that fit your own style" (Jackson, 2009, p. 3). Trying to copy teaching strategies or lessons verbatim from what other elementary music teachers have done can be frustrating, exhausting, and stifle personal creativity. Imitating another teacher's style can also limit one's perception of self-identity as a teacher. Erin said:

I feel like when we're starting out we're told we need to dress a certain way, talk a certain way, and act a certain way. And that's okay because it's part of our journey, but that can be hard on people. That can really push your own view of yourself if you're

feeling like you need to be this certain person, so I think... (teachers should) not be afraid to just be themselves. They'll be happier; the kids will do better for them. Everybody will accept them.

Erin realized that experimenting in the classroom to find what songs, teaching strategies, and management styles worked for her personally and to discover how her students learn through those ideas were all part of the self-discovery of teacher identity development. She said:

I think it's important to... be true to who you are, and figure things out that work for you and what methodology you're going to use and all this kind of stuff, to keep learning and growing, and trying new things. But I also think it's really important that we get a base understanding of how other things are done and taught because that makes us way better educators.

James recalls the process to discover his teaching identity and style when he was starting as a young teacher and how that has changed over time. He said:

The challenge, especially early in my career, was in finding my voice, finding my place, establishing myself in a community that didn't know much about me, developing community and student trust in me and what I'm trying to do. Nobody questions me anymore, and that's very different then it had been, especially when you get to new jobs and you have to almost prove yourself the first three, four, or five years at a place.

Becoming aware of the perspectives of others and comparing them with your own can help one improve as a teacher. However, James noted that trying to please everyone in your teaching is not necessary. He said:

Young teachers and experienced teachers, I think there is a natural tendency to want to belong and to want to be certain about things, and wanting self-affirmation, and sometimes that's not the best way to lead other people. That doesn't mean (to abandon) one's personal convictions, but when you're trying to lead people to think and act like you there really needs to be an opportunity for creativity and divergence. And as arts educators that's what we should be fostering.

Both James and Erin discovered through their experiences that teachers need to be themselves in their professional role, setting their own goals for student learning and planning ways to make it happen in their unique settings. For example, James has investigated new topics and processes like foleys (adding sound effects to a film post-production), and he linked them in

his lessons to get students using higher-level compositional techniques. Sullo (2009) wrote of a teacher whose objective was to empower students to be hardworking and engaged learners, which he accomplished by intentionally showing enthusiasm and passion for the kids and the subject matter:

I discovered a long time ago that I had a better chance of reaching my goals if I brought energy and enthusiasm into my classroom every day, even on days when I might be dragging...It's more about me taking responsibility for my professional life and holding myself accountable for being the teacher I want to be. It's me deciding who I want to be regardless of what's going on around me and not getting sidetracked because the world isn't always the way I think it should be. Being enthusiastic about what I do helps me be more successful...Plus, it's way more fun! (p. 69)

Engagement through Relevancy

Having a master teacher mindset necessitates that learning be made relevant and meaningful to students. He or she knows that there are many ways to teach effectively:

At the same time (as finding a style that works for you), you look for ways to make your teaching style relevant to your students' needs. Master teachers understand that there isn't just one way to teach and that effective teaching can be accomplished in a myriad of ways. They find ways that work for them *and* their students. (Jackson, 2009, p. 3, emphasis mine)

Lisa taught lesson concepts in ways that were interesting and relevant to her students. For example, she created a rap to teach note names and note values to her third and fourth grade students. She recalls thinking, "How am I going to apply (this concept) to their lives? Well, they're very responsive to raps and rhymes so we're going to learn it that way." She also did a lot to teach her students about composers so they would learn to listen to music intentionally and understand the life and music from different eras, but she tried to "bring it down to their level so they (could) understand." Each month Lisa's classes studied one composer on his or her birthday "to relate it to the kids, because they understand birthdays and how important they are so, 'Today we're celebrating Mozart's birthday and let's find out how old he is today.'" When she talked

with them about a composer's life, she would make it engaging (i.e. dressing up like a composer) or find connections between the musician's life and their lives (like J.S. Bach was in a fist fight with someone, so he was an average person).

Martha also felt there was more than one-way to teach effectively. She saw elementary music education as having lots of choices because of the scope available in it, and so teaching remained exciting to her over the years. She was able to continually develop fresh lessons that related to her students. One year Martha created a simple, group dance using Christmas garland to help students learn to sing and build meaning for "Deck the Halls". In similar ways she said:

You can explore ABA form, and that can be in a thousand different ways. There weren't the restrictions (in music) that some (classroom) teachers had, so because of that (teaching) was constantly new and refreshing... There was always such variety for me; it was never the same. I was able to pick such variety that I was able to grow as a musician.

Making learning material applicable and engaging for students requires teachers to be organized and plan in advance of delivering a lesson. Jackson (2009) states, "Good teaching for master teachers is fluid and automatic. They invest most of their time up front on planning and thinking through their teaching situation" (p. 23). James developed his own style of teaching elementary music that is engaging and relevant for kids. It involved large amounts of detailed planning to set the stage for his students to have learning choices in the classroom so his music lessons became a kind of student-teacher collaboration (student-driven, teacher-facilitated work).

He said:

Fortunately I had the years (earlier in my career) where I could have the privilege and the luxury, if you want to call it that, the necessity of being able to plan and organize and think and develop stuff... I was hoping to continue that whole investigative work until the end of my career, and I still do that but it's in small doses because of the energy and the time to devote to that work.

Sullo (2009) suggests that teachers instruct in accordance with their school district's goals and expectations, while at the same time crafting a unique teacher identity. He wrote:

Create your own unique goals and professional identity that allow your individuality to emerge. Don't let your desire to 'fit in' stop you from bringing forth your unique gifts and talents. Your school and district will be stronger when your individual style flourishes, as long as it is congruent with the district goals. (p. 162)

Indeed, both the school district and the students who are taught in a particular school's music program would benefit from an elementary music teacher with a confident professional identity who teaches with their own style and is working towards or has acquired a master teacher mindset:

The master teacher mindset is not simply a response to good training. We don't go to school and automatically come out thinking like a master teacher. The master teacher mindset *develops* as a result of systematically taking all that we know about teaching, organizing it into a few governing principles, and rigorously applying these principles to our teaching until they become our spontaneous response to students in the classroom. The more we practice these principles, the more we begin to think like master teachers. (Jackson, 2009, p. 5, emphasis mine)

Jackson said it well: master teacher mindset is not automatic for teachers but rather develops in teachers who take intentional steps to link their attitudes and professional practice around a few main principles. While the teacher identity you are developing helps you see yourself as a teacher, professional identity is also partly discovering who you are within that educator role. Learning to teach in ways that fit your own style and finding ways to make your teaching relevant to your students' needs are both part of the process toward mastery. Acquiring a master teacher mindset (if desired) is a pursuit that one must intentionally work toward, and discovering how to organize your teaching knowledge is essential to that ambition.

Summary

Attaining a master teacher mindset, a different way to think about and do teaching, is a reasonable goal for educators but one that requires personal commitment and sacrifices of comfort and some traditions. My interviews with elementary music teachers revealed that those teachers with or working towards obtaining this mindset have also developed strong teacher

identity (but not necessarily vice versa), and both positively contribute to their instruction and student learning. Jackson's mastery principles applied to daily teaching can improve effective practice. The final chapter will outline conclusions from this study and the implications this research may have for elementary education.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

The interviews undertaken for this thesis examined the experiences of eight music teachers through the joys and challenges of teaching elementary general music over an extensive career. Particular attention was given to practical and inspirational ways that these individuals stayed motivated and continued to grow professionally. Each educator stated that working with children, helping their students to connect with music, and equipping the children to be successful were their primary motivations for staying in the field for extended periods. The impact of teacher identity on the instructional practices of participants was also explored. I found that the majority of the veteran teachers interviewed described their professional identity as strong, based on 1) successfully persevering through challenging experiences (Abril, 2006), 2) firmly-establishing a music performer identity (Haston and Russell, 2011; Russell, 2012), 3) having longevity of work experience in a particular school district (Thompson et al., 2005), and 4) developing a personal growth mindset (Gehrke, 1987; Jackson, 2009). This clear understanding of their professional identity and acceptance of professional roles (both self-perceived and assigned by students and stakeholders) helped these educators successfully facilitate high levels of student learning.

Music educators with a strong teacher identity frequently have certain characteristics in common. In this study, all participants had developed strong backgrounds as musical performers by the time they were in high school. These teachers highly valued a positive attitude, even in the face of challenges, and said being organized and collaborating with colleagues were important for elementary music instructors (Abril, 2006). They also agreed it is important to be flexible toward new experiences and toward adjusting or modifying plans for students during lessons as

needed. Those with a strong teacher identity tend to set high learning goals and expectations for their students and themselves, while staying true to who they are and treating all students with respect (Jackson, 2009). Participants recognized that their perception of themselves as elementary music teachers developed and progressed over time as they gained experience (Trent, 2010), became comfortable with their teaching responsibilities, collaborated with music colleagues, and pursued professional growth opportunities. Studies by Abril (2006) and Russell (2012) confirm that building positive relationships with colleagues, especially music mentors (Conway, 2003) can contribute to forming a teacher identity. Whether or not teachers intentionally built relationships with students or knew their interests, participants acknowledged the importance of creatively delivering the musical content to students in a variety of ways that the children could relate to and engage in to learn more successfully (Campbell, 1998).

A master teacher mindset was evident in some of the veteran elementary general music teachers. In the careers of James, Lisa, Erin, Martha, and Theresa, various qualities of a master teacher, as identified by Jackson (2009), are exhibited. Compared to the practitioner teacher mindset, which Jackson stated is more common for educators:

What separates master teachers from the rest of us is that master teachers learned how to use the principles effectively, and rigorously apply these principles to their teaching. In fact, these principles have become such an integral part of their teaching that...applying (the) principles has become a natural response to students' needs. (p. 4-5)

These teachers start each year by identifying where their students are and setting a clear plan with goals to get their students where they need to be by the end of the year. They believe and expect that the students can reach their goals, support the students' learning throughout the process, and effectively use feedback to communicate to themselves and to the students if they have met their goal (in order for both to improve). These teachers put in many hours of up front time to create quality assignments and assessments, and they "are strategic about what they teach

and how they teach it” so they can focus on the quality not the quantity of learning experiences for their students (Jackson, 2009, p. 156). In addition, work in the classroom is evenly distributed between a master teacher and the children because they make each role clear, teach students how to effectively do their jobs, and hold students accountable for doing their jobs (Goolsby, 1996). Elementary music teachers with these attitudes and practices will successfully equip their students with skills for exponential musical and academic growth.

Implications for Teaching Practice

I have learned that developing a strong teacher identity and a master teacher mindset are part of an intentional journey that I, and likewise other early-career music teachers, can endeavor to pursue. Neither element is necessarily easy or even comfortable for the individual to attain, but personal sacrifices and attitude adjustments will likely be necessary. To change from just making your teaching what you know (based on personal experience as a student) to what is unknown (but in your students’ best interests), teachers should put personal feelings and the public’s expectations behind teaching decisions that directly impact students and their learning success. Change can start with small shifts in perspective and lead to students taking a more active, engaged role in their own learning while the music teacher strategically guides and facilitates the students’ work.

In analyzing my own process according to the teaching principles and mastery self-assessment of Jackson (2009), I am currently divided between the Novice and the Apprentice Stage. After fully achieving qualities of the Apprentice teacher, the Practitioner stage follows with a final result of the Master Teacher category for some teachers. Although I have seven years of experience teaching, my research has shown me that my mindset and approaches toward teaching have limited my progression in effectiveness. Also, I recognize that only in the past

year have I begun to feel secure in my teacher identity. I look forward to continuing to grow as a professional in music education.

The knowledge that I have gained from this study will help my teaching because I am starting to understand how shaping a personal philosophy about teaching and intentionally organizing my knowledge around a few essential principles can help produce a specific, desired effect about how I instruct students in music (Jackson, 2009; Moore & Albert, 2007; Trent, 2010). I want children to feel respected and valued as individuals in my classroom, and feel free to ask questions when they do not understand or try new things that develop and deepen their understanding of music and life (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 2010). This awareness is a significant step forward for me in the process of growing as a professional educator.

Interviewing seasoned veteran educators was informative and encouraging to me because it gave me an in-depth look at the practices and mindsets of other elementary music teachers (Conway, 2003). Many of them advised that individuals choosing teaching should realize they are committing to a profession that will require much, but reward much as well. I have determined that teaching elementary music is not something at which all excel (participants indicated that acquiring teacher identity is a continual process, often taking five to ten years) and consistent progress on developing teacher identity is necessary in order to grow in character and confidence in your teacher role. I have learned a number of new strategies and attitudes through this research process to improve myself professionally and to make my teaching more effective.

Early-career music educators should continually seek guidance and support from music mentors and teaching colleagues in building a strong teacher identity, in understanding the different stages for teachers, and in how to practically pursue the goal of mastery teaching, especially in the face of their daily classroom experiences (Conway, 2003; Trent, 2010).

Participants in this study indicated that they found committing to teaching elementary music for the long term is worth it if the teacher continues to actively pursue personal musical growth and has built meaningful relationships with students, families, coworkers, and fellow music educators and community members (Abril, 2006). Hopefully this study can be a guide to early-career elementary music teachers in developing a teacher identity and in gaining confidence in their role of music teacher. Further research into the teacher identity of in-service elementary general music teacher could be done to benefit those in the profession (Russell, 2012), especially beginning and early-career teachers.

Final Conclusions

This study of master teacher mindset and teacher identity showed that new and early-career elementary music teachers can learn much from veteran educators regarding the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of effective teaching. Networking and investing in intentional relationships with other music educators is a valuable tool (Conway, 2003), though educators should remember to be themselves with their students rather than trying to copy the style of other teachers verbatim, since educators have different personalities and backgrounds, and each classroom of children is unique (Jackson, 2009). Regularly asking intentional questions of your students and yourself, during instruction and as reflection, can improve student engagement and raise the level of your professional practice. Above all, participants agreed that taking the necessary time to organize your knowledge and to plan instruction ahead of time is key to daily, weekly, yearly, and long-term stress-reduction and success of teaching and building a strong elementary school music program.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions for Master Teachers in Elementary General Music S. Greunke

1. How long have you been a music teacher? How long have you been in your current position?
2. Have you always taught at the elementary level, or have you taught other levels?
3. When applying for jobs, was elementary music your first choice, or did you see yourself at a different level? Were you assigned to elementary music?
4. What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?
5. What inspires or motivates you to continue teaching at the elementary level?
6. What are some successes you have had as an elementary general music teacher?
7. What are some challenges you have had as an elementary general music teacher?
8. What solutions have you found to your challenges?
9. My research focuses specifically on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself as having a strong educator identity? Do you feel that your sense of teacher identity grew and strengthened the longer you taught? If so, how and in what way?
10. Please share any experiences and challenges that you see as significant to your perceived identity as a teacher.
11. How do you create and deliver engaging lessons? What mindsets or attitudes do you have that help you achieve high student engagement and learning? What teaching skills have you developed that help produce better student learning outcomes?
12. How does your understanding of child development impact your music instruction?
13. Can you identify when in your career that your teaching stopped focusing on yourself (professional practice) and started focusing more on the students' needs?
14. What strategies and attitudes have you found helpful to improve yourself professionally as a music teacher and to make instructional preparation and delivery more effective?
15. How did you establish a strong elementary music program? Was developing a solid general music teacher identity helpful to this process?
16. Do you have any suggestions for teaching from a cart, incorporating personalized learning into music, or directing student concerts and musicals? How do you meet the musical needs & expectations of your school & community, including serving/teaching students with special needs? What teaching resources have you found valuable for elementary music?
17. What advice would you give a beginning elementary music teacher?
18. Is there anything else you would like other elementary music educators to know?

APPENDIX B

Teacher Interviews

Name: Theresa

Date: November 24, 2015

Interviewer: How long have you been a music teacher?

Participant: For forty-one years.

I: Since you are teaching at the university, how long were you in your last elementary position?

P: Thirty-six years as a first grade through sixth grade and then an extra five at the university, where I consider myself still a music teacher; because so much of the classes that I'm assigned all the time, even all my music ed. classes, I fall back on experiences. I look at them and say, "Mr. Rabbit, Mr. Rabbit, your ears are mighty long, yes indeed ___". The students have to fill it in. I tell them, "The kids love to sing it, it works, it's a real chestnut of a song." I just look at them in the eye, "Don't tell me anything else, I did it for thirty-six years. And 12-bar blues with sixth grade is a gold mine. It's perfect for the end of the year, so don't argue." So yes, I retired totally from public. But then Dr. Feay-Shaw has me, once a year, teach in the public school system, for one day.

I: Have you always taught at the elementary level?

P: That is accurate, yes. Except for student teaching, to get licensed I had to teach a broader spectrum.

I: When you were applying for jobs, was elementary music your first choice?

P: Yes. One interview, one job.

I: The whole time you were in one district?

P: Yes. I graduated in August, had one interview, was the second choice and accepted the position and never left. But I was in schools within the district, so it wasn't one school. But yes, one district.

I: What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?

P: It was perceived that elementary students could not use music language correctly. And it was my philosophy that elementary students could be taught musical language and use it correctly. I also, in conjunction with that, wanted students to have a lifelong relationship with music. It didn't have to be performance. It could be performance but it could be consumer; but I wanted an educated consumer. I wanted them if they went to the opera, and I had so many students come back and say they saw *Phantom of the Opera*, and they knew what a soprano was and what a tenor voice sounded like. So they were educated. They didn't just go and not have, again it came back to they knew music language. So I felt they were in conjunction. You can't be an educated performer or consumer if you didn't have that music language. And so that was basically my philosophy.

I: What inspired or motivated you to continue teaching at the elementary level?

P: It was the **joy** of the students when they did something musical. That's what drove me. It was never, "Okay my class all passed their recorder exams." It was the joy at the concert, they played their recorder and for some of them that was joyful. For some of them it was taking their final exam and realizing everything they had accomplished, that they could read music finally, they could play it on an instrument. And it prepared them, that now what seemed so far away was, "I can try the flute now, or I can try the cello." That's the only thing I tell my college students, they don't give me true joy. And children, a sixth grader playing their 12-bar blues and having the class all have to give positive comments, they become filled with joy that they did it. So that's what, honest, continued to drive me. It kept me in it and it drove me out, when the budget was falling apart and I didn't see that joy anymore.

I: What are some successes that you have had teaching elementary music?

P: One success I felt: What are they called now? Cognitively challenged, is that what they're called? Special education? I was able to give them successes and they perceived this success. Because it's one thing for me to know, "Look at what you did for the group or whatever." But for my cognitively disabled as well as physically disabled, I could give them success. And I heard from parents how appreciative they were that (and I'm trying to include my 509s too, because I heard from that parent), how much they appreciated a teacher recognizing the value of their child being successful.

For gifted children, they felt there was somebody on their side who valued their giftedness but never said, "That means more work." Giftedness is a challenge, and by having a gifted child, and this I never heard from the

parents about, this was always the student. They really appreciated that I would respect their giftedness. I was never threatened by it, because that also is easy to fall into that trap and I can't even begin to know what the student feels like if I felt threatened. But there are teachers that shut you down, "Just sit down and shut up, I'm in charge." Because I have one now who is gifted, and I'm not threatened by him; but they are challenging. And we hugged and a professor walked by, and I could tell, because I always leave my door open, he didn't understand why a professor would be hugging a student. And it was the gifted child just showing appreciation that, "You respect my giftedness, you don't feel threatened and you don't give me more work." So that was success.

And I always felt concerts were not for me; they were for the students. So I heard from the students and from parents that how vested my students were in their concerts. If you pick out the concert and then you say (to students), "This is what you will do", that's me. But if I say things like, "Ok, let's work on this song. Let's just sing through it today, and the next class I say, "What do you think about doing this for your parents?" and I would listen. "We've worked on this for a month and we drop it. Now we're going to put on the concert for Christmas. What do you think about bringing it back and maybe adding some props to it?" My students always felt they had chosen. And the other deal was if it wasn't going to go well, I pulled it. "Trust me, if I don't think you've memorized it, that we've got the props, that whatever, it's not going to make you look good, it's gone." So there was this mutual respect going back and forth. And I heard from parents and from students how valuable that was. They could **see** it. And I was more just the facilitator in the concert. I never felt it was my concert. And that affected my average child. They were so appreciative that they had, they knew. Concerts are big things in my district.

I: What were the average number of concerts per school year?

P: I usually did two choir concerts and I think most of my career it was just one per grade. And some schools had a tradition that this is who did it at Christmas, the holiday time. Others didn't care, so it used to be kindergarten through third would do it at Christmas and the elder kids in the spring. As I became a very trusted music teacher they gave me more latitude, and at Christmas I would have, at the end of my career I had second and third at Christmas because the class sizes and the number of classes were increasing. So to have second and third together was enough, I could put on a forty-five minute show. And I had fifth and sixth in February because that didn't conflict with their band and orchestra for the holidays or spring athletics. So in the spring I had first and fourth, because first graders need a lot of time. And fourth grade could still sing with them and play their recorders and do obbligatos, and it was a really nice mix. So that's how I ended up my career. But I couldn't at the beginning; I wasn't intelligent enough, I hadn't developed enough musically to figure that out.

I: Did you say you worked with kindergarten too?

P: I didn't. But they would perform with their kindergarten teacher. I never taught kindergarten until I met Sheila. And when she puts me in the urban setting, she's been reminding me of that. She didn't know if I was going to be an urban teacher, but she can see how successful I am now. As she put it, "You've always been an urban teacher, you've just never been in an urban setting." Well, she didn't know that my all-white suburban setting had a very low socioeconomic school. Okay, they were all white, but they were low, they came from the apartments, uneducated parents who were struggling. So everything my husband saw in Milwaukee I was seeing at Calhoun (Elementary School).

The kinesthetic was so important. That's why I adore Orff for my low socioeconomic students, and the urban love it. I had a very wealthy school. One family went to Egypt every year, several families went to Disney World every vacation and there I am lucky if I can get to Chicago for a day. I don't know how to relate. And at Calhoun (Elementary School) I could give a pencil as a reward and it was cherished. At the other school I gave a pencil and it was they sometimes left it in the room, they just didn't take it with them. Okay. So yes, you learn. It's funny, we were just talking, Sheila and I, about this: that when I left my very wealthy school in New Berlin, and it was the bus schedule changed so I had to leave, I told the secretary, "I'm going to be a b** for six weeks, so just put up with me and then I'll turn into a nice music teacher. I apologize in advance. I didn't want to come here, it's not a voluntary transfer." She said later, "It only took you two weeks and you were a puppy dog." It just took me a while to get over that, because my mom kept saying, "Those kids need you". And when I realized how much they did need me, because the person there hated them. It was all about what they couldn't do musically. And they were low; they were *urban*. We had a high Hmong population.

My mom kept saying, "They need you (just) you watch." And one of my boys, his father committed suicide in the field, and I was one of the few teachers that would casually, when it was genuine say, "I wish your dad had been at that concert. He could have seen you shine. You really led that group when the three of you played the round on the drums. I wish we could show your dad." Because I was told repeatedly by many single parents that, "You at least bring up their dad or mom that died, they can't forget them. That's going to be their dad or mom

forever. At least you bring it up in a gentle, rewarding manner.” So that stuck with me, because I certainly didn’t know if I was doing right or wrong. But if I kept hearing that that was okay, because I had another family where the father was killed. He was the passenger and his brother drove drunk and the father of my students got killed. And every so often I would remind them of their dad, and the mom, a teacher in my district, kept saying, “Thank you. You’re the only one.” It’s as if you’re scared to talk because you don’t know. *But I get to know my students, that’s the other thing.* Which is why after fifteen years I knew so much about my students and then they took me out! And I guarded my heart after that; I couldn’t give it all because I felt so betrayed.

I: What are some challenges you have had as an elementary music teacher?

P: The really misbehaving boy. I don’t care how young; they could be misbehaving in sixth or they could be misbehaving in first. I struggled with how to manage that misbehaving boy. Once Dr. Feay-Shaw came in, I think I had a Whitewater student of hers, and mentioned before she observed that I had this boy, and she suggested, “Maybe all he needs is a spot to sit on,” and said, “Have a round or square to put your mouse pad” and it worked, it was his spot. I wasn’t creative enough. I had one first grade out of control that whole year. I didn’t know who to turn to for classroom management and I don’t know why I didn’t think of Dr. Feay-Shaw. I just felt alone. I knew I didn’t have colleagues to turn to because their style was so different. I’m not a yeller and a screamer.

The challenges near the end of my career were different from the beginning. At the beginning music, art, and library were viewed as time for the teacher to get their more important things done. So just, “Take the kids, don’t bother me. Just take the kids.” And that babysitter mentality, “I don’t care what you do, I don’t care if you show movies,” and the principal didn’t care and parents didn’t seem to care. “I don’t care if you play games all the time.” It **affected** me because I valued and felt it was difficult to become a music teacher and I always knew in my heart, “I can be, anybody can be a classroom teacher. Not everybody can audition and be a music teacher.” But here we are so low on the totem pole. At the end of my career I had the support of the parents, the students, the teachers, the administration, but I had no budget. So I had no school board support, I had no community support. I had no facilities; they built this new school without a referendum. I said, “The room is too small”, and they said, “This is all we can afford to give you.” The room was too small. That was basic. I had more control of those kids (at the end of my career), but I didn’t know how to get help.

I: You were within a district. Were there other elementary music teachers in your district?

P: Correct. There were usually four or five.

I: You said you weren’t always comfortable going to your colleagues. Do you mean to your music people or to the people in your building, the classroom teachers?

P: I felt comfortable with people in my building, but I never ever saw another (elementary music) colleague unless it was a district thing. We never socialized. I was an Orff member when I graduated, shortly after, and then I became not only a local Orff but became a national. And not one person in my district ever came with me, not ever, ever, ever. None of them ever joined the Kodaly Society. The high school joined the choraliens group, ACDA. I did later in my career, when I found out about them I joined. I would say, “Come to my school in two months. Bring a successful lesson and share it; I’ll have coffee and donuts.” And nobody came. So I don’t know what more I could have done, but for some they were competitive, I could tell. For others they just weren’t that bright, they weren’t that passionate, they weren’t that committed. “You want me to stay after school? What for? I want to go home! It’s 3:30, I go home! Saturdays?!” So, I’m very glad I married my husband, because we shared a lot of the passion, or I don’t know if we would have stayed married. We had to have that passion.

I: What solutions did you find to your challenges? It sounds like, from what you were saying, that with the classroom management you talked to Dr. Feay-Shaw and she gave you some ideas.

P: Yes. She was the only one.

I: Were you professional colleagues?

P: There was some connection there and we became good friends. So yes, there’s a collegial but there’s also a very personal (connection). Now she and I are in the same field. I constantly remind myself, “I teach the way she wants me to teach teachers”, and she saw that. She saw that I was doing so many good things that I had developed simply because if they didn’t work I didn’t continue to do them. What worked is what I did and found out I was doing practices and then I kept taking student teachers to find out what was current, what was up to date. “Oh, that’s what they’re doing now. I can use icons, no problem. Don’t like the titty tahs, but I do like the hand signs. So I kept the

hand signs and loved the Orff Schulwerk. So yes, she and I, she helped me, besides my husband, continue on my journey.

I: My research focuses specifically on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself as having a strong educator identity?

P: Yes.

I: Do you feel that your sense of teacher identity grew and strengthened the longer you taught? If so, how and in what way?

P: Yes. The longer I've been successful at teaching, because without success I don't think you would stay with it. It had to be because I was getting something out of my career, and it wasn't being a professor, it wasn't being a president. I was never a president of Orff Schulwerk. I'm not a power person. Dr. Feay-Shaw is. I'm a leader, but I'm not a power person and that is different. Jon Gilliland, Dr. Gilliland I work with, he's a power person. He's going to be the next WMEA president. See I know our adjuncts Dr. Feay-Shaw got. She has Dr. Loren, who is to me a god in music. Dr. Gilliland, who is phenomenal. Jill Anderson, my whole career I would see her in the journal writing columns, and she was over at Marcy and Sussex-Hamilton, and then she became my school principal. The only thing she hassled me about was she wanted my kids to go in that listening (project), and I kept saying, "I'm overworked! I'm not taking on more. I have a family. You don't have a family. We're not talking apples and oranges here. You did the listening – great. But you don't have two kids who are in music and athletics and a husband that... I have parents and church." So that's the only thing we don't get along on. Now she's an adjunct for Dr. Feay-Shaw, and I don't know how I got there. That's what I keep wondering, because it's me. I became stronger as I saw the success of my career as a teacher. See, not as a power career, not as to how many sessions I've put on or offices. No, that wasn't it. It was success with students. It was, "Who got the lead in the musical in my district? They were my students. I must be doing something right." As I said that was my mission statement, to have some be performers and some go and enjoy a Garth Brooks concert.

I: Please share any experiences and challenges that you see as significant to your developing your identity as a teacher.

P: If you don't have collegial support that can be difficult. Within your building and within the district. I think you need both. You value them differently. I am thrilled to hear you have a mentor. I used to have the supervisor, Dr. Riley, used to be my mentor. And then there was a power struggle in my district, and they gave the music supervising job to a Masters degree over a Doctoral person. So Dr. Riley, the woman, sued the district and won, but never really had the respect of the district because that was not their choice. She got the job over a lawsuit, and then she retired. And then the guy they always wanted, the 'old boys club' guy, got in and resented that I had admired Dr. Riley and never let me forget it. When I asked for a transfer he blatantly stopped me from getting my transfer. He couldn't wait; he just delighted in coming over to Calhoun, my urban school in the white suburban district, "You didn't get the job; nobody voted for you", which I found out wasn't true. But he couldn't wait to hurt me. Always said he was such a Christian too. So that's why I value, I think you need to have that support. And if you can't get it in your building or in your district, that's where MENC, see it's NAFME now, I think being in NAFME helped. Getting the magazines and going to the national and especially Wisconsin conventions, I made more friends that I may never see again, but people would be drawn to each other because of our passion. I remember meeting so many people there that weren't from my district, and just eating lunch with them. And then it's Orff Schulwerk, I made so many friends; I still send cards to several. So I think you really need that support. Classroom teachers, that's a toughie. It's more you need to have the support of the other specialty areas, because they relate more to you.

I firmly believed I had to give back to my community. So my choir, I tried to get them to perform in the city of Milwaukee, preferably to an audience that wasn't the same color as my students. It got very difficult at the end, but I really felt that helped me be seen as a teacher because here I'm making them grow musically but also as citizens. So we would perform at Washington Park, which was basically all African American, and we were basically an all-white choir. But I always said, "These concerts are to give back to the community." I wanted to be a teacher who didn't just do music. I tried to be ethical; I tried to tell them that I never smoked. I don't believe in smoking; I don't see any reason to smoke. If you see me at State Fair or Summerfest I'll have a beer in my hand; please, I do drink but I drink responsibly. I don't drive and drink. I always tried, when appropriate, not to lecture but just say, "This is who I am, this is what I believe." And I felt that is what helped me see myself as a teacher.

I: How do you create and deliver engaging lessons?

P: The textbook was always a resource for me, *Music K-8*, *Music Express*, and I would go in the summer to a sheet music reading by Hal Leonard that Ward Brodt would support, so you would just read a lot of sheet music. That's where I got my music so I could be legitimate. And then I would go to Orff; consistently, reliably making the commitment to go to Orff sessions, even if I didn't use their ideas, just constantly seeing how Orff was implemented was good for me. I seemed to understand how important engagement was early on in my career, that to ask a student to sit and listen, to ignore their visual, because we're so highly aural. That's not a problem for music people. We can put a lot on, play, "I'm going to sing to you; sing back to me." We struggle with providing visual support, and I learned as soon as I could how valuable that was. I just seem to have an affinity for not neglecting the special ed. You have so much energy, and I gave a lot of it to my job, and when I came home I shut that down for school and tried to give whatever energy I had left to my family. I pity people now who have eleven classes a day. I don't know who goes home with any energy anymore. Do you have eleven classes? See in the metro area they're up to eleven with duties. I was up to several days with ten and I could tell that eleven was coming. And I knew when I took this big elementary that was coming. I could have stuck around for one more year, but my husband was retiring so I retired when he did. I know the person at my building has eleven plus duties, and Dr. Loren has eleven at his. They're doing ten and eleven in MPS. I knew that my husband would support me and between the two of us we could raise our children. I don't know how single parents do it; I can't relate. He would come home spent, I would come home spent, try to recharge our batteries. But I had parents to support me; I had my husband to support me and I would support him. We had church, community, neighborhood. We tried to pull energy from all those areas so that when we came home we weren't a teacher, unless we had to go back for a concert. And it definitely was easier as you went along because you knew what works and what doesn't work. I knew my 12-bar Blues was going to fly at the end of the year and I didn't worry about it, because the end of the year is horrendous. I knew my International BINGO is a good "Day Before Christmas Break" (activity). Every kid I knew what candy they liked and they'd play it for me. Don't overdo it and it still had learning objectives. So, that's a really hard question to answer because it's so individual. But I learned early on that engagement is the key. And I don't mean sitting on your butt and listening. That to me is the opposite of engagement.

Because I'm constantly grading their lesson plans, "You read the book but you had no engagement for the whole book. You played that piece but you had no engagement. What were they supposed to (be learning)? What was (the purpose)?" Trust me, if these weren't college kids you'd have the discipline problems. And that may be why I still had discipline problems; I wasn't fully immersed in how valuable engagement was. **Lesson planning takes time.** And in New Berlin, which is where I came from, if you don't have contact with a class you're asked to go home because you're not paid. They have no time while they're in the building to do lesson planning. That's considered: you do that on your own time now. I can't relate to that, but I would come early and stay late. Nine classes was a heavy load for me most of my career, until just recently. The only reason I'm doing this gig as an adjunct is that I'm not full time, because it takes so long to do lesson planning. I saw classroom teachers who wrote out a year's worth of lesson plans and the next September opened up the book and just taught it again. I never did that. I would keep that, "Basically this worked well at this time of the year and this was a good progression and for this to be done before their concert." So I had an idea of how I had my year laid out. But I never opened my lesson plan; I always threw it away because I had to recall, and if I couldn't recall I had to rethink it and tweak it to make my lessons always strong.

I: What mindsets or attitudes do you have that help you achieve high student engagement and learning? How do you approach that all mentally?

P: Well, as I said before, I started my career at Calhoun and then I got away from it. Principals were demanding me and then when the bus schedule changed and I ended up back at Calhoun, it had gone from a high socioeconomic neighborhood to a low. The teacher before me viewed the students by what they couldn't do. I was always striving, "What's the most that this class can do?" So if all they could do is steady beat, that's all I did then all year. If they could get easy play parties that's what I would do, rather than, and I'm a pusher. I will either push a class gently as a group collectively or I will push individual students. "Why aren't you trying out for a solo? Would you really think about taking this part in the Christmas show? I know I'm pushing you, I know you didn't think about this, but would you? And I'm going to ask you in four days if you would do this." I was always very specific. So I know I was a pusher. But that was my mantra: "What can we do?" Rather than, "You should be able to, you're in fourth grade, and everyone should be able to play recorder." Well, some classes that was (chuckle). "Recorder, no maybe this year we'll get four notes. That's it and let's just rejoice. And let's revel, "We got those four notes!" Maybe the next year I could get nine notes and they could play two parts and obbligatos, and yay that's what this group could do! So I always had a happy heart. It's okay, it was accepted, for what we can do. I never let them know it's boring. I let my college kids know, "You may have to play "Hot Cross Buns"". It's going to be on my tombstone;

there will be a little button you push and you can hear a recorder player doing “Hot Cross Buns”. I said, “I’m so sick of “Hot Cross Buns” and don’t you dare put your recorder to your nose, I’m so sick of it. Or “Jingle bells, Batman smells”. I tried not to show; it’s acting, you have to be an actor. When my finger was smashed in the door, it was my responsibility to instruct. I let both teachers know that I was in extreme pain, the blood was putting pressure on my pointer finger, and I couldn’t let it go down because the blood would gush, so I kept it up. Both fifth grade teachers made me teach. It was pure acting. “Let’s just do these activities, I know it’s going to work well,” and the kids didn’t take any pity on me either. So I went to the doctor and they drill a little hole and the pressure is relieved and you’re fine. That’s another good question. You think of good questions.

I: How does your understanding of child development impact your instruction?

P: I could never have been a performer; I never wanted to perform. I admit to all my sixth graders, “You’re all going to sing better than me this year, those of you that have a good voice.” I said, “I never got a solo. I probably play piano better than anybody in this building, but I don’t have the singing.” And I was more of an accompanist on piano. I know more now about child development now than I ever knew. I got mine from UWM. Piaget is all I can remember, and I really, I don’t know if this is understandable. I don’t think child development impacted my teaching at all because I didn’t think about it consciously. Unconsciously, we would have second grade books for second graders, and it wasn’t successful so I stopped giving them. And I had more engagement, and more focus. Well, the UWM music education department doesn’t recommend the use of symbolic stage from Jerome Bruner before the third grade. I didn’t know that ever, while I taught for thirty-six years; I didn’t know that until I got to UWM. I didn’t understand abstract and concrete; I was told about it but I never used it until now I’m assessing lesson plans. “Why are you giving first and second graders abstract ideas? They don’t get it! A whole note – that’s so abstract. The word “whole” means a whole pizza. That’s what they think of.” Now it impacts my teaching. I just did things intuitively: it wasn’t working so I changed it, I modified it, or I eliminated it. But it didn’t. And maybe I would have been a better teacher if I had. Now I got my Masters in teaching. So it’s a Masters of Education and I cannot get a Doctorate on top of it, it’s one of those. So I never did a thesis, I just did extra credits. It’s from Aurora University. So I learned how to story tell. I know the value of story telling now, I can be very engaging as a storyteller and I wasn’t before I got my Masters. I learned about poetry. I learned how to be a better teacher. I was a pretty dang good accompanist, I knew my music skills, I knew how to accompany, but I didn’t really know how to teach. But I didn’t learn in my Masters about Piaget and Brunner. I learned Kagen and Kagen, but I also learned I couldn’t accept cooperative learning for assessment. That just was not my cup of tea. But I learned how to do cooperative learning from them, and I like cooperative learning. I had projects. But no, it didn’t have a high impact. But it should have, and it would have if I were teaching now.

I: How did you establish a strong music program? You already said that building relationships with the students and with your colleagues was helpful.

P: And parents.

I: Is that what made your program strong, or do you think it was other things?

P: No, I feel that was a good strength to have: to value the parent organization, to value the parents as your audience, to value having the students buy into your program. To value the administration, to let them know “I will PR for you and I don’t have any strings. I don’t PR for you and then you give me days off or a bigger budget.” I never asked for ‘no duties’. It usually was just, “You work so hard, I don’t want to give you any duties” because I made my administration look good. When they needed a health volunteer luncheon group to perform, I was at the health volunteer luncheon. I had my second graders sing one year, and I had recorders do it. I went to the local senior center with my chorus in the spring. I never went at Christmas, because there’s always an abundance at Christmas. So I always said to the senior center, “You’ll hear from me in the spring”, and they always loved that I came up with programs that were delightful for the senior audience. So yes, I tried to value all of these areas and build a strong base. When I wanted my Orff instruments I would get as much as they could give. Oh yes, I was president of the teacher group for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. I did get roped into that, but it’s not because I wanted the power. It’s because I taught well and I’m a leader, though they did it more for my leadership than they did for power. That was “Who’s gullible enough to do this thankless job?” because it was meaningless. And that was fine because I love the symphony and it’s the first year we don’t go now. But I think that’s what helped make my program so strong. It wasn’t my music colleagues. It wasn’t. No. That’s interesting.

I: Was developing a solid general music teacher identity was helpful to you establishing a strong music program?

P: Yes. Absolutely! Underscore that. That's a good point. If you're too hung up on being a performer or too hung up, if you don't understand the teacher role that you have, and you don't understand how you interpret it, you won't have a strong music (program). See I saw myself; I never walked into a classroom and, "I'm the boss." I was the classroom manager, I was the bottom line, but I could ask a second grader to help me out on a computer. Do you understand how much respect I had for that second grader to help me out to learn computer skills? Do you see how I had such high respect for all of my students? Before a concert, a kid raised their hand and said, "Since we're doing Disney, we've got this blow-up Winnie the Pooh. Do you think that would add to the ambiance of the Disney concert?" And I went, "Yeah! Do you think you can get your mom and dad (on board)? Why don't you bring me a note tomorrow that tells me when you're going to bring it in and who's going to set it up." Do you understand how they felt good enough to ask the teacher to help out and be part of the teaching experience?

I: How do you get there though? For example, in my situation, you know everybody says, "Be mean at the beginning and set your boundaries so the kids know what you expect of them. Well, I'm no good at the 'being mean' thing, so classroom management can be an area of struggle for me sometimes.

P: Me too. It's very hard for me to be mean.

I: So I do try to be respectful to everybody, but I still feel like I need to put my foot down and say, "This is how we're doing things" sometimes.

P: Absolutely! At times, that's the bottom line; we're in charge. "This must be accomplished." It's gotten harder. Society has changed. Their mom and dad have an opinion, and it may be that Trump is the greatest thing since sliced bread. And they're going to express that opinion. And I didn't have that for the majority of my career. I had students whose parents would say, "We're going to listen to Trump, but he never seems to want to give and take, compromise; he's more of a "it's my way or the highway" kind of person." So that's what I had reigning in my classroom most of my career. It's only been lately where we've had this social media and bullying has come out. Not to say we didn't have bullying or suicide. I had a lot, not a lot, but to me one is one too many. I've probably had ten student suicides in my career that I had taught them and I would go to their funeral. Yeah, that's a style of teaching that the person who took over for me in my district does not have. She does not encourage students to participate in the learning environment. Her philosophy is, "I will plan engaging lessons and you will engage in those lessons. End of it." "Well, could I suggest...?" "No, you may not suggest..." "I have all the costumes planned, I have all the backdrops planned." And I got parent phone calls, "What do we do?" And I said, "Well what do I do? You're calling me. I'm not at that school any more. You don't call me, I'm just a colleague." They were so used to me being receptive. And that's NOT somebody taking over your class, that's not what I'm advocating. I loved saying, "You can bring in your CDs when I run out of teaching, because I only have this list here and once we get through that list we can have CDs once a week." What they never knew is that list kept growing and I never put in the subcategories. But I guess they seemed to understand that was what I had to get through. They didn't want to sing, "I'm in sixth grade and I don't want to sing." "Listen, we have a problem. I can't make you sing, but I'm not the one asking you to sing. That comes from the principal, and that principal expects me to perform with you for mom and dad. So we've got to live together. Now, in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade you don't have to sing except for the concert that's expected. Other than that, if you want to sing there will be opportunities to sing. Choir is available outside of your general music. But there will not be singing commitments other than for the concert that we have to do." And my students learned early on I'm not a singing teacher. You earned your music grade by doing music activities, not singing activities.

I remember I would have to review that time and again: "I'm not a singing teacher". They'd come from singing teachers. "No, no, no. You're expected to do so much more in this room; this is a music room." But that's another good question. See I always heard that too, from some of my close friends in the classroom is where I heard that from. That's not my teaching style, and that's probably why I still had classroom management problems, or that one boy that would drive me insane in every class. I'd try to give ADHD kids, all they had to do was give me a signal and it meant they had to go get a drink of water, and that was fine. Dr. Feay-Shaw helped me out with Koosh balls: that they're allowed to come to my room and they take a Koosh ball, and they get to hold the Koosh ball, and before they left they had to put it down. We used to have more. Do you have support for your special ed. students?

I: For the severe autistic I have support.

P: We had more support for the mildly (autistic students). And you don't have that any more. The budgets don't tolerate that.

I: No. Just the nonverbal kids and the ones who might throw a chair at me. (laugh)

P: I could have five in the classroom and at least I had a full time aid in there. And they were just moderate. They couldn't play recorder, but at least we had an aid in there. And my husband noticed a difference when the aids started disappearing. Music education has evolved. Education has evolved. Society has evolved. I never wore blue jeans teaching. I wore it to the Brewer game when I left that school, but I never wore it for field days. And I wore it one other Brewer game day. Otherwise I never ever in thirty-six years in public education and at the university now for forty-one, I don't wear blue jeans. I always felt I was a professional. That's personal. I happen to respect that. Do I feel a man needs to wear a tie? No, I didn't say that. But a t-shirt and blue jeans... I'm glad my husband didn't.

I: What advice would you give to beginning or early career elementary music teachers?

P: Wow, I've never been asked that. Okay, one thing I do say to my students at school is, "Get a support system, and I'm not going to tell you who it is. It can be your parents, your siblings, your neighbor, or your church." But when I see beginning teachers not on the job because of a variety of reasons... I had water coming in my window; I called my dad. He had my house key; he came over and got the roofer to fix it. Water in the basement; he paid to have a new motor put in my washing machine. And I still have that \$600 motor, Dad, that I wish you hadn't done. I would rather have a new washing machine, Dad, but he authorized the \$600. And a supportive husband and I've got supportive kids. I had an African American student whose son has sickle cell anemia, and she said, "I have to stay home because he's sick." And I said, "You can't be a teacher and stay home; they're going to fire you today. There's no union in MPS; you're going to lose your job. Get a support system." And she dropped my class because she could see she had no support system. I just told somebody last week, "Who is your support system?" because he's falling behind in my class. And he said, well his parents are to an extent, because he's older. He's like thirty-five, and he said he's starting to determine which friends he can lean on. So he's just learning now who he can; he said, "Some of them just expect me to do it on my own," and he's finding out he's working thirty hours and higher level classes, you've got to have a support system. I firmly believe this, and I know some people in politics don't agree with me: teachers need to be well-rounded people. We need time in our buildings; paid time, to do our lesson plans, to be involved in a field trip, to see the McDonalds program come and get picked. If we're told to go home, that's not well rounded in the school community and it's not allowing me to be a mom who can support my family, or go to the synagogue and be a good Jewish person. I firmly believe we need to be well-rounded people. We can't; eleven classes, that's insane! And to think that that translates to what a classroom teacher does, that's stupidity. No. Contact time for us is engagement time. Those would probably be my two biggest to any teacher.

Name: Erin

Date: December 5, 2015

Interviewer: How long have you been a music teacher?

Participant: This is my eleventh year teaching.

I: And at your current position, how long did you say?

P: My sixth year.

I: Have you always taught at the elementary level or at other levels too?

P: In my first position I had a K4-8th grade school, so I've done middle school as well.

I: When you applied for jobs was elementary music your first choice, or did you see yourself at other levels?

P: My original degree was actually secondary ed., so I was looking a lot for the older. But once I'd already done elementary I was just kind of open to anything that was out there.

I: What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?

P: I think the reason that I picked music in college because it had been something that I'd always done, and so as a pianist and a vocalist I knew it was something I could fall back on. So my initial thought was maybe I'll make it a minor and maybe I could get some scholarship money and I'll be good. And I have no idea why I changed my mind to go into ed., but I just always knew music had to be a part of whatever I was going to be studying. So I would say a combination of just having had it in my life for as long as I could remember and I don't know, there would probably be moments when I had teachers influencing me, and you know all those things that I didn't even realize were happening at the time. Yeah, I'd say a lot of it was just I'd always done it. It was always an important part of my life.

I: What inspires or motivates you to continue teaching at the elementary level?

P: The kids. You know the cool thing about being a specialist and not a classroom teacher; we get to see them grow up for so many years. So by the time they get to fourth or fifth grade it's your sixth year teaching them, the bond that you've created is so cool! And I feel like once they leave and they get to middle school, which is the worst time of your life in my opinion, and there's so many outside influences that guide their choices, and then they get to high school and they've kind of decided what they do and don't like. I love that especially at third, fourth, and fifth grades, it's the opportunity to help them connect to music. I feel like it's my job to help them find some way to buy in and make it personal, whether it's singing, playing an instrument, just appreciating it, whatever, so that regardless of what influences them in the following middle and high school, wherever they go, that music can at least have a positive place in their heart. I feel like that's this unique opportunity that we have, because they have to come to us. And after they leave our building they don't have to do anything musical the rest of their life if they don't want to. So I feel like that's my job to share that.

I: What are some successes that you've had teaching elementary general music?

P: I feel like my biggest successes are kids that I hear are still loving music after they leave. Like I had one boy, he's in seventh grade, and I worked really hard to kind of rope him in and get him to enjoy music and not be such a jock. His mom emailed me this fall that he decided to quit sports and he was going to start doing Community Theater and singing, so I went and saw him in his first show and it was amazing! And I have the opportunity to teach the summer school drama program and I work with the high school musical production every year, so I have the chance to see kids come back that I've had and still find joy in it. And I feel like that's how you measure success, is knowing that once kids leave they still want to be a part of something musical.

I: How did you get involved with the summer school and the high school drama program?

P: I have a theater background and I'm a dancer, so I do a lot of choreography at the local high school and stuff like that. So when the high school drama director met me and realized I actually knew what I was talking about, she roped me in. And I love it. I think it's just another way kids can find success and such a different way like nothing else really. The experiences they get from that they can't get anywhere else. You know, just like in music. The things you can learn and do in music you can't get anywhere else.

I: What are some challenges you've had teaching elementary general music?

P: Ten year old boys. I think there's this stigma that some kids come into, and I think it's a learned behavior, that music is girly, not cool, whatever. So I feel like any time I have a kid like that in my room, whether they realize they're acting that way or not, they're like my project. I *have to* find a way to reach them. I remember one boy, he's in eighth or ninth grade now, and nothing worked on this child. It took me until February of his fifth grade year to finally find a way to reach him. But it was the coolest moment! So I feel like the biggest challenge is just overcoming negative attitudes towards music. And it's sad, they're too little, they shouldn't have that, but we all know them.

I: But like you said, they pick it up from parents.

P: Yeah, it's learned behavior and that's okay. I'm sure they had a reason that that's their attitude. So I feel like the challenge is undoing that when it exists.

I: My research focuses specifically on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself having a strong teacher identity?

P: (chuckles) Yeah, definitely.

I: Do you feel that your sense of teacher identity grew and strengthened the longer that you taught?

P: One hundred percent, because I figured things out. I feel like when you start (teaching) you're so afraid to just do things like you're supposed to. I found myself needing to relax because I was trying to be stricter than I needed to be and I found myself needing to go, "It's okay. Let them just experiment with the instruments. Who cares if they're not playing it right, they're not hurting anything. It's fine." So I feel like you get out and you want to do everything just exactly the right way, and as you go through you figure out some things are okay because personally that's not important to me as a teacher as much as this. I feel that you are constantly evolving as you are figuring yourself out.

I: Did you have people along the way who were guiding you in how to become better, like a mentor teacher?

P: Not really. When I started in the inner city I had a lot of guidance in the classroom management department. And I had lots of opportunities to go and observe, like I had the opportunity to go to the KIP Academy in New York City and observe, and their string program is amazing! So I had a lot of opportunities to go see other things, and if there was an area teacher I wanted to go observe they were really great about letting me do that. So I had those kinds of opportunities, but I never really had a mentor teacher to work with to just kind of bounce music questions off of. You know, as a music teacher we tend to be islands in our building, so that always makes it a little interesting. Well, and then going back and getting my Masters, I can see that makes a huge difference. You leave (a graduate) class and the next day (teaching in the classroom) you're trying something. Then you get to class the next week and you say, "I did this, and this is what happened." It's much more meaningful.

I: Were there any experiences or challenges that you see as significant to your perceived identity as a teacher, things that really guided you along the way?

P: I feel like when I changed schools. You know. It's scary. It's a big change. I didn't exactly go rural, but Sussex is borderline rural with a lot of that rural mentality. So that was a really big change, and I feel like that kind of forced me to reevaluate; I couldn't do things the same way. And so I feel like as I figured out my first year there I wasn't going to be teaching the same way, I was like, "Whatever, I'm just going to do whatever works for me then and the kids will figure it out. We'll make it work", versus feeling like I needed to subscribe to a certain way of doing it. I also feel like having had middle school kids in the beginning, you know my first group of eighth graders are out of college. And so as I run into kids that are seventeen, eighteen, or nineteen years old now, it's been really interesting to hear about their experiences with me and what they remember and what it meant and how it felt. And I never realized so many things; the little things I took for granted that were so meaningful and stuck with them. You know, the positive comments that you kind of say to kids without thinking too much about them, how deep some of those things were carried, which is really cool. So I'd say those two things really helped cement me into being who I am.

I: How do you create and deliver engaging lessons?

P: I keep really good notes of what I do, so when I pull something from a book I try to note what grade level I did it with and when I did it so that I can reference it back. I write in everything, like what worked and what didn't, cross-reference, I try to really, so that when the next year comes around and I open up and I go, "Oh, this one I didn't remember. Oh, look this went well; this is what I wanted to try." So that helps. A lot of just watching the kids and getting to know my kids and figuring out what they're in to. And every class is going to be different. I have one group of fifth graders that just loves to sing, so if I get them singing they're going to be right with me. And I've got another group with a lot of boys that singing is the most painful thing I can ask them to do, so if there's a different way I can get the same concept across without asking them to sing a lot then I know that will be a more successful lesson for them. And I feel that it's just, you know, you're constantly changing. Nothing ever looks the same. I mean I've maybe taught the same song every year to second graders for eleven years and probably never done it the same way.

I: Wow, okay. Do you use textbooks or *Music K-8* or other resources?

P: D, all of the above. So I've got three sets of textbooks in my classroom that I'll pull from sometimes, I've got a bunch of Kodaly stuff and I've got some Orff stuff. I've got a lot Feierabend stuff for my younger kids. Some days I'll do something almost straight out of a textbook and other days, if somebody came in to watch me and they say, "Where did you get that?" I'll say, "I don't know, it just kind of happened and it worked." I tell my student teacher, "Sometimes you just need to make things up, like I really want them playing an Orff part. Well, here's a song they can probably learn quickly and I can write an Orff part to it. So you just kind of make it up what you need it to be."

I: What teaching skills have you developed that help produce better student learning outcomes?

P: A lot more on the students for responsibility. So instead of always just spitting out the information I want them to know, having them find the information, having them talk with somebody about the information, teaching them to use the resources to find the information; so trying to put more responsibility on them than just on me being the source of all information. What teaching skills I've developed to make my kids learn better, right? I feel like that's the biggest thing, just kind of empowering them to be able figure it out. And there's some things that we can't, and I'm just really transparent with them, "You know what guys, today with what we're trying to do you're just going to have to listen to me. I'm just going to have to give you this information. I know that's not always the most fun way to do it but that's what we have to do." And they respond to that and they get it when you just kind of lay it out for them.

I: You said that you've used Feierabend stuff and you've taught the older kids too, so how does your understanding of child development impact your teaching?

P: Huge! I feel like if you don't understand that, how do you know if you're teaching something that they actually get? And I think something that often gets overlooked across the subjects is just the importance of exposure when you're little, so I think that understanding what's realistic and what they're capable of and understanding that they're okay if you don't teach them what a quarter note is by the time they're six; they can still be good musicians. So it's almost not just a matter of understanding their development and what's appropriate, but also giving yourself permission to do what's best for them. Giving yourself permission to say, "It's okay if you're not going to learn this right now. Right now your job is just to find your singing voice and participate and have fun."

I: Going along with that, do you write out, "This is our objective for the day that you will to learn"?

P: Not as well as I should. I go through streaks. I feel like some times I'm really good about it. I'm usually good about verbalizing it at least and I try to be good about displaying it in the room. But I'm not always good at it.

I: It's okay, we're all in process. That's an area I need to grow in is being clear on why we're doing this and then figuring out how to measure that they did it.

P: I think that's a big thing for young teachers to learn too. You don't just do it because that's what the textbook says. Why are you doing it and what's the point? That was a big conversation I had with my student teacher this week, "Okay I get you're going to have them sing and you're going to do this and this. What do you really want them to learn from that? Because then that's what you need to make sure that they're doing well and everything else doesn't really matter that much."

I: What strategies or attitudes have you found helpful to improve yourself professionally?

P: Being open to anything and really trying to establish good relationships with classroom teachers. I feel like understanding their world and what they're going through helps you understand your kids better, helps you understand your role better. I just feel it makes everything better. If we're really there for the kids then we need to really understand the kids, not just for the thirty minutes that we see them, but for who they are. I've found that really important, and I've also found that when you have these strong relationships with classroom teachers and you show a willingness to say, "Well you're teaching (the states) or whatever you're teaching, and that naturally fits in with what I'm doing", they're really willing to reciprocate. So you get an opportunity to create a really strong bond, and the kids see that and I feel like they take things more seriously in a different light then too because it's more meaningful than just, "This is what I do in music or this is what I do in gym or this is what I do in my classroom." It becomes more of an experience than just that one thing.

I: You have been at two placements now. So how did you establish a strong elementary music program? I know it takes time, that's part of it.

P: Yeah, time. I think building relationships. I think building relationships with my kids, that they trust me and they're willing to do what I ask them to has made my program (better). I will say I feel like I have a very strong program in my district and my kids come out of my elementary school in very positive place, and I think it stems back to the relationship that I build with them as people within my room. I've worked really hard to build a mutual respect for each other. My principal knows that if she needs me to do something, I'm a team player. I'm going to do what I need to. My coworkers see me that way too. When I got there they weren't very eager to come to concerts to help out. You know I felt like I was pulling teeth to get people in. It's not like that (now) at all. It is so supportive and positive. So I feel like when people see that I'm not asking above and beyond and it's a really positive place where kids are shining and the kids love it, you build that sense of community. That's what makes a program strong. The kids buy in, the other teachers buy in, the principal buys in, the parents buy in, and it all stems from when you have that relationship with the kids, they're going to work for you. This fall I had my fourth and fifth graders singing 3-part a cappella harmony in a concert. Really, they're ten and they could do it! It was amazing! And I note that. They know that they work, but they knew that they'd really accomplished something and they loved that. I think it's all about relationships.

I: Within the classroom setting do you do a lot of large-group community-building games? Or do you just build that one-on-one connection with the kids?

P: Yes. For a while I did a lot of theater games. So many theater games are really good at building those kinds of relationships and communities. I haven't done it for probably the last two years, and I don't think I need to. I've been there for a while, yep. And *I am me*. I will act in front of my kids and teach the way that I act with my friends

and my family. I am the same person no matter what setting I'm in, and I think that's part of what helps with those relationships. I get to know the kids individually. I have free time, so I'll go hang out in the special ed. room with my special ed. kids and their teachers. The fourth graders are in my hallway and they see me hanging out before school with their teachers, and I'll come pop into their classroom and chat with them. Kids will eat lunch with me sometimes. I'm around and they see me at things other than just in my music classroom and at music things.

I: Do you have any suggestions for making teaching from a cart more manageable?

P: Probably not. I've been fortunate with not having that, other than sometimes during testing season when I've gone to classrooms to offer relief almost. Like, "We're in the middle of testing – we need something." "Sure, I'll throw some things on a cart, and I'll come up and we'll do some activities." Because you build community, and you help people out, and they see that.

I: How about incorporating personalized learning into music? I'm still trying to wrap my head around personalized learning, because I just look at music as a community thing, so I know I need to adjust some things.

P: That's a big thing for my district too, and we're slowly delving into it. The angle I'm taking right now is learning environment, so "If we're learning a song today and you're going to be sitting to learn the song, do you do better sitting on my carpet or would you be learning better if you had a chair to sit on so you're sitting up? Or would you do better standing on a spot because you're more comfortable?" So I'm approaching personalized learning (this way), because I agree that there are certain aspects of music that are very community-based and then I think there's opportunities for it to be more individualized. I think it's really important that we recognize those times like, "Here's the pattern we're going to play on instruments today. I'm going to give you three minutes. Get your instrument and figure it out on your own. You don't have to only play it with me when I'm counting for you and we're all together. Take some time to try and figure it out on your own." Composing is very individualized. I'm approaching this year as an opportunity to create a better learning environment that meets my students' needs. "The reality is that sometimes you need to do a worksheet in class because I need paper proof that you understand notation right now. So you're going to go by the silent corner because you said you work better when there's no sound, and you're going to come over by my boom box because you said you like to have music in the background when you're working. And you're going to work at a desk that I put in the corner, because that's what you need. And you said you're good just hanging out on the floor." So things like that are how I'm approaching it because I think that's the most realistic thing to do in a music classroom. And I think it's what's going to have the most effect on the kids because if they're comfortable they're going to be more willing to participate, they're going to be more positive about it, and it's not going to take away from the music or the concepts. You know what I mean?

I: Yes, as long as them sitting on the floor is not going to make them goof around with their friends.

P: I have the relationship with my kids that I can say, "You say this is how you learn better, but I'm not seeing it. You can either fix it or I'm going to find a better solution for you."

I: Okay, since you have theater experience, do you have any advice for starting out teaching and directing student musicals?

P: You know all of the canned things like 'John Jacobson'? I would not base my opinions and my experience and my thoughts of what's good and what isn't on those. I hate canned things. I write my own. So my fourth and fifth graders do choir; they do two concerts a year, and I pick the music and I write a show to go with the music. And then my fifth graders have the chance to join a drama club after school and have the acting parts. I hate the canned ones; I think they're horrible. I don't think they're realistic at all. So, if I were advising someone to get theater background before trying to do it, because it's really important, I would tell them to be in a show. Because you can tell the difference when you're working with someone who's never been a performer on stage. And singing with a choir is good but it's not the same as being in a show, even just a chorus part in a show makes a huge difference. So I would say find a community theater group and do something in the summer. Do something where you're onstage and do something where you're backstage as stage crew to see that side of things, because that's totally different as well. And a really easy way to get into theater is to start doing summer theater camps, like when you're ready to dive in to teaching it, find someone that you can co-teach with a summer theater class because that's the easiest way. Then once you've been onstage you've got street credit and you've been backstage so you get it, then you just have to dive in and figure it out as you go. And not bite off too much at first, because there's always going to be more work than you think it's going to be. I've directed high school musicals, I've choreographed kindergarten through college-age, I've done vocal coaching and musical direction. I've literally done everything

you could from the production side of a show. And those are the biggest things. You're going to constantly be learning and figuring things out and doing things wrong, and that's okay. But I feel like to do the job well you have to experience it from those two sides.

I: Do you have any advice for working with special needs children?

P: Be willing to get to know them. I don't think you need to know their IEP, but at least talk to their teachers. And have a conversation with the aid, if they travel with an aid, so the aid knows what your expectation is, how much you want the aid involved, do you just want them there in case something goes wrong, or do you want them helping to participate? What do you want of them? I pick, if I know they can handle it because it's a very specialized basis, I pick my special ed. kids to do everything. I always give them turns. When four kids are going to experiment with how to play a game, one of them is one of my special ed. kids and then another one is whatever kid in that class that the special ed. kid attaches well to. They always have a regular ed. student that they have a good relationship with typically, so I always try to make sure they're together and I try to give them time to work it out. And I give them extra attention, and sometimes I ignore the rest of the class in order to talk just to them and help them with something, and sometimes management suffers, but I feel like it's worth it because they need that. Sometimes we're the only time they're with their classmates because everything else they're pulled out for because of their needs. So I really want it to be a positive experience, I want them to have fun, and I realize that they're not going to be able to do everything. So you know I'll say to the paras, "Hey, next week we're going to be doing notation, they're not going to be able to do it. So let's strategize some things they can do that are meaningful during that time without feeling frustrated because they're not like their class, or you know we can have them do it but realize you're really going to be doing it.

I: What advice would you give to beginning elementary music teachers?

P: To not be afraid to mess up, to take really good notes and reflections so they can look back and see, to not be afraid to ask for help and admit that they're struggling, and I would say to not be afraid to be themselves. I feel like when we're starting out we're told we need to dress a certain way, talk a certain way, and act a certain way. And that's okay because it's part of our journey, but that can be hard on people. That can really push your own view of yourself if you're feeling like you need to be this certain person, so I think to not be afraid to just be themselves. They'll be happier, the kids will do better for them. Everybody will accept them.

I: Is there anything else that you would like other elementary music teachers to know?

P: I would say my last answer, but I also think that the more that we as educators can learn about what other educators do (the better), not just you and I as peers, but like me and the reading specialist. Me understanding what the reading specialist does and what she teaches and what works for her, I think that makes my classroom stronger, to just understand how kids learn a lot of things. Because when Act 10 came down, and all these shifts, and Common Core, and whatever you feel about it and whatever your district makes you do, I think that the good thing that can come out of that is just we all can learn from each other. The way I teach certain concepts, they're the same concepts that a classroom teacher is teaching, but probably taught very differently. And if we're able to communicate and collaborate, our profession is going to be stronger, their instruction is going to be stronger, the kids' learning is going to be better. So I think it's important to be yourself and be true to who you are, and figure things out that work for you and what methodology you're going to use and all this kind of stuff, to keep learning and growing, and trying new things. But I also think it's really important that we get a base understanding of how other things are done and taught because that makes us way better educators. I did my Masters on literacy and kindergarten music and the ties that are there. I also have a background in general ed., so I'm at an advantage there. But there are so many aspects of reading like fluency and letters and all these different things that make so much sense. And my biggest pet peeve about our profession right now is that nobody is diving in to that as much as I think could be done. I think there's a lot more that we could be doing as musicians, as music educators to support literacy than just, "Well, they read lyrics when they sing a song in my room and they read notes." There's so much more to it than just that, and I think people are so afraid that we're going to turn into reading teachers and not music teachers that they don't even want to go there. But it does so much good! It does so much good there.

I: So we will continue learning every day, lots of things, even if they're not music related, and that will help me and us grow as teachers.

P: And really be what's best for kids. That's what we're there for.

Interviewer: How long have you been a music teacher?

Participant: I taught for thirty-six years.

I: How long were you in your last position?

P: I taught in the Wausau elementary schools for that whole time.

I: Was that all at one school or at various schools in the district?

P: We had many elementary schools and I actually taught in all of them, except one, Riverview. You know, the size of the elementary schools would not necessarily warrant having a full-time music teacher there, because most of our buildings were a little smaller in size. The only time I was in one building was my final year, when I was at Jefferson, and that was over four hundred kids so I was just at one building.

I: Have you always taught at the elementary level, or at other levels as well?

P: My very first year I was a split position: middle school and elementary. But my preference has always been elementary. So then they did a realignment with the middle school and there was an opportunity for me to switch, and then I went to elementary for thirty-five years. But my first year it was split: middle school I taught in the morning and in the afternoon I was at the elementary. I like the young kids. They're always so eager, and they like to try new things. When they get to the middle school they kind of have that mindset: they only like this (certain) music and they're not as willing to explore. I like the younger kids.

I: When you were applying for jobs, was elementary your first choice, or did you see yourself at different levels?

P: Yes, my certification is music, K-12. But my preference always was elementary; it's just that there was an opening. See, I went to Lawrence (University) in Appleton and I had a double major, music education and organ performance. And it really was a five-year program, but I finished in December instead of completing a fifth year. So when I finished in December I wanted to stay in Wisconsin, and I was looking for if there was a position open, because sometimes there are if someone, for whatever reason, has to leave mid-year. But at that time there were no openings. My home was Wausau; I was born here, so this was my home. I thought I would come back to Wausau and I would do some subbing just to get a little more experience in addition to my student teaching. And then there would be lots of jobs that would be open in September. Well, what happened was, in late January, and I had just sent out my application and resume to D.C. Everest because I just wanted to have some practice with some interviews, so they already had my materials. The end of January I got a telephone call from Wausau (Public Schools), and they said, "Could you please come in for an interview? We are going to have an opening." And I was so surprised, I said, "Absolutely!" So to make a long story short, I went in and there was an elementary teacher who actually had elementary and middle school. She was an older individual and she didn't go to college right after high school until she was older. She'd always wanted to be a music teacher, so after her kids were a little more established she went to (UW) Stevens Point and got her degree. Well for whatever reason, and I don't know the specifics, she had a huge problem with the discipline. And the principal and the people were working with her, and finally in January they realized that this could not continue. They had to make a change. So they allowed her to keep the elementary, but they realized, "She has to come out of the middle school like now." So I was interviewed and they called me back later that afternoon and said, "We would like you to start tomorrow in the middle school." So I just kind of jumped in. I was hired as a long-term sub because they didn't actually stop her job immediately. They kind of let her finish at the elementary, and so I just kind of jumped in at the middle school. And of course at the end of the year she was not given a new contract. And then, at that time because of the process of a long-term sub, they took my application once again and said, "We need to go through this," because of the steps that they needed to follow. Well I had my foot in the door because they kind of knew me. I kind of turned the program around at the middle school, so then I in turn was offered the job for the following year. And that is how I, all of a sudden, started. And I stayed with Wausau then for my teaching career, for the thirty-six years. But my intent always was, my preference was always for the elementary. As I said earlier, I just love that age and I wanted to work with that group of kids. When I was applying if they had asked, my preference would have been that I would choose the elementary.

I: What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?

P: When I was in middle school I had two really awesome music teachers. I mean they were really, really great people and did an amazing job with their music program! And I knew in middle school that my dream would be to

be a music teacher. I didn't quite at that time know what level, but I just knew that was my dream. I had started taking piano lessons when I was in first grade, and I took piano lessons straight through high school, so I took it for many years. But when I was a freshman, I loved the sound of the pipe organ: the variety, the amazing sounds, and of course I heard it every Sunday in church. So I said to my parents that I was interested in the organ, and they tried to find an organ teacher, which was not easy to find. But lo and behold, the organist at First Methodist agreed to take me as a student. So when I was a junior I started taking organ lessons in addition to my piano. And she said to me, "You can't continue with me. You need somebody who is a little bit more of an organ teacher than what I am capable of." She knew that John Thomas from Stevens Point was going to be coming to Wausau to give organ lessons, and she said, "I'm going to check with him to see if he has room." And to make a long story short, I started taking with him. So I knew in high school that I was going to do a double major of organ performance and music education, because I wanted to pursue both of those. Not that I wanted to be a recitalist with organ and travel and give concerts. That was never my vision for myself, I mean even though that's an awesome thing, I'm not criticizing anybody. But that was not mine. Mine was I wanted to work in the church setting, and maybe on occasion give recitals and so forth. But my dream was to do music teaching and then to work in the church with the organ and be involved in that music. That was what always was in the back of my mind. So then when I got the teaching job I was always, in addition, doing organ and sometimes I did organ and choir both in a church setting. So I was able to fulfill my dream. Some people kind of wonder, "What should I do?" and they're not quite certain. I did not have that. I knew that was my preference, that's what I wanted to do, it was kind of in the back of my head, and thankfully I was able to do that. I mean I was very blessed!

I: When you were teaching music, what inspired or motivated you to continue teaching for so many years?

P: I loved working with kids and sharing my love of music. With elementary it is so varied. You know, you do movement, and you do such a variety of instruments, and you study different kinds of music. I mean, they get to explore it in so many ways; there is just a constant joy to share that. Obviously there are always concerns with discipline and different situations that come up. I'm not saying that it was just this "la la land". That's not the reality. However, music was so dear to me, it was just such an important part of my life always, that I just wanted to share that with kids. I was able to have fulfillment as a teacher and yet have my love of music, so I was able to continue and did not feel at any point that I had chosen the wrong profession or this wasn't right for me or I wasn't right for the kids. I didn't have those doubts. I mean I loved doing the work. You have such choice when you have your curriculum and the concepts are listed. It may be a bit different now, since I've been out for a short time, but I would choose music that I'd think would be beneficial to the kids, but yet I could keep such a balance. If we wanted to do a calypso, or if we wanted to do a rap, or if we wanted to do whatever, or put together a musical, I had such freedom to share and to develop those plans for the kids. Whereas if you're a math teacher and you're teaching addition, there's a variety of ways to do that but it's not the scope that you have with music. You can explore ABA form, and that can be in a thousand different ways. There weren't the restrictions that some teachers had, so because of that it was constantly new and refreshing.

I: What are some successes that you had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: Seeing the "a-ha moments" on kids' faces was just beyond compare. You can just see it on their face when it all clicks, and they give you this look like, "This is awesome!" I would have to say that was number one. Then the second thing was working together and putting on a concert. Yes, it is a great challenge, but when you do those final rehearsals and you have the kids on the stage and they're giving their concert, and they always took such pride in what they had practiced, their success. I mean they didn't do it for me; I was just like the catalyst, I kind of set them off, but they were able to share with their parents and their grandparents and whoever was able to come. They were able to share with them concrete learning. And that was another thing. I was able to have two concerts, in December we had a winter concert and then in the spring we had a spring concert. And it was phenomenal when the parents would come up to me and would say, "Wow, it was amazing when I look back on the December concert what the kids did, and now I see the spring concert." I heard that over and over because they were able to see in a concrete way what was the growth and development of their child. And of course music carries over into all subject matters, through their reading and through their math. I mean the integration, people don't realize, and they're so easy to think, "Well music or art, you know the parents can pay and they can go take private lessons or whatever." Yes, that is always an option if someone would be interested in that route. But the music education is the heart and soul of their education! So the concerts were also just amazing for them to be able to share what they had learned. And of course there was always such variety for me; it was never the same. I was able to pick such variety that I was able to grow as a musician. It wasn't like, "Here we go again." And I'm not saying there weren't challenges

always, with putting together the concerts and working with children and all the unpredictable things that happen and occur. But their “a-ha moments” and their effort in the concert, I will cherish those memories as long as I live!

I: What are some challenges that you faced as an elementary music teacher?

P: Sure. The change in discipline. You know the breakdown of the family and families that are in very, very difficult situations, and they come to school. When I think back, at the beginning of my teaching career there were more stable families. The kids came to school and they were more prepared. I’ll never forget one year, in one of my kindergarten classes, and we were in SAGE at that point, which is a smaller class to begin with, I had six kids in one kindergarten class that either had one or both parents who were in jail. Because of that, the ramifications of dealing with these students who were in such difficult struggles were big. How can we help them, to prepare them, when they had such baggage? You know, they’re five years old. You wonder how on earth can they survive, let alone come to school ready to learn and to do everything that they can? So (it was challenging) to work with these children that came from such disadvantaged situations, through no fault of their own, and just such struggles while their parents are working to figure all of this out. Then the second challenge of course is the growth of the autism in the student body and those kids that had such special needs, because suddenly your group was not so homogenous. There always would be students that would be, kind of like the class clowns, seeking attention and wanting you to spend time with them, who would do whatever they had to do to make that happen, be it good or poor choices. But (then adding to) the makeup of the students, with so many children dealing with the spectrum of autism, whether it was severe or whether it was to a lesser degree, all of the issues within society, well those were just huge ones we knew to deal with in the classroom. And the schools are not fully equipped to deal with all of these emotional problems. They do the best they can, but the funding is simply not there to have in every building a psychologist, a full-time guidance counselor, to provide the help and the support of these children, and then within the context of the family to provide help and assistance. I mean they are trying. This is not a criticism. They are trying their very, very best to make all of this work under extremely dire circumstances. And people are so quick to judge. I am like, “You know, come into the school and spend a week with us, or spend a week with a teacher and find out what really is involved. Because the challenges are just off the chart! I mean they are just unbelievably difficult with what people are having to deal with in the classroom setting.” So those challenges were a daily struggle: trying to figure out things or come up with a different way or, “How do you incorporate the student who loves instruments but cannot physically play them?” It’s constantly the variety within your classroom that when I first started teaching that was not the case at all.

I: What solutions did you find to solve or meet these challenges like working with kids from poverty or working with special needs kids in the music room?

P: I think you always have to remember the school is a community. I would try to go to the guidance counselor who might be working with this child in a small group for whatever, and they weren’t always necessarily always able to share all of that with me. And I wasn’t asking them to do that if something was confidential, but just to talk with me. If something was working with them, what was that and then would there be a way I could kind of adapt that? Or talk with the special ed. teacher. I sometimes think with the pressure that teachers are under today they think that they have to do it all by themselves, because there’s criticism and the teacher is always popping in and saying, “You didn’t do this right.” But do they ever stop to talk with you about some suggestions that they might have from their expertise, whether they’re a principal or someone else, instead of just criticizing and just dropping the ball in somebody else’s lap? And they have huge pressures too; I’m not trying to dump on them. It’s just really a complicated situation. But I think people should remember to communicate and talk with each other, and sometimes you just need to vent about something that happened. And talk with someone like the guidance counselor, or the special ed. teacher, or the classroom teacher, because there is this whole group of people. And sometimes we’re so close to a situation that (a solution) might not be obvious to us since we’re dealing with all kinds of things within the context of that lesson. But yet somebody else might say, “Oh” and suddenly it just might click in a little bit different way. So I tried to just keep the lines of communication open, because then they might come in and say, “This child, when I come in here I see something different in music (class).” And you know, some of the autistic kids love music, but it is not necessarily what they can express or it might not be in a traditional way. But then somebody else might come in and say, “I never would have guessed they could have done that in music.” Sometimes then, that can be handled from the special ed. teacher’s point of view or the classroom teacher, just constantly communicating. Or even on a broader spectrum, if there’s going to be in-service, what I absolutely hated was to sit there and know that I couldn’t apply it to music whatsoever, and yet for three hours I had to sit there and listen to this. So then I would always write on a sheet to give to my principal, “Yes, I tried as best I could to listen for something I could incorporate in music.” But sometimes I would just be honest with them and say, “This was just not something I

could (use).” And I said, “I’m not criticizing the person who came. They had a great deal of expertise in what they were sharing. But yet sometimes there needs to be in-service that is for music teachers, and sometimes in a very polite way they need to be reminded of this, that we don’t need to just sit there for three hours and listen to something that has nothing to do with us. In fact, they should be bringing in a music therapist or somebody, whatever the specific learning that might be helpful to those teachers might be, somebody that could come in and present with some other ideas. Like, “What about this?” or “With my music therapy, da da da.” Because music therapy, that’s kind of what’s happening with all of these special needs situations. And who is handling that for their job? A music therapist, whatever setting they’re in. If they’re in a group home for high school kids, if they’re in a nursing home helping older people, they are working with people with special needs. We have to remember the community and the talents of those around us, to which we can then share our perspective too.

I: My research focuses on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself as having a strong educator identity?

P: Yes, because you’re constantly learning on the job. It’s not like someone who comes into a job and they do the same thing, the same way, every day of their work job. That’s not a criticism. There are some positions that that is what their job is, and that’s what they’re paid to do, and they do a great job. But when you’re teaching, every day is a brand new experience. And even something maybe you did three years ago, and you think, “What was that song? Oh yeah, I’m going to try that”, it’s never going to be the exact same, because you’re not working with the same kids, in the same (situation). It is always fresh. So in order for you to be a successful music teacher you are growing every single day, even though those steps might be small and you’re so busy doing everything, and preparing for the next day, that you might not be aware of what has happened. But yes, at some point it will click for you too, because it did for me and I’m not different from anybody else. And you will say, “Oh yeah,” because all of a sudden you will realize it; or in something that maybe is not your complete strength, whatever that might be, because face it, we are not all amazing people in every single facet (of our teaching). You know, there’s going to be something that is not quite (how you want it to be), but yet as you keep working through it (it gets better). So if you see a student like with recorder that’s having trouble and you realize, “What is going on here? What is this problem?” and you try to, not to make them feel embarrassed, but maybe after class you say, “Could I just talk with you for a minute? Oh, I noticed that you’re having a little trouble with this. Is there something that I could help you with?” And then you say, “Could you tell me, why do you think that might be a little hard for you?” And based on what they say, you might learn a whole new way that you always want to teach that. Maybe there’s a better way. So you’re constantly evolving. You don’t ever stagnate because you can’t, because all of a sudden it’s a whole new situation. Or all of a sudden there’s a fire drill in the middle of the class and now you only have three minutes and you have to do things a little bit differently than what you had planned to do, but maybe in the end it was a perfect way to end it. Maybe what you had planned was not necessarily the best. You constantly are (learning and growing) in a way you reach your goals, but it’s never the way that you envision it. And at times you far surpass what you thought the goal was to begin with.

I: How do you build and strengthen your teacher identity and confidence over time?

P: You know what I would suggest you do? Take a notebook, and every day write three things in that notebook that went *amazing*. Maybe it was that the class really followed directions well. Maybe you did a song and it all clicked, and they did that song the very best that they could do. Maybe it was an instrument part and they were working with drums and whatever, or maybe somebody came up with an idea. Whatever it is. It could be anything; it could be small, it could be a bigger something, it could be a concert. But every day write down three things, and keep that notebook. Then when you suddenly feel, “Oh my gosh, how am I going to come back tomorrow and do this?” then just shut your music room door, just open up that notebook and review those things, because there are always going to be times when we are never the best person in that situation. We are never going to be perfect, but yet you are perfect for your kids because you’re the one that knows them. So by just taking those few minutes to change your attitude, it will make a difference beyond what you could even believe, because suddenly you’ve flipped that around and suddenly you will not look at it like, “Oh my gosh!” It will start clicking, “You know, I could try this. Or maybe during the summer time I need to take a class on drumming. I’m not quite as secure in that as I would like to be. Or maybe I would need to take a class on recorder ensembles.” I’m just picking stuff out of the air, I have no idea what that could be because everyone is different. But maybe then you need to set that aside, “Okay, yes I could improve on that; I will go ahead and do that.” Or maybe there’s a workshop for a weekend you could go to, and just kind of do that. Just keep that in your mind and flip that around. Because teaching today, if people would come in and follow you around for one week they’d be just blown away. Everything now a teacher needs to do is humongous, on so many levels, in so many ways, in so many shapes and forms. So you know you just need to make

yourself remember all those great, great things so you don't totally burn yourself out. And then if it does get to that point, then you realize, "I think I need to start thinking about (changing careers or retiring)", then you have given everything and you have done everything. Because the journey today is beyond difficult, and people really are not aware of it. We just need to make sure that (we check) our attitude also, that we remember all the great things we do, because it's a very difficult journey.

I: How do you create and deliver engaging lessons?

P: Well, I try to use all of their senses and their learning styles. Not all kids are comfortable being in front and doing something. So if we're doing a dance, I never said, "Everybody has to do this dance" because I knew that for some kids they couldn't and that would be their worst nightmare and they're going to shut down and then something is going to happen. They're going to blow up or something. So you kind of get it from knowing your kids. Or even sometimes at the beginning of the year I would have the kids fill out a one-page intro. for me and I would say, "What's your favorite music? Why do you like it? In music (class), what is really a fun, fun thing for you to do and what is not enjoyable?" But in a non-threatening way, because I wasn't trying to put them on the spot, or if they left it blank that was fine too, because it was just for my knowledge. So then if I knew they could not dance, I never made them dance. Then I would say, "Here is this neat instrument part to play with it." And I would have a group of kids doing the instrument parts and another group who loved to dance doing that. See, everyone was learning and doing their part. So I tried, as best I would, to accommodate these different learning styles, because we all have different strengths of how we like to learn and I tried to always encourage them. "Why didn't they want to dance?" Maybe if they saw the dance then they could say to themselves, "You know, I think I could do that." And then I would say to the people playing instruments, "Maybe you would like to join us and we could switch parts." And a couple kids would, which was great because I wanted them to experience it. Not necessarily that they were going to do it in a concert, because for a concert I always asked. I never said, "You're going to do this part," because I knew for some kids that was not in their comfort zone, and I didn't want them to not show up at the concert because they felt, "I can't do that." So I would always ask, "Who would like to do instruments?" or whatever it might be. So to keep it engaging I always tried to have their comfort zone in mind. I always tried to keep things moving. For thirty minutes we didn't do one activity. We would start with our welcome and our warm up and do some activities. We might do a rhythm activity, we might do singing, and we might do instruments. I tried, depending on what we were working on for the music concept that day; I tried to keep a variety of things. And of course it was based on their age. A fifteen-minute activity for fifth grade is completely different than doing a fifteen-minute activity for kindergarten, when their attention span is so much shorter. So looking at their age, trying to include a variety of things, I mean we're doing the parachutes, or we're doing yarn balls, or whatever. Trying to come up with a variety and you build that as you continue teaching. As a first year teacher it's overwhelming because you don't have all of these things and still you're trying to do these things, but it's overwhelming to have ten classes in a day because you're trying to prepare all these things and then come up with new things. But as you get into it a little more you kind of see what works with what things. I would get a lot of ideas too just by looking through some of the catalogs and some of the music books. You can get parachute activities or beanbags, and then you don't necessarily have to spend a huge amount if you can get a CD that was with some beanbag activities or whatever it is. So I tried to keep it so the kids didn't come in and say (to themselves), "Here we go again". But there are times when you're preparing for a concert, "It is yes going to be, 'Here we go again.'" When we're working on a concert, we need to master something to present it for the public. We can't just kind of throw it together, and we do need to go through things again." And the kids begin to understand that, because they want to take pride in what they're doing too. So I think the variety and just trying to keep up with things that are in some of the workshops and some of those things. I think that's always valuable to catch their interest. That's kind of what I did.

I: What teaching skills did you develop that helped you to produce those better student-learning outcomes?

P: One of the things that I think helped was often times I would go to other elementary music concerts and just get some ideas. I would talk with other music teachers. And one thing was, when I began teaching in the Wausau School District, we had an elementary music office, and in the morning we came there because a lot of our music materials were stored there and we shared. At that time we had like six music teachers, so we shared materials that we would then take to our buildings. And then we'd just kind of brainstorm with others. Like if the teacher came to me and said, "I would like an Abraham Lincoln program for my second grade class, and we are going to be doing this, this, and this activities. Could you please put together a couple of songs for the kids?" Well a lot of times things would just kind of pop into your head and you'd think, "Oh yeah." The Music K-8 magazine was invaluable to me, the wealth of ideas in there for kindergarten through grade five, I used that as a great resource throughout my teaching career. Talking with my colleagues, all of that helped me to come up with ideas, or something would just

pop in my head. I would be in the store and I would see (something I could use). One time I went into Walmart and they had this beautiful garland that was gold and silver, and we were working on “Deck the Halls with Boughs of Holly” for the concert, and all of a sudden it popped in my head, “Why couldn’t I put together a dance with “Deck the Halls” and use this garland that the kids would hold?” So I had the kids make a square, like a square dance, and I cut a section of the garland, and each pair had one. So one would walk into the middle, hold the garland up and come back. The other would then come into the middle and go back. I put together this basic dance. It just popped into my head, looking at the garland in Walmart, I don’t know for what reason. Sometimes you just need to think about different things or walk through some place. Ideas sometimes, amazingly, come to you when you’re not expecting it. Like when they’re throwing yarn balls to the beat, which is kind of silly, but the kids had a blast. Why was it so fun? I’m not sure. And then again you can try something and it didn’t work, so then it’s like, “Well, chuck this, I’m not going to that again.” It was a great teaching example for the kids, because then I can say, “Let’s stop and take a look at this for a minute. Is every single thing we try for the first time going to work? The first time that you try gymnastics, are you going to the Olympics?” And they would look at you like, “Well, no.” A great teachable moment. So even though something might not work, you can just take a few minutes, it’s not like you’re going to spend a whole lesson on it, just take a minute and say, “You know, that’s how we learn and grow. Some things are going to work and some things are not.”

I: Can you identify when in your career that you stopped focusing on yourself and started focusing more on the students’ needs?

P: I would say that probably happened about five years into my job. I think it does take about five years to get the flow of everything that you’re doing. And some people might pick it up in three, some people might pick it up in eight, and that’s no criticism of them. We all have different learning curves and that doesn’t mean they weren’t a qualified teacher when they came in. It’s a lot to master. And then I just kind of started realizing, “This is never about me. I am the catalyst; I am the one that just needs to get (the students) to do the learning, to do the sharing, to do the instructing. I had to step out of the picture. I need to be focused not on me, but on them.” And you know that is unnerving when you’re being observed because at one point when I was being observed they did this Madeline Hunter, where the principal had to write and script everything you said. Now normally I was not self-conscious of what I was saying because it’s natural. You’re talking, yet you had the outline in your head, you had your plan book in front of you; you know the outline you’re going to follow. Because you have ten classes in a day, you know what you’re going to do, so you have that in your mind. Or to refresh if you forget you can just look at your plan, at your outline, what are the steps. For some reason when I was being observed and they were scripting everything, I suddenly became so self-conscious of how (I sounded), and finally I had to say to myself, “Forget that they’re writing anything down. That’s totally unimportant. They are just trying to get a picture of the steps you are doing.” And I had to just block that out of my mind; that was a conscious effort on my part. So I stopped doing that and just realized, “I need to do what I’m doing and show them what the kids are learning,” and they came back to me with great compliments. I think we just have to (do the job), and you reach a certain point and you realize (that). And second of all, by that point you know goofy things are going to happen and you just know, “Hey, that’s fine. We’re going to just move through it,” because no matter what you do, goofy things are going to happen in life. That is part of living; it’s going to happen. So I just realized that I have to put that aside. Then by that point I was more concentrating on the kids, what we were doing. “Did I really pick the best song I could for this concept? Was this really successful? Or is there another one that I could have (taught/used)? And you begin to look at the bigger picture, and then you’re always going to have these little things that come up and you’re going to say, “Oh my goodness!” And then you just have to realize and go back to your notebook and read all these great things, because that just changes your attitude, and suddenly, you know. This is life. We are not perfect people; we will never be perfect people. There’s going to be things that happen, and that’s how we learn and grow and move on from there.

I: That makes sense. So attitude and mindset really play a big part in a teacher being both satisfied and being successful.

P: It does. Absolutely! You know, during teacher appreciation week, I got a letter in the mail from a student who I had in music. She said all these great things about me, and at the end she wrote, “P.S. I will never forget that every time I came into music with you, you were so happy to see me and be a part of that class.” And she said, “I know that there were days that was not exactly how you were feeling.” I was blown away. You know for her to remember that from elementary school that I said, “Hi, welcome everybody. Let’s get started!” That blew me away because I thought, “They knew that I cared about them and I cared about music and wanted to share that with them. You know, we have to stop and remember we are all making an important difference. They won’t all tell you that. I mean, how many letters did I get like that? One. And then a friend of mine said to me when I was retiring, “Do you

know that (over your career) you taught over 16,000 students? I multiplied it out. As a music teacher you saw over four hundred kids a year. If you multiply that out over 36 years, you actually taught over 16,000 students. It just kind of took me back. You don't realize the profound importance you play in these kids' lives. We get so bogged down in everything, and the kids very often will smile at you but they won't share that with you. But they're thinking it in their heart and soul. So your attitude (with the kids makes a difference). I'm sure I wasn't every day like she said, when I'm battling a cold. But that's what she remembered. I was just like, "Wow." And that's what everybody has. I'm not different from anybody else; that's what everybody has.

I: What strategies and attitudes have you found to make instructional preparation and delivery more effective?

P: What I've learned through the years: I try to keep my directions short and concise. So if it's something brand new, take a piece of paper and just identify, "What are the three directions they must have in order to at least try this?" because as you try it you may see something that you need to tweak. But just think of three basic directions to do something new, and then make that very concise: three or four words for that direction. Then just kind of pause and let them think about that. Then give the second part of that direction, and once again be very concise. Be brief, and then jump in and try it, stop talking and jump in and try it, whether you have just two kids model it, or if it's something you want everyone to do with a partner then just have them jump in and try it. And have them try just a small portion and then kind of see, "Now do I need to tweak anything?" But then I always tried to compliment the kids when they did something new that was something we had not quite done before. Like maybe they were supposed to do a pattern where they were clapping with their partner. And I would always try to point out, "You did great! Did you notice you were right on the beat? Your hands were right together. That was amazing! Let's try that again but put the music with it." But try that, and after you've complimented them, then it's always good to go into something that maybe didn't quite go together. Like maybe they needed a little more direction than what you gave them; maybe it was your fault. Or maybe they just weren't paying attention enough. It's always easier to correct something after you've been given a compliment. If you just come down and really get on their case, and maybe they need you to get on their case, I'm not saying they don't. But if you first tell them something they did really great, and then you can say, "But here's something we need to work on. We didn't quite get this in the right way it should go." And then maybe I needed to demonstrate that. Or maybe there was a group, there were two kids that had it; they just did it. And I would say, "Let's look at John and Tim. Just take a look at what they're doing." And then of course John and Tim are just over the top of the moon, because you said they did an amazing job, so they're going to do it perfectly for the class because they're kind of 'on stage' now. And then, if someone is having trouble then I split up Tim and John, and I would say, "Tim could you please go with Henry? John, could you go with Sarah?" And then, put somebody who's really got it to work with somebody who is still kind of struggling. And then try to figure out, "Was it just a few kids who didn't get it? Then it might be their problem. If it's like the whole group then it's my problem, because it meant something I told them wasn't quite enough or I didn't explain it right. So just try to first to make your directions brief and concise. As you're looking at that, write it down the first time, so then you kind of say, "I don't need to say this. This is not essential to their learning." And then by breaking it down like that, then you can take it from there. Or maybe just work on the first part. If it's something really big, and this just came to me one day, "I don't need to do the whole thing at once." And that sounds silly, but it's actually quite profound. Like when we're doing a new piece, you're not going to do a large Vivaldi work and do sixty pages at once. You're going to break it down. You need to remember that with the kids too. Maybe I only want to work on Part A today, and let them really kind of master that so now they aren't confused by Part B because they haven't mastered Part A yet. So maybe they work on just one small part today and then you move on to something else that they are also working and learning. Maybe it's a recorder piece they're playing, but now you move to recorder and we're working on this part where the rhythm wasn't quite right last time, so kind of do some of those things, because if it's brand new you don't want to totally overwhelm them so they don't want to try. So if we make it in small bites, I think that will help them in their learning and their growth. For me, if I'm going to try a brand new recipe and I realize, "Wow, this is quite a complicated recipe. Maybe I need to just kind of work on this first part and look at this and master this, "Did I get this right?" before I put together this whole complex thing. Because I'm not on the Food Network; I don't have their experience. So it's the same no matter what our age is.

I: How did you establish a strong elementary music program? And along with that, was developing a solid general music teacher identity helpful to this process?

P: In trying to put together a solid music program, I number one wanted to have solid materials that I used. I just didn't pick something that was kind of trivial and goofy. I'm not saying that I never did some of those fun, silly songs with the kids; I'm not saying that. For a fun thing or having a little sing-along I put those in, but that was not

the core of my curriculum. I tried to make it as solid based as I could, from my learning. Then I got my Masters, and from reading, from professional journals, from talking with teachers, all of those things I tried to incorporate just a solid basis for the music I chose and the variety of what the kids did, whether it was Orff or some kind of movement thing or whatever. I tried to incorporate a variety of things, tried to keep it an element of fun, because even though it's fun, it's not fun that has nothing to do with learning. You know, when they were doing a parachute activity, their faces were beaming. That was fun for them to be able to do with that parachute, but yet they weren't just flipping the parachute to make it go up and down. There was music, there was a lesson, there was an activity, whatever we happened to be doing with that that made that an enjoyable thing. So I tried to always include things that would be fun and exciting for them to do. I always tried to make it age-appropriate, so it wasn't like they were in way over their heads or they were in fifth grade and trying to do things first graders would normally be doing. I tried to put it at their learning level so they'd not be too bored if it was too easy or drop out because it was too advanced. So I tried to do those things to make it just a well-rounded experience for them. I think basically that is it. And then as far as me, then it was working with my colleagues that I developed a solid music program that the parents are proud of, the kids are proud of, the school board is proud of, the community is proud of, because it's something that has succeeded and has provided learning and enjoyment for everybody. It's something to be proud of. It was a success, and people can take pride in that and know that "My money is being well-spent for this child's education." You know, we're trying to develop the whole individual and it takes a village to do that. Even though it's a quote that's been (overdone), it's true. It makes us a better place, it makes a better city, and it makes a better world. We do make a difference. Everybody makes a difference; it's not just one person.

I: Do you have any advice specifically for beginning elementary music teachers or for elementary music teachers in general?

P: Well, I would say, in the school district you're in if there is more than one music teacher, get together like once a month. Most people don't have that opportunity like I had, that music office, because we had that support and that sound system. That is an essential to your success and to your development. You really need to have that foundation that you meet and you have (collaboration), it could just be over a cup of coffee or a formal meeting that lasts for forty-five minutes. However you want to set it up and however it works for you, I would just have that support group that works to everybody's advantage. Then just continue to learn, like the weekend workshops, however you see that and depending on your situation, if you're single, if you have a family, however you work that out so it works for you. Because now you can do a lot of things through your computer, and you might want to just listen to it and do it that way, that you maybe could not go to a weekend conference. But just continue to learn new and different things. Attend a lot of concerts. Go to other elementary concerts and you might say, "That's not how I would do it" and that's fine. What you're doing works for you and your kids, and maybe what that person did works for them and their kids. But you constantly pick up new things and different ideas, so you're constantly availing yourself of all different things. Don't be afraid to talk with others in your building, like we mentioned earlier, maybe the guidance counselor. You're not going in there because you're ignorant. You're going in there because, "I've tried such and such and this has not really been successful. Do you have another idea?" or "I've tried this and it kind of works. How could I do that a little bit differently from your perspective that it might be better?" So avail yourself of other people and communicate. If you're doing something great and it's really coming together, invite your principal, don't wait for them to come in. Say, "The kids have made great progress with this! Is there a time when I have this class that you could pop in for about five minutes? I'd like to show you something." So you are constantly building up a rapport with them as well, so that they know why music education is important in their building. Plus if you're talking and something is going to happen, and you think, "Oh, on that topic maybe we could have an all-school sing-along and I could teach the kids these songs and the parents would know these, and we could just take ten minutes and we could do this. It makes a world of difference in this day and age when music programs are suddenly gone. If they see what is going on, or during music in our schools month, I tried to do a variety of things. Like a special concert, and maybe it was a concert that parents and kids came together and it was in the gym and we listened. Maybe it was a hands-on thing where we would do activities together, like it was a school dance, or whatever. Maybe I invited parents to come in for a day to sit in on their child's music class. All of these things are number one, for the benefit of the kids, because I never wanted music to be eliminated. It wasn't to show off what I was doing, I'm sure there was someone far better than me, but it was to keep music in the curriculum, so suddenly it wasn't gone because then it would be too late. Once people are in the mindset and people know, we're going to save this amount of money, I'm so glad we did this. Now my taxes are going to go down. Once that has started, to bring that (music program) back in is like "Oh my goodness!" So put these things where people know, not because you're bragging, but because you are standing up for your program, whatever that means. Invite your principal in, or invite your curriculum coordinator to come in, or invite your music supervisor in. Whoever that

might be. Yes, these people are busy, but if you call and invite them and they know this, they're going to make time to squeeze that in. Because number one, they're flattered that you would invite them and you'd like to share something like this. So all of these things can help to make it work. And then just keep every day (positive). Your life might get very difficult, and you're going to have days when you want to pull your hair out. "This child was just a nightmare. How am I going to live through this? I can't go through this again." And you have to stop and just think, "This wasn't about me. What is that child going through? What needs to happen? Do I need to go to the principal? Do I need to go talk to the counselor?" And start figuring it out one step at a time. Just don't think, "I'm a bad teacher." You know what I mean? All of these things.

Name: Sharon

Date: January 22, 2016

Interviewer: How long have you been a music teacher?

Participant: This is my twenty-fifth year as a music teacher.

I: How long have you been at your current position?

P: This will be twenty-two and a half years.

I: Have you always taught at the elementary level or other levels as well?

P: Always elementary.

I: When you were applying for jobs, was elementary music your first choice or did you see yourself at a different level?

P: No, elementary was always my first choice.

I: What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?

P: I was always interested in music. I started taking private lessons when I was five on the accordion, because I grew up in a German-Polish family, and that's what you did. So music has always been part of my life. I was always active at church, singing in choirs and eventually becoming a choir director and accompanist. So music was always my life, and so I just continued.

I: What has inspired or motivated you to continue teaching elementary music?

P: I think it's the rewards you get when you see the finished product. When kids do really well at a concert, or at the school I'm at we do 'all-school sings' and you see the whole school participating and enjoying and being engaged in something that I helped them learn. So those are my rewards: the end product when the children are performing. When you look at where they start out from and you look at how far they're progressing, you see those little bits of progress. If it's playing an instrument maybe they're finally getting it right, or they're playing the instrument musically, or they're remembering the words, or whatever it is. They're adding some expression and they're smiling and having fun, you know that it's reaching them; things like that.

I: What are some successes you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: I had one student come back, and he graduated from college with a theater and music background, and he said, "You let me play the drum when I was in fourth or fifth grade," and now he's a drummer and he's a theater major and he plays the drums. So little things like that. That was just one success story, that I impacted somebody just by being an elementary music teacher, getting them excited and very interested in continuing in music.

I: What are some challenges you have had as an elementary music teacher?

P: Trying to reach the people who are not interested in music, they're not motivated. How do I get them engaged in something I'm so passionate about? And I've tried a couple of different things, you know maybe if they don't like singing bring in some instruments and see if they're successful at instruments. Or if they're having difficulty, ask them if they want some extra help. "Come in at recess time with a group and see if I can help you with a little something" to help make their experience more successful. There's one or two that are hard to reach; it may not be what they're interested in, so you try to get them (engaged and participating).

(Students putting in effort) teaches perseverance too. As an example, I thought my fifth graders were able to play a song for Christmas (this year) on the recorder, but we have such different level(s). We have some really high kids and then a lot of special needs kids, and even with the kids needing help, they came in but they still couldn't get it. So I switched to something a little easier; we only had like two weeks to go. They were so good at

what they did! My expectation is, “Well, we can do this because we can.” But the performance was very good. And it didn’t need to be really that hard with an extra hard note or something. And everybody was proud of what they did, even though it was a little easier song, they were still proud of what they did. Yes, like I said, you have to try to get everybody engaged. Good luck with that.

I: What are some solutions you’ve found to those challenges? You said things like with the unmotivated kids, offering extra help, or if they don’t like singing offering them an instrument part. Is there anything else you’ve found that worked?

P: Those are probably the two.

I: My research focuses specifically on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself as having a strong educator identity?

P: Oh yes. Very confident in that.

I: Do you feel that your sense of teacher identity grew and strengthened the longer that you taught? If so, how and in what way?

P: Yep, and I think it took about six or seven years until I had established routines for discipline and a curriculum. You build on, “What do kindergarten need to know to go to first grade?” We did that as a district and as a music group, and I think that helped me gain the confidence, “Yes my kids CAN do this, so they’re ready to go on to the next grade.” So I guess that helped with, I knew what to teach and how to teach it and be successful. I think I start out with the same things (concepts) every year, like we start out with a steady beat. It’s something we do in kindergarten and we’ll do that again in first grade. We’ll talk about it again in each of the other grades, but then we may demonstrate it in other ways. You know like in kindergarten it would probably be just sticks or clapping or marching, some movement. And as they get older, there might be more dance moves or something, you know a combination, for example the hand jive. Do the hand jive, which is, you have think of what pattern you do but you’re still demonstrating a steady beat. So, I think each year I try to do the same elements but then expand on them. And then if we do beat the first couple of weeks, we’ll still come back to it sometime in the year at all grade levels.

I: And the same could be true for melody and all the different elements?

P: Yes, whatever we’re studying.

I: Please share any experiences or challenges that you see as significant to your perceived identity as a teacher.

P: Sometimes, and I don’t feel it too personally, but once in a while I feel like this, that “I am prep. time.” Otherwise I’m well respected by my colleagues, but if somebody misses their prep. time they try to have me come in and make that up because I am important as that part too. It’s not just that, “Oh, my kids missed music so they need to catch up on this lesson,” it’s the teacher needs their prep time. But otherwise I feel fine, respected and appreciated for what I do. And (I like) being asked to help plan assemblies or be part of an all-school activity where I have a part to contribute that makes that program successful. Teaching the kids a song to sing for the veterans or learning something to go with whatever program they’re doing. So that helps.

I: How do you create and deliver engaging lessons?

P: Sometimes you have to know what (a textbook lesson) says and then you explain it your own way. Sometimes I bring in a video or go on the Internet and show a real life example of a situation, whatever it is. Have the kids demonstrate it and try lots of different learning styles. Let me give you an example. I guess I use this one a lot, if we’re studying tempo in fourth grade, there are some animated videos (with the textbook series) you can watch, like “The Hungarian Dance” so they can see that little meter. So they can see it, they’re listening to it, then we get up and do “The Chicken Dance”, and so they’re moving. And then we may sing a song and change the tempos. So keep them engaged by changing the activities or trying lots of different fun things for them to do to experience whatever the concept is, like for example that was tempo. I really think music should be fun for the kids. Sometimes it’s work because they have to be able to read, and for some kids that’s difficult. So I try to find songs that are just silly or something that they’ll really be in to. We have a third grade class this year that struggles with reading words, just regular reading. So to learn a song sometimes is pulling teeth because if they’re not engaged in the song, if the song’s not interesting, they’re not even going to try. So I pulled out the old third grade books, the purple ones, and we did things like “Rockin’ Robin” and right after that there’s a song called the “The Supermarket

Shuffle.” It’s a rap, so they have to read at the tempo that it’s at. And I spent a lot of time with it; we slowed it down and we read it really slow and then we read it faster. And then we looked for where in the song that particular paragraph happened. “Oh, it happened three times! I know half the song already!” And so we broke it down into little chunks, we worked on it slowly. They still ask for it. You know, trying to make it so that they can be successful at it, but it’s still a nice product when they finish it. And sometimes you have to work at it, and I break it down into little chunks.

I: Songs like the “Supermarket Shuffle” or “Rockin’ Robin,” do you plan to get all of that accomplished in two lessons, in a week? Or do you stretch it out over a number of weeks?

P: I usually, like “Rockin’ Robin” with that class we did it in four lessons, and by the fourth lesson we got up and we moved. And they had it memorized. The first lesson we learned verse one and verse three. The middle part, “a pretty little raven”, that part is really fast. So I thought, “We’ll learn that part the next time,” so we just listened to it then. The second time we learned the whole song. The third time we sang it and the fourth time they had it pretty much memorized. I had them move. For the A section we did ‘the twist’ and then for “a pretty little raven” we did ‘the hand jive’. So that is kind of a hard skill, to sing and keep a steady beat by doing things like that (actions or movements). Some of them were more successful. And then we added jazz hands at the “tweet, tweet, tweet.” And they were laughing, even the boys, some of them are real shy, but you know. So used that: we learned to sing it, we did form, we did steady beat, we talked about rests. There’s a big spot where there’s a rest so you have to wait. And we talked about rhythm and stuff too. The kids loved that song! I had somebody say, “I went home and sang that song for my parents, and they said, ‘How did you learn that song?’”

I: So then over the four lessons, for each of those forty minute lessons, do you work just on “Rockin’ Robin” or is that just part of each of those four days?

P: It’s part of it. The first day that would be part of my lesson part, and the next day we would do it as a review. “Let’s warm up our voices and we’ll start on “Rockin’ Robin”, oh but we have to work on this middle part. Let’s read through the words of this middle section slowly, and then look at all those eighth notes. They go faster.” So then it’s a review from the day before and then add in that next part. Then the next day, just sing it as a review; warm up your voices. And then the fourth time, “Well, let’s sing it and see if you’ve got it memorized and let’s add some actions to it. So you can build on that and they’re still familiar with it. In that third grade book I also did “Don Gato”; the kids love that and you can teach ballad. The next song after that is “But the Cat Came Back”. That is in the second grade book, if you get that far. It’s another ballad song; it’s about someone who’s trying to get rid of their cat and the cat keeps coming back. And we sang it in second grade so they were so happy to see it again in third grade. They were *all* singing it again. So sometimes bringing things back from last year (is good), and I do that because I know what they know. And I did that a couple of times. I’ll have to think of situations where we were studying something and, “Oh, do you remember from last year we did this?” “Yeah.” So we’d sing it that way when we learned something new. Bring in their background knowledge to help them be more successful. You have to do “But the cat came back” – the kids love it! It has a fermata, and we talked about what that means.

I: Along with that, what mindsets or attitudes do you have that help you achieve high student engagement and learning?

P: If it’s not fun for me it’s not going to be fun for them. It’s a little bit silly. So I have to think of the activity as fun or that it serves a purpose; that it’s going to be relevant to the kids. We did some songs about Martin Luther King, Jr. That wasn’t silly or fun, but I read them a book about Martin Luther King Jr. and what he was working on, and they talked briefly about it in their classroom too. But it made the songs meaningful to the kids, so getting them engaged.

I: What teaching skills have you developed that help produce better student learning outcomes?

P: I think this has to do with classroom management. You know there are days when it doesn’t always work, but if you keep everybody in line, deal with the problems as they come up and kids know what the expectations are and sometimes you have to go over the rules, “Is that being very respectful?” or whatever it is. I think getting rid of that problem of discipline helps you teach and be successful at teaching. But you have to be doing both at the same time, you have to be managing and teaching. And that comes with experience, years of experience and toleration. And some days I can put up with more than others, and in your old age not as much.

I: How does your understanding of child development impact your music instruction?

P: There are certain abilities kids don't have. Physically, you don't teach recorder to a kindergartener, their hands are too small. You know, so there are physical limitations to what things kids can do. Complex things, can a child sing and keep a steady beat? And that's something you work on in kindergarten, and you know that developmentally that's a challenge for them and even to do something other than clapping. And that goes along with building on what they can do. Being able to read notes, our language, the language of music, is different than their language, but still they need to learn to read their language too. So there's a certain age where they're more able to read rhythms and read the staff. So I think maybe that has to do with developmental things too. I teach rhythm notation in kindergarten, but reading on the staff would be not until fourth grade. I explain the staff and I explain the notes, but we haven't gotten to time signatures yet. So developmentally that would be in the third grade because that's getting you ready for playing the recorders and reading that language in fourth grade and fifth grade. So developmentally they need to see the symbol, then see it a little more in real life, in a real life situation, and then demonstrate it once they get older.

I: Can you identify when in your career that you stopped focusing on yourself and started focusing more on the students' needs?

P: That probably came after a couple of years, and I can't remember back that far, but it probably took about five or six years, where I wasn't, "Is there something I'm doing wrong?" or "How do I need to be a better teacher to do this?" and look at what the kids need to learn. So that's a hard one to answer, because I don't remember that far back, but it took several years, I would guess maybe six or seven years before.

I: What strategies and attitudes have you found helpful to improve yourself professionally as a music teacher and to make instructional preparation and delivery more effective?

P: Just always being positive. You know. I love music and I let that show in my lesson, in what we're doing. I get up and I dance; I'm involved in the whole thing too. It's not like I tell them to run three laps and just sit there and watch them. (chuckle) I move when I ask them to move, so just by my attitude and trying to always be positive. Sometimes I'll even say, "Well, this isn't going so well. Let me think about this. Let's see, what can we do differently. Let me think of a new way to explain this." And we'll go at it from a different angle. I can remember saying that. Sometimes you make assumptions; you talked about this and you assume that they remember that. So then you need to go, "Well, let's try this another way." Remember when we talked about this thing. Let's build off of that a little more." Or you have to go and do a song from before and bring it back. But admitting that, "Oh my, we're not doing so well. We better fix this somehow. Let's see what we can do." And if it doesn't work that day then maybe the next day we can find a better way to do it. Don't worry if you don't get the lesson done. There's always tomorrow.

I: How did you establish a strong elementary music program?

P: I think we developed it as a district. We were looking at standards; it was a time in the political time when we were developing the State standards. So "What do we teach in first grade and what do we expect for them to know?" So it was district-wide, and I think everybody in the world was working at standards, what our standards were for elementary music. It was very tedious, but it really helped us develop what kids need to know. Because now we have standards: "In fourth grade kids will be able to do this and this." And you probably still have that sheet that says, "In kindergarten this is what we'd like to teach in rhythm." That came out of that session or that activity. So we did it as a staff. The whole music staff developed it, but the elementary worked together and the middle school worked together and there's only one high school choir (person) so he developed his own. So I built off of that. We had developed that document. It was done during the school year. Those were our MSI (teacher in-service) days; and we had more MSI days back then. We used to have like one a month, but now we have probably one a quarter, at the end of the quarter to help for grading or whatever that day is for.

I: Was developing a solid general music teacher identity helpful to the process of building a strong music program?

P: By that you mean that I'm credible? I think absolutely, being an accomplished musician, whatever that is, being able to sing or play or being able to teach, yes my identity as a good musician has helped develop the program.

I: Do you have any suggestions for teaching from a cart?

P: You have to be organized, and sometimes you have to think of the easiest way to teach a concept. I mean instead of getting out, if you're teaching chords for example, getting out and setting up your room and having all of the autoharps sitting there, you might just take tone bells and give everybody a bell and give them an assignment. "So

we're going to play together. There are three different pitches, sometimes four, but that tone together is going to create a chord." So you find an easier, more convenient way to teach the concept. And sometimes you have to be kind of creative to do that. Teaching on a cart, you just have to be organized and have everything you need to do and always have an extra something. I have a little binder of "Oh, we have five minutes. What are we going to do?" songs. It might be the "Hop 'til you drop" John Jacobson song, or I've got a couple of rhythm stick things. "Oh, we have five minutes, let's get out the sticks and let's do a steady beat and let's practice some patterns." I always keep rhythm sticks on my cart, and there are some other things that are movement. But always have a little extra something, just in case, because a lot of times your room is far, far away. And I use the Big Books, but it's hard to do when you're traveling around (from room to room on a cart). And what happened is, when they closed so many schools you have like two of each Big Book. I took some of those apart, because we're never going to have seven elementary schools again. And then I just use one of the sheets. For example, in the kindergarten there's the "Cuckoo" song. I took that page out and I wrote the words on it, and I made one set of words be black and one be another color. So then they can see, "This is Bird One and this is Bird Two. I'll sing Bird One and you sing Bird Two."

I: I would think that way you're not hauling around the heavy big books. Do you roll them up in one sheet or a couple sheets or fold them?

P: Well, I put them on the bottom of my cart and I have more sheets. I have word sheets for everything. I think that song is in the kindergarten book but I do it in first grade. I think it might be in the first grade book, but it's in the old kindergarten book, and it shows a cuckoo bird, and you write those words on there. And that way they, my first graders, wow, are they good readers this year! And they accept the challenge. I'll read the words and they'll read them after me and then listen and sing. (With children) if it's something they're interested in, even if it is tough, they will work on it because they're interested. It's the same thing with music: find a song that they're interested in or an activity that they can relate to or be part of.

I: Do you have any suggestions for directing student musicals or concerts?

P: Again, you have to really try to know the thing you're doing. Know the music so that you feel comfortable and confident teaching it. Don't be learning it with the kids. And there might be a song that's newer and maybe you could say, "Let's learn it together," but (mostly) know your stuff. As far as planning a concert, make it a variety. Show the strengths of the kids at their level, what they can do. Have them do more than just sing, if it's movement, if it's playing an instrument, if it's doing actions to a song, whatever it is. You have to think of the audience also, so it's something the audience will enjoy. I try to find things the audience knows and then some other stuff that might not be familiar to break it up so that they're not, "Ugh, I've heard this song before," (but instead), "Oh, I recognize this!" to keep the audience interested. That helps with that.

I: For your all-school sings, that's during the day, right? Do you invite parents and families to those?

P: Sometimes they're invited, like for example the Veteran's Day program they were invited. We did the all-school sing in December for our Christmas Tea and then some parents came in and just helped with the cookies and tea and others may just pop in.

I: So besides the Christmas program, do you still consider the parents being familiar with songs when you're choosing songs for Veterans Day or the spring? Do you want familiar stuff or not necessarily?

P: Yes, I wouldn't do all stuff from *Music K-8*. You might choose one, but then do traditional things too. Try to (incorporate folk songs); kids need them and that's part of our culture, learning the traditional patriotic songs and traditional Christmas carols. So don't forget about tradition.

I: How do you meet the musical needs of your special education students?

P: Each situation is different. A kid might be in special ed. because they have trouble reading, so that slows down their ability to learn a song. So we'll do things like slow the tempo down, read the words, and slow it down. Playing recorder, sometimes I feel like I overdo it, but I'll have the kids practice by putting the recorder on their chin just to get their fingers to (build) muscle memory. Sing the notes that you're playing, (sung) "B, BAG, BAG" but have your fingers move to what you're singing. And that way I can move around and I can help. "Let's do it again and watch my fingers." Sometimes I'll demonstrate it so they can look at me, because sometimes reading that is too hard for them. So I'll make sure that I'm fingering along with it so the special ed. kids can watch me.

I: With your adaptive special ed. class, I think you've mentioned that you do a lot with steady beat and instruments. Is that right?

P: Yes, and that is probably the one thing we do (a lot of), just keeping a steady beat, because that is the beginning concept in kindergarten. Some of the kids are nonverbal, so they're not able to sing, so the next step is starting and stopping on cue, "Beat, beat, ready play. Beat, beat, ready stop." So listening to verbal cues, because some of those low CD kids, that's what they're working on is language because that's hard for them. It gets kind of boring to work on the same songs over and over again. But to see those kids now in second grade be able to do it no sweat, and I still have to give a little bit of a cue, but they'll know when it's time to stop because we do the same song a lot. For those little kids sometimes autoharps are nice too, to do that big body movement. I do the buttons and sometimes they can do their hand and I will sing the song, like I'll sing "Happy Birthday" or "Old Dan Tucker", something I know they know. Sometimes I'll bring in a rain stick just to do the sound or the African shekere because it's got the beads on the outside. I have a little boy who's blind, and just to feel that (is exciting for him) and (to hear) the rain stick. And just to play, and sometimes we'll pass out, "We're going to try to play the steady beat on the tambourine" and for them to coordinate that. Play it on the drums, play it on the sticks, bring in the sand blocks, pretend we're a train, "Chu, Chu, Ready and stop". And sometimes we'll do big arm movements with scarves, like "Beat-, Beat-", sometimes cross body. I've got a song where it's got a nice sixteen beats of something and then it changes to something else, so you go up and down and after sixteen (beats) that part comes back, so doing cross body and stuff like that. And sometimes there aren't a lot of aids. There are days when the aids are short, so more kids will come to my adaptive music, some of the lower kids in kindergarten that (normally) go to a regular music class but they haven't got an aid at that time. "Could they please come to music?" and then those are the shining stars. They demonstrate, and they get to teach the other (special needs) kids how to do it. And we can do things they do in kindergarten that they're successful at, and I have two others who couldn't do complicated things, but they can watch and the aids help them do whatever it is. But sometimes we do stuff that they're familiar with.

I: What advice would you give to a beginning elementary music teacher?

P: Hang in there! There will be days you might doubt yourself and you think that the kids hate you. You have to get a thicker skin, and that is part of that confidence that you build as you go along. You may not be successful at everything. You may think you have the best plan and it falls apart the first time you teach it; you just have to tweak things. It's 'trial and error', but just hang in there. If you love the craft and if you love the (elementary school) area, you'll find what works and keep doing it. And you'll have frustrating days, but don't take it personally. It could be the personality (of the child) you're trying to teach, or it's a hard concept, or the kids don't have the background. You may assume that they know something, and maybe if you're a first year teacher you don't know that they don't know that. If they didn't learn it in kindergarten, in second grade this (could be) a new concept for them.

I: Is there anything else that you would like other elementary music teachers to know?

P: I think it is a great profession! Personally I had the best job in the world because I got to sing with kids, and have fun, and get them excited about music, and see kids go on to be successful at things they tried as they got older. So, it's a very rewarding career! I hope you feel that way.

Name: Katherine

Date: January 23, 2016

Interviewer: How long have you been a music teacher? How long have you been in your current position?

Participant: Well, in this position, sixteen years. In my other job, seventeen years. (So thirty-three total years teaching music.)

I: Have you always taught at the elementary level, or have you taught other levels?

P: No. The first year (was high school). I did chorus, I did all the musicals, and Solo Ensemble.

I: When applying for jobs, was elementary music your first choice, or did you see yourself at a different level?

P: Well it was at first, and then I found this position at Pacelli (High School) and I thought, "I'm certified K-12." But it takes awhile to work in a system or work with people to know that maybe your strengths are not where you thought they were, but maybe somewhere else.

I: What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?

P: Well, when I started taking music lessons when I was maybe in fourth grade, I was almost to the point where my parents wanted me to perform for their friends and I played at church. So I had a lot of musical opportunities and my brother was in a band, and so I got all that performance part of it. So by the time high school came, my choir teacher said, "Would you like to do something for Solo Ensemble?" and I didn't know what that was. So she kind of took me under her wing and we entered a piano piece and did really well on it. I think it was high school that I really thought, "I have a good skill in piano and a good ear too" so I felt that maybe I should develop that more, and that's when I discovered I should go to UWSP.

I: What inspires or motivates you to continue teaching at the elementary level?

P: I think there is a desire for the person who is teaching, and it doesn't even have to be music, to teach others about their skills and their passion. I think passion has a lot to do with it, and if you know that you're pretty good at it you want to share it with people because if you have something that's really heart-felt of course you want to share that. Now, I'm a very introverted person, so for me to get up and do that is kind of stepping out of my comfort zone. But teaching music, (that's) no problem. I can do that. Just don't ask me to do anything else. (laugh)

I: What are some successes you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: Well, there have been musicals, and there have been students who have done well at Solo Ensemble. But I think the success is when students come back after a long period of time and they have families now, and they come up to you and say, "I remember when we did this ___ in music." I think that's a success story in itself. Success stories, I can tell you about the things that I've done like musicals and VYC (Very Young Composers, a partner program with UWSP) and children's choir. But I think the success is to see what you do every day, and hopefully that is something that the person or the people you are teaching can take with them as a life skill at some point. I mean a life skill is, you want to be able to sing something to your child right? Not, "No, I can't sing." I guess that would be my thirty-year plan, just like John Feierabend.

I: What are some challenges you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: Well, first being schedule changes, and I think what the district wants you to do that may not be ethical, let's say traveling with no prep time. "Oh, it will work out, it will work out." "Yes, but how long until you change it?" So I think too much change. There used to be for like thirty-five years, it just ran like clockwork and it was really good. But then things changed so much that we didn't have stability in our program any more, and yet the public doesn't see that because they still see the musicals, they still see kids perform. Nothing has changed in their mind. But the caliber of music is going down. And (there's now) no chorus, so there's no feeder for junior high. Music has to be almost "dumbed down" a bit, and they're starting to feel it in the senior high as well. So I guess too many changes that maybe the public doesn't understand or see, but we know that in time hurts your department. The other thing is, I think a lot has changed as far as discipline and using new methods like PBIS. It's positive reinforcement for kids, but where is the negative? There is no negative really, it's just all positive. I've seen a lot of kids that a (daily class behavior score) number doesn't mean anything any more. It used to be if your class got a 4 or a 3 or even a 5, "Wow, let's celebrate!" Now it's, "How come we didn't get a 5 today?" "Well, you didn't EARN a 5 today." I just don't see it working in the schools' benefit at all. And the other thing is just having students being unprepared when they come to kindergarten, and I see the deterioration a lot, not even just in music, but kids being unprepared to exist for a whole day (at school). Some kids aren't even potty-trained yet. Right now I have a Chinese student in kindergarten who speaks absolutely no English, and there's no assistance for him. He's a behavior problem and yet they keep sending him, and there's no talk about what they're going to do. At least I don't know the talk. So yesterday I met the new student teacher for one of the second grade teachers, she's Chinese, and I told her all about this student and said, "Could you please help us?" So she's willing to help. Thank goodness! What a godsend! So yeah, I can see some deterioration that's going on. (Also, although there is now) more collaboration time for classroom teachers, I need to find (time to meet with teachers) so I can talk with them about behavior issues or just to touch base on whatever they're going through in class that I may be able to enhance in music.

I: What are some solutions you've found to your challenges?

P: The principal that I have now is more open to just, "Email or talk to me any time." That has really been wonderful! I think the administrator has a lot to do with how well you feel about your job and how fast results can happen. That makes a huge difference! If you have a good administrator then you're happy. When you have a supportive staff it's half the battle, or people you like to teach with. That's good. There has been a lot of change (at UW-Stevens Point since I graduated), but staying with the VYC program (Very Young Composers) has really anchored me at the university, whereas I think a lot of people who would come back may not feel that connection

anymore. The VYC program is (open to) all the public and private schools in the Stevens Point area and some outlying areas like Almond-Bancroft, Tri-County, and Rosholt. So this year we are really extending our feelers. Not all the public schools here in town (participate); but they're invited. I work with two other general music teachers (as coordinators) on the project and we create the lessons for the students on harmony and texture. There is also a keyboard lab that they work in at the university, and the kids work on their harmony or just a melody, or if the kids want to create their story through words. We try to help them as much as we can, and from there they go to the teaching artist, and then they talk with their teaching artist about their ideas written on paper. And from there they have it all on computer, so they can kind of pick and choose their instrument and they can hear it right away. It really is an amazing process and the teaching artists are just worth gold to that program! They really make it happen! They're (university students) on interim right now, so the ones that we have, they don't get credit for this, it's all on their own time, but they do get an abundance of experience. I think it's great having it on your resume.

I: My research focus is specifically on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself as having a strong educator identity?

P: That's interesting. I think I lost that identity when I came here to the public schools because of the change. When I was in the Catholic schools, I was it, and I was the one who determined what my curriculum was. I had more of an importance of a role in the Catholic schools because of the liturgies and so on, but here in the public schools, not so much and that was because of all the change going on. I lost that. I think in the school's eye maybe I have a pretty good role or a pretty good importance in their children's education, but it wasn't like it used to be years ago.

I: Do you feel that your sense of teacher identity grew and strengthened the longer that you taught? If so, how and in what way?

P: Yes, (but) there is just like on a graph, there is that plateau when you reach the top. And like I said it kind of dwindled a little bit. And I don't think it's because I'm not doing enough, because I'm definitely doing (plenty). There's just more things out there that have to be done after school. So I'm doing what I think is a great job, but only the kids that can stay after and participate are the ones who benefit. No longer can I do that during the day because the day is so messed up with the schedule. So I think that loses the identity because you're not working with the kids during the day, and they can't go home and say, "We just had chorus today! Or "We had this ___ and look what we did or we're doing concerts!" This will be my first concert in almost five years in the springtime. We used to do them religiously at Christmas and in the springtime, and then five years ago when everything got changed, many of us said, "The public is going to expect us to (continue to) do (evening concerts). We want to make a stand but not a stink, that we will do concerts and programs during the (school) day but not in the evening time." So that's how it started out, and then there were principals along the way at different schools who said, "We're going to just have a program like it used to be," so some of them are doing what they used to do but they're not doing evening concerts. And the thing is, anything that you have, people think, "Oh, it is a concert." "No, it's not. It's a program! It's not polished; it is just showing what the kids do." "Oh, it is a sing-along. That's a concert." "No, we're just singing along." So I think the public still doesn't get it.

I: Please share any experiences or challenges that you see as significant to your perceived identity as a teacher.

P: I think now that I've had several student teachers, I think being dual certified in choral/general and instrumental/general, I think that and getting as much experience (with kids as you can) under your belt before you take your first job is crucial. It's crucial because administrators want to see somebody who can start the year running, instead of, "It's my first year and I am not sure what to do." I think that's what they're looking for. When I took (my first) position I didn't have all that experience. Now students have *Finale* experience and they have all those observation hours. We never had to do that. And then anything else you can find that you have hands-on (work) with students is a plus. So I think education has shifted a lot. I think more students are spending more time trying to get that education so that they don't have to come back and get it or wish they would have. It's one of those, "If I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it now." I guess that's been a struggle for me, not being able to have all the computerized, technological advances. I don't like technology and it doesn't like me. We have lots of technology workshops here, but they don't pertain to me, so it's kind of hard to jump on the bandwagon when I can't use them. But we've got a facilitator now that used to teach at our school, so again, it really helps to collaborate and give out ideas and shoot them back to see how we can develop something that I can justify that I'm jumping on with everyone else. I hate to say that, because what would happen in a society or a school district where there is no technology? What if you go to Timbuktu and you don't have anything? Well, you could still teach

music; you don't need anything. I think that is kind of a fault right there. I don't think you need all those toys, but you do need experience now (with technology) because education is completely different now than what it was when I graduated. (Also, my colleagues and I in the North Wisconsin Orff Chapter) get together at least a couple times during the year. They have a choral festival going on in February, which I can't be a part of this year because I'm not going to be in town. They're having it closer to Stevens Point; this year it's in (Wisconsin) Rapids, whereas it's always been in Tomahawk or Necedah. I feel a little bad that I can't be there. And that takes a lot of hours to prepare, and I normally help with the workshops and I accompany because piano is my strength. Plus we're on Facebook, so we email a lot. That is such a good place and a good time to connect with people. Year after year it's normally the same faces, but once in awhile we get new people who come. We try to have overnight retreats so that we can get together (for) a make-and-take session so that the next day, which is normally our workshop day, and then we can sell that. It helps to know what the presenter is presenting so we can make up lesson plans and work on the make-and-take for that. It's really good.

I: How do you create and deliver engaging lessons?

P: By going to Orff workshops, so that it's not like, "What am I doing today?" and "What works and what doesn't work?" Now, I've got a binder of all Orff lesson plans, that if I'm like, "I want to do something bluesy today" I just go to that binder and remember what we did. I think the series that we have is outdated and we're not going to get any more textbooks. So I think a lot has to depend on the person who is delivering the lesson to go out and seek (teaching resources). I do a lot of online search too of videos and books and so on and so forth. You know, what everyone else does. But those workshops are very important, and convention, that's another one, either national or state. Are you on the John Feierabend Facebook page? There are a lot of lessons on there! Become a member, and you just get a lot of people's situations, like "I'm a first-year teacher and my principal told me in three weeks I have a program. What are some K-8 songs that are easy to learn?" And there's a lot of feedback. Yeah, you'd be able to pick up something for your age bracket. If you take a workshop of (Feierabend's), like I've done this twice now in my years of teaching, in Manitowoc he comes there frequently. So if you ever catch him there, he and (his wife) Lily teach together, so I guess I could call them levels. Take the workshop with John Feierabend; you will learn a lot and it will make better sense. Also, he has some DVDs about his method that is really nice because if you're doing something on rhythms just put it in and re-watch it. "Oh, I get the idea now." It is just really super helpful. Yes, you'll have to invest a little, but that is what your budget is for. That's the way to do it, John Feierabend. In fact people have gone to the full curriculum, so they buy all the John Feierabend things and that's their curriculum. Not a bad idea. So this no textbook kind of thing, that would be my goal for the future before I retire, because we're never going to get textbooks again, and most of these ideas you can go online and bring up again. But that's a thirty year plan right there, so once you invest (in his program), there's not much more that you can do other than buy more of his story books, and they're just precious. And I think your preschoolers would really like it.

I: What mindsets or attitudes do you have that help you achieve high student engagement and learning?

P: Lots of hands-on. In my forty or forty-five minute period I have four different high-level hands-on activities, with drumming or Orff or notating or movement. Those are the four things that I do for every lesson, regardless of how long or how short, for every grade. That's just my elixir of music right there. And with (kindergarten) I might do six (chunks during a lesson).

I: So if you're learning a new song, but you only have ten minutes of the class to do that, do you spread it over multiple lessons?

P: Yes. I have my little packet of ten pieces of paper and my grid is on there; my template is on there. And before I even attempt to teach the first lesson during the ten weeks, I gauge when and how I want to teach that song. So you can kind of see a time lapse, and that's how I work my lesson planning. So yeah it might be, "Just listen to this song" and for the next lesson, "Alright, can you listen to this song and tell me what the instruments are?" da, da, da all the way to the end where they're performing the song with instruments. But it really does have to become a diet for you and for the kids. So you can cover a lot with those four. And you have to ask yourself, "What do I find important when I teach? What do I want to do?" Now for me, because I want to cram as much in possible, those four things work. For other people it may only be three, and some people just follow the John Feierabend lesson plan sheet because it's in there. To me that's just too much; so give me some four chunks and I'll work everything else in there. I guess it depends on who you are and your pacing of students, which is so important for beginning teachers. "How much can I do?" And every year it changes because of your class loads.

I: What teaching skills have you developed that help produce better student learning outcomes?

P: I don't know if it's a skill, but I learn a lot from my student teachers. I think I'm a pretty efficient teacher, but those student teachers are so patient. And I just want to get as much done as possible that I think being patient and standing there and waiting and knowing that your being there waiting for them means, "I'm working and you're not working with me right now." And one of my rules is, "Raise your hand and wait your turn. Your teacher is working." So it's something in the process. So when you have a kindergartener who comes up and you're giving a lesson and they're tapping your shoulder, I just say, "Excuse me, I'm working. Could you sit down and raise your hand?" Because they need to know that what I do is work. And then when you say, "I'm sorry, I can't work now" and they're like, "What, this is work?" Just being patient and cooling off. (When kids are interrupting), I just stop, like the train just stops. Nothing happens, and then when it's all quiet I progress again. There's that PBIS thing that we have to hook in there a little bit, so that may have something to do with it as well. Just stop the train.

I: What do you do when you stop the train but the kids just keep talking?

P: You just wait, just wait. See those college students know how to do this, because they haven't had all that experience behind them. So waiting for them is like, "Okay, I'll think about my laundry or whatever." So while you're waiting, just think about "I don't know what I'm thinking about. I could be thinking about what I want to make for dinner tonight," so you get your mind off of it. And then, wow. Isn't it simple? But it's very effective.

I: Classroom management can be challenging sometimes.

P: Oh yeah, because it's music and all they want to do is have fun. "Okay, but we have to do this first." And especially when you have your autistic kids and your behavior challenge kids, even they have to hear the train stop. They have to. But you know I am saying it's not always going to work all the time, but if you do it once in a great while, "Okay, now let's get back to work."

I: Can you identify when in your career that you stopped focusing on yourself and started focusing more on the students' needs?

P: When I started working in the public school, and this was really cool, they had taken all the mainstreamed kids out, and we had a special special-ed. class for them, which is great. But I had a couple different levels of special ed., some who couldn't do anything so that was their goal and then the other kids who were in upper levels that maybe didn't have a special assistant but were able to participate in this class. And it was kind of like a review of what we'd done in class or to say, "This is coming up and when it comes you'll know how to do that," like playing on an instrument or a rhythm pattern on the drums. So it was kind of like a refresher or a review for the music class. So it really helped, except they stopped that when the new schedule came into effect, and then everybody became infused into the same (music) class. But that was where it was really not about me writing lesson plans it was about them and, "How can I service them?" I mean music is really, "How can you service everybody in your class?" That's what it is. It's the world's largest service project. (Did teaching the separate special ed. music class) impact how (I) perceive other students? Yes, by all means, because I think everybody has some of those needs, regardless of who you are. Like they just need you to touch their shoulder or they just need you to bend down and see what they're doing. You know they got it but they just need that extra (reinforcement). So every class hopefully I can walk around and see when they write on their erase boards, and they hold it up I give them a thumbs up. They just all need that. But the special ed. kids need it differently and the regular ed. kids need it differently. It's all about them.

I: What strategies and attitudes have you found helpful to improve yourself professionally as a music teacher and to make instructional preparation and delivery more effective?

P: Workshops, definitely.

I: How did you establish a strong elementary music program? Was developing a solid general music teacher identity helpful to the process of building a strong music program?

P: Well, you collect over the years the things that work and get rid of the things that don't work. I don't use the textbook any more. I use some of the songs in the textbook and other textbooks, and you kind of shuffle them in an order that you want to use them. I don't per se have kids open a book any more; everything is on the visualizer. Any notes we learn on lines and spaces is all on iPads now. So that's how I do it. But you know how much you collect and where does it fit and how does it benefit you? The only reason why you go to workshops is to take back what you're going to use, and the only reason why you go to convention is to, "Oh I want that, I'm going to use that." That's what it's all about. How does it work best for you? You have to make it work, and if it doesn't, "Well, that was a nice try. We won't use that one again."

I: So would say that when you're teaching, that each year you use the same songs at the same time or the same lessons, or are you constantly changing?

P: It's a fifty-fifty. I'll use fifty percent of what's in the book because I'm not going to throw away the book, but fifty percent is what I do outside of that. Like I've used a lot of John Feierabend things. Okay, if I put that in there then something else has got to get out. It's kind of a mixture. And your student body changes every year. So you save those things that work for you and keep those in the back of your mind so it's like this big file cabinet that you keep. Well, it may not work for whoever comes after you, but it sure works for you because you know how to utilize that.

I: Do you have any suggestions for personalizing music learning? You said you used iPads.

P: I'm not sure technology is where I would go in music because they use so much of it in the classroom. I only said using technology because I'm probably the only one who doesn't use it. It really has helped so far working with iPads for note identification. So (for Educator Effectiveness) the SLO (Student Learning Objective) that I have (had) for the past two years is to benefit the mostly third grade to begin instruction in the notes they're going to need to play during their first year of recorder. So I give them a little test, and of course they fail miserably. And now that we're in that in between part where we're practicing and learning, now they're going to have their next assessment on those same five notes, and you know it's going to go up. But they're pretty excited about their new (iPad) game, which is called *Staff Wars*, I would highly recommend that for your upper kids, my fourth graders like that, knowing that they're getting so much better at reading notes. And it increases its speed along the way too, so the kids that I would not suspect as knowing are like, "Well, okay!" They're getting so much better at it. *Flash Note* is another good one we use, or *Flash Derby*. And it's like the little horse is running and you're supposed to identify the letter that comes. And that is the still note. *Staff Wars* is the moving note. The only fault is, right before we start recorders we have to do the *Opera for the Young* and do some other things to get us ready, because the last nine weeks of school are recorders. So we have to be 'done done' by that time. So we stop and I hope that they'll remember a lot of things, and we'll be doing some notation along the way. They're just SO geared up for this because they know that in class it's all about lines and spaces. We have relay races and we have puzzles and stuff like that. I really think that that technology has helped with that. And being that they start in third grade and learn all the notes, and in fourth grade it is just a review and they learn all the notes again, they are much faster and can retain much more. It's kind of like the multiplication tables. So technology has helped with that personalizing learning.

I: Do you have any suggestions for directing student musicals or concerts?

P: Prepare, prepare, prepare! Never be caught unprepared and know your music inside out.

I: What teaching resources have you found valuable for elementary music? You said that you've been involved with Orff-Schulwerk and you know use Feierabend's materials.

P: A little bit of the Kodaly, although I don't use much of it in the classroom. I use a little bit of it starting at the end kindergarten and working through to probably the end of second grade. And then third and fourth grade we get into learning the pitches for recorder. I start (recorder) a little earlier than everyone else, but I think you just need time for those kids to learn and remember. As far as Orff, that's been kind of an off and on thing. I started in 1999 and then I'm at Level 2 right now and I'd like to complete it, but the instructor kind of dropped it for this summer. It's Bryan Burnett, and he said he's never taught Level 3 before, and he wants to make sure that when he does he's doing it the right way. I've been kind of waiting for that opportunity, because he's seen all of us go through Levels 1 and 2, so the whole gist of this was if you enter with Brian, you should be able to finish with Brian. And sure I could go somewhere else, but it's nice to have it right here in town. But you know, Level 1, if I could pick a level, it would definitely be that one that I would retake over and over again. So if I wait now too long, I'm going to forget a lot of the things I learned in Level 2. There are a lot of modes and things; modes were never my thing. But yes, they encourage us to go somewhere else and take another level or repeat a level.

I: What advice would you give to a beginning elementary music teacher?

P: I kind of think we went through that. Get as much experience as possible. Be dual or triple certified if you can; get as much technology under your belt (as you can), like *Garage Band* and *Finale*. Work with students as much as you can before you get that first job so you're well prepared.

I: Is there anything else that you would like other elementary music teachers to know?

P: Make sure it's something you really want to invest your whole life in, regardless of how much it changes. I hope I was able to help. Thank you for having a project like this where you can really talk to music educators and where you can find out what makes them tick and why they're doing what they're doing.

Name: Jennifer

Date: January 23, 2016

Interviewer: How long have you been a music teacher? How long have you been in your current position?

Participant: This is my twenty-first year. I am K-5 and I'm at two buildings. Riverview (Elementary) is my home school and that is our biggest elementary school in (my city), & then I travel out to our country school, Hewitt-Texas (Elementary), where we are a one-section K-5. I've been in the district ten years. Seven years I was down here at Marshall (Elementary), then with things changing and schools partnering I got moved. Then I got moved the following year again, and I'm following somebody who was in that school for thirty years. So big shoes to fill, but I really like Riverview a lot. It's a good school. And I was at Hewitt before, you know when you've got that second school you can be transferred. I mean, seven of the thirteen elementary schools; Riverview is my seventh! I like the match (at Riverview); I'm really happy there.

I: Have you always taught at the elementary level, or have you taught other levels?

P: I did one year in high school and two years in middle school, and the middle school thing, oh eighth grades boys! So yeah, (elementary) has been my niche for quite awhile and I like it.

I: When applying for jobs, was elementary music your first choice, or did you see yourself at a different level?

P: Yes, that was always the first choice. It was just I didn't have a job, so when you're married with kids you find something in the area. And it was actually a 5th-12th grade position, so I had one section of fifth grade and then I had middle school choir and eighth grade general music, and then high school choir and different high school (classes). And I enjoyed it, it wasn't that I didn't enjoy it, but again the position got cut down to sixty percent. That's the nature of the beast, that's how it is with any job. And I love the K-5; I love having kindergarteners and fifth graders and everything in between!

I: What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?

P: I guess the teacher part was just always a give-in. I remember as a kid, my mom worked as a paraprofessional and she would bring home old grade books and stuff, so just playing school, that was always in there. I guess the music part just came in high school when it was something I really wanted to pursue, but at that time they told you if you want to think about performance (you should) get a degree in education so you have something to fall back on. Well, that wasn't the fall back plan; I guess that was the plan.

I: What inspires or motivates you to continue teaching at the elementary level?

P: I guess it would be the kids. With the very little ones, and I'm sure you experience this, with the K's and 1's, it's like you're a super-star or some kind of super hero. At Hewitt-Texas, which I travel midday to go there, when I walk into the lunchroom they're all just a waving. Or even with the older kids, when I do my incentives, one of them is I will have lunch with kids. So this is the first year I've tried that, bring the kids into my room and we have a carpet-picnic and sit on my floor. And I'm overwhelmed how this is such a motivator for my kids. I mean they get to bring a friend and they get to eat in my room. I look at it like it's not really a big deal. But that one-on-one time is really important to them. So I would say the main motivator is that instant gratification, every day, that there is always something that no matter how bad the day is, the full moon or Valentines or Halloween parties or whatever, there is always something that's good every day, and that makes it worth getting up every morning and looking forward to going. Kids are amazing! I don't know why I did "song choices" with kindergarten. I love kindergarten because I just play with them. And of course they pick their program songs, and some of the Tom Pease songs, and some of them were from Christmas. "Do you have "Uptown Funk?" "No!" And when the baby chickens are born in their classroom, you have to do a chicken song and you have to talk about it, because they're five years old! I have to chuckle when they talk about assessing. I'm like, "No." I've done this long enough that when kindergarten comes in, we play. If they can keep a steady beat and sit in their place and raise their hand to answer questions by the end of the year, we're really doing well. They're so stressed everywhere else. I was saying to one teacher, "There are some days we just have to do "The Chicken Dance." They're like, "Really?" I said, "With kindergarten, absolutely, because some days I need the humor! And I just need to do "The Chicken Dance" with my kids." And veteran teachers will say, "That is a plan. You have to some days just (let go), like three weeks

in with cold weather or whatever. Sometimes it's about what they *need* more so than what you are supposed to be teaching. Like I said, the chickens are hatched you have to do that, or the sharing time: they have to show you their teeth that are loose or the new shoes that they got.

I: What are some successes you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: I used to have kids participate in the WMEA listening project. I chaired the project for four or five years, and when I started in the district I brought that in and another veteran teacher was doing it as well. The kids did very well with that, it's just with schedule changes and things it's not something we can do anymore. I don't have time and recess times or anything like that like I used to. Concerts are probably, as stressful as they get, I would say not so much for me but for the kids those are success. And just to relax and do fun songs, I used to a lot more instruments and things; again with schedule changes I can't bring kids in to practice extra, just being able to add those little things. Or this year my kindergarten and first graders at Riverview have to do a separate program; we don't have a facility to do K-5 because there are 450 kids. So we do a K-1 program in the afternoon and I had them sing "Two Front Teeth," and I took pictures of them all, and we put on a slide show, which was a hoot! And I stole that idea from another teacher; I didn't come up with that. But just the little things like that, or when they dress up. One year when I was in the Catholic schools, with all my 100-125 kids, I always worked to make sure everyone had some kind of part, whether they were stage crew or had a speaking part, something so everybody's name somehow got in the program. And one year, Sister Carol, one of our aids had said, "You guys did such a nice job" and to Sarah (one of the fifth graders) she said, "You just really did a special part!" (Sarah replied) "Uh, uh, Sister Carol. We *all* had a special part!" And it wasn't that you had to pick the kids to be speakers. One year I picked the superintendent's kid to play the drum, and he was like, "(You are) the best music teacher God ever created!" It's those little successes, not that you have to put on this grand show, but the way they feel when they succeed or when they finally get the B, A, and G on the recorder, or "I get it now, I get it!" Those are the successes that I celebrate the most, the little things, because they mean the most. That's what they're going to go away with, not this grand curriculum that we went through. I would like them to continue it their whole lives, but that's not what we do. We give them a break, we give them a different side of education, and then what they do with it from there is their decision. And that's good. We're a little more enabling and empowered at the elementary level than the secondary people are, so we're kind of lucky that way. (Our elementary kids) they have to come (to music class) no matter what!

I: What are some challenges you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: Most recently it's been scheduling, and I guess it stems from the core standards, the core curriculum, where they want those blocks of time, and so those have to take precedence over everything. And I see a positive from the administrator's point of view, because the schedule does not change from year to year. It used to change every year they'd have to do the schedule, where now it's there, it's in stone. So sometimes sections might have to switch around, like we had two sections of fourth grade and three of fifth grade last year. Well now that flip-flopped. So they just flip flop their times; there wasn't a lot of adjusting. So I would say the challenge for us has been that scheduling, and then because of that, partner schools have been changed which means (music) positions have changed with people, and full-times (positions) have become percentages. So like down (at Marshall, the neighborhood elementary school), I was here for seven years. I followed a gal who was only there for a year, who followed a gal who was here for twenty-five, so they were used to that long-standing (music teacher), and now they've had four in four years. So that's been a challenge. It's hard to build a program when you're moving all the time. My first batch of kindergarteners down here are freshmen this year. You see a difference in what they continue with into middle and high school if they've had somebody different. And not that they're not capable (elementary music) teachers, but everybody's different. It's like they just got used to you and now they have to get used to somebody else. There's that constant transition, the same way some kids have got to move from school to school to school every year. But there's a certain expectation that (kids) want to just come in (to music class), they already got a new teacher in September (and they think), "Let me see somebody I know!" So the scheduling part of that has been a challenge.

We don't always get (consistent preparation time); the classroom teachers have an hour block every day for prep in the schedule, and it's the same time every day, which is when we have their kids. We don't have that, so some days I might have an hour here and a half-hour here, or a half hour here, half hour here, and half hour here; and the challenge of that is just being more efficient with what you can get done. If you have an hour block, great, you can get more done. Where if you have a half hour block, by the time you go to the bathroom, make your Xerox copies, catch your mail and come back to check your email, it's time for the next class to come in. Or like our afternoons are six classes in a row, so that three hours can be long. Most of the time my afternoons fly, but some

days it gets to be really long, especially that last hour from 2:20-3:20. It's a hard slot for kids to have, no matter what age they are. I used to do kindergarten at that time, or at the beginning of the year they're coming right after lunch and nodding off. I would say that is the biggest challenge, and I'm pretty sure every district has been through that challenge.

And enrollments have a lot to do with that too. In first grade last year we had twenty-two in each section, and during the summer we had eight move out and six move in, which changes dynamics hugely in one class. And then a bunch of them moved out so they were at sixteen, eighteen, and eighteen (per class). So now were they going to become two sections of second grade or stay at three? So with the constantly changing enrollments that can put a *big* damper in your schedule, and we face that every year. Am I going to have forty-six sections next year or forty-eight sections? Where are we going to put those extra kids? Scheduling and the things that impact it are probably what makes administrators pull their hair out too, because they need to try and plan for it too. What do you do if we have eight new kids on the first day of school and you're already at twenty-five kids in a section? It happens, maybe it doesn't in the more rural areas, but here it's not uncommon. It is not uncommon for kids to just show up on the first day of school with no record whatsoever and just have their parent drop them off. There was one point this year at Riverview where for six weeks in a row we had brand new students every Monday, and depending on our cycle, some of us didn't see them for a whole week! It changes the dynamics of a class, where you can have kids, maybe third grade, who've been together at least in the same school since they were in kindergarten or 4K. And now you get a (new) kid who's coming from outside the district who normally would fit in but who has academic issues or behavior or social issues, and that just can throw a whole (wrench in things), and when it happens often that's hard for the kids who have been together. At Riverview they kind of accommodate more because it's been an issue in the past few years. But at Hewitt-Texas, those kids have been there, their parents went there, their grandparents went there, so when somebody new comes in and doesn't quite fit the mold or beat to his own drum, that can be difficult for a class and for that individual student. It can work the other way and be positive too, but it can really throw a damper into things.

I: What are some solutions you've found to your challenges?

P: (With high student turnover in the district, assessing) does and it doesn't (become a challenge). It depends where they're coming from. Wausau did go with common assessments. We are trying to be more common among schools because there is a lot of transiency, between especially our lower-income schools. But our non-poverty schools are starting to see it more too. So that part of it, not so much if they are coming from a Wausau school, they pretty much have the gist of what's going on.

I: My research focuses specifically on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself as having a strong educator identity? Do you feel that your sense of teacher identity grew and strengthened the longer that you taught? If so, how and in what way?

P: Yes, and I would say twenty years into this, that didn't come to be probably until the last six or seven years. First of all, I feel that when you're in a place awhile, you kind of establish your identity. So when I taught in the Catholic schools for seven years I had my, this was my identity. "I was the Catholic schoolteacher." Then a little change went on and I came to the district here, and a couple years in at Marshall it was like, even though my second school changed several of times, I had that identity, "I am John Marshall's music teacher." But it's an ongoing process. That identity changes based on where you are in your life, what's going on in your personal life, but (also) the dynamics of the school you're in, and every school has an interesting dynamic. There's always something that's different. We have thirteen (schools in the Wausau School District), and the seven I've been in, there's not a one that I could compare one to the other. It's apples and oranges; they're really different. So it depends on your climate, your clientele that you're working with, your administration in the building, the rapport. So you identify, but then it sometimes has to evolve into what goes with the building. I would say, yeah, I know who I am but it took awhile. Like I said, maybe people who've (taught) in the same building for twenty years, maybe they get that feeling faster. I didn't. And like I said, there are still days where it's like, "Oh yeah, this could be a goal I'm working on or this is a different way I could look at it or do it." As teachers we are life-long learners, and I'll tell you, stealing ideas from other people, that's the way to go because that's how we all grow. I am pretty strong in my convictions now, a little more opinionated, but I think so. And I identify myself as an elementary music teacher. That wouldn't change no matter what I was doing.

I: Please share any experiences or challenges that you see as significant to your perceived identity as a teacher.

P: Sandy Hook changed me as a teacher. My kids are older, but when they were that age, and then thinking about how those teachers had to hide those kids and what must have gone through their minds with those little, little people and how you were going to protect them. And (there have been) changes in the schools since that happened. We have locked doors, we are under lock and key all day with buzz-in systems now. That's different. We have mirrors by all our corners so you can see who's coming in and out of the door without leaving your classroom or without having to go around the corner. We have to practice 'Code Blue'. And you know, I think it was about fifteen years ago, we had a lockdown in the Catholic schools when I was there. It was just that the principal happened to notice somebody wandered into the building. We weren't locked out; she came and locked everybody's doors and we kept them closed. We didn't worry that somebody was going to come in and shoot us, and I don't worry so much that somebody's going to come in shoot me as somebody's going to come in and hurt one of these kids. And the threats, they do happen. You know, a non-custodial parent gets angry. Down here several years ago we had a murder-suicide, where a mom picked the kid up on Friday and he didn't show up for school on Monday morning, and Monday afternoon they found him dead. She shot him and herself; dad had no idea. It was awful! So those kind of major traumatic things that happen, and Sandy Hook I think changed us all, every one of us that were in education. And maybe it's because they were elementary kids and so young. If I'm not mistaken that is the youngest since, well we had Columbine too. Columbine changed us, and a lot of those events changed us, but not like Sandy Hook changed elementary. Just everything, safety is all about it. And I guess even as a teacher I think more about where I put these kids in a classroom or when I let them go to the bathroom, that I know where they are every second of every day. And little kids, we try to do the bathroom breaks, but they do get those emergencies, so I let them go one at a time. I tell them, "I have to know where you are so if there's a fire in this building and you don't come out of the building with me, I will know where we can find you." I say that to my kids all the time. At concerts, "You will make eye contact with your teacher before you leave!" The kids know that about me, and it's because anything could happen. And I'm not worried about it being on my watch or being sued or whatever, I worry about what I would feel like if something happened to one of my kids. That changes us all. I would say that would be the biggie.

I: How do you create and deliver engaging lessons? What mindsets or attitudes do you have that help you achieve high student engagement and learning?

P: That's kind of what we're all about now. I always try to, first of all, have (them) sing at least once during a lesson. Even if it's a recorder lesson, I'll have them sing the part before they play it or something. So there's got to be an element of singing. There's got to be an element of some kind of moving. Now with the little guys I do more physical, get up, "Hokey Pokey", march, "move like an elephant" kind of moving; whereas with the older kids it's maybe just a transition. So I like to, if I'm doing instrument lessons I'll sit them in a circle and they're rotating around the circle, so there's always this (action), because to have to just sit is awful.

I'm embracing the technological era right now and I've done more with *Class Dojo*. I went to that, this is the first year I've used it and mostly because, I don't know if you're familiar with PBIS, but that's the positive, and they say it's geared towards the 80% of kids that always do what they're supposed to do. But that's not what I'm seeing. Those that cause problems get a lot of attention when others don't. So this was my way to reward the good kids, because I do have a class incentive, but there's always the five or so in the "bad classes" that ruin it for everybody. So this was a way for me to reward kids for doing what they're supposed to do when they do it without asking. That seems to be helpful like, "Thank you little Jimmy and little Joey and little Suzy. Oh, you were ready to go right away!" I know one of our teachers can type it on his iPad and it comes up on his SmartBoard. I'm not that gifted, so I write it down and then later put it in. But even just the fact that they know I'm writing positive notes about them, and that makes me more focused on the positive behaviors. Because I found myself really nailing the kids with the negative stuff, and it's like, "Wait a minute, that's not why you started doing that (teaching)." So positive encouragement, and anything I can do technology-wise. Our principal showed us, it's called "Get Kahoot", where it was a multiple question quiz and it's timed and the kids got points. That is something I want to implement with my PBIS boosters, or my classroom expectations boosters, because I do believe kids need to be taught those (behavior) expectations and they need to practice expectations. That part of PBIS I'm all for. If there's an interesting way to do it, like with the kids on the first day of school when they come in, well they had me last year so they do know my expectations, but they do need to be retaught those things. So instead of a matrix (to teach the rules) that I had to read through, I came up with colorful signs that I put around the room and introduced them as we needed them. "Okay, so today we need textbooks. Here is what my expectations are for textbooks." Put it up there and if you need it (you can refer to it). Then there's always something you can point to, plus it's colorful, and that would be a way I could boost it and have it be a twenty-second question (on "Get Kahoot"). So it's kind of a combination of (traditional approach and newer technology approach). I still make my own flashcards; part of me

will always be a Catholic schoolteacher. Games, direct instruction, it has to be a variety and there always has to be that element of flexibility no matter what, because you never know what's going to happen. You know, somebody flies off the handle and you have to remove the whole class, or you have to have a child removed forcibly out of the room because they're a danger to the other kids or to themselves. And then sometimes we have to sit down and talk about that, and that is not music-related, so I guess (have) that flexibility. But just (teach) something that they're always doing in different ways, and differentiated instruction is all about that; any way you can come up (with ideas). I'm going to do a little experimenting with some stations so I can assess more effectively. That's new for me, because twenty years ago you went to music class and you played instruments, "Alright, that's a good kid. Yeah, they get a 'Proficient'." That's not how it is anymore, and I'm okay with that, but it's a way to do it more efficiently, because that takes practice.

But they've got to have a little bit of everything; they can have the new, but they need to know how to be able to match "This is *mf*" with "Here's the word *mezzo forte* and here's the symbol." They still need to do that kind of old fashioned stuff. They love flashcards and the different things we play. When we do *Memory*, for example, I have flashcards that are dynamics, and for *Memory* they don't get to match the words *mezzo forte* and *mezzo forte*. There's like three of every set in one set; they have to match *mezzo forte*, *mf*, and *medium loud*, so they are turning three cards up. "But I have a match. They're the same." "No!" Or, you have to match the picture of the whole note with the word *whole note*; things like that, I do games and things that way where they can learn. And that physical matching, that physical putting them together like a puzzle and having me come around and check it off, "Okay, these are the ones you have wrong. Fix it and I'll come back." And then if they're the first ones done or they get it right the first time, "Dojo point". Costs us nothing, and I do little tickets too. I do a drawing at the end of the quarter with junky prizes that they love, but just little things like that, or any way to reward a positive goes a long way! It goes a lot longer way than, "Okay, I would like you to sit still now. Please turn around." Any way to say, "Thank you" or "Please." Give them a job! I've had lots of kids who can't sit still, well give them something to do. "Can you straighten out my books while you're waiting for the rest of the class?" that kind of stuff, so just anything to keep them moving, because we don't live in a slow-paced society. Twenty years ago, my kindergarteners would sit when I told them to. Not anymore.

(When working in groups) I like to give them the choice of, "You can be in a group of two or a group of three. I do the same thing for Orff instruments. I allow them to make as many choices as they can, because that's empowering them. I'll often say, "Sometimes your best friend is not your best working partner" and give them the opportunity to make a good choice. And, "Do we have to be with the same person we were with last time?" "No, you can move around," but somehow give them some kind of control. As many as I can have of stuff, I try, but I'm also very big about taking turns. My kids don't always get their own instruments, either they're working in a group of two or three, depending on the class, or I try to give them that liberty, but I like them to have to share and take turns and decide who's going to be first, second, and third. "Now if you've been first for quite a few times in your group, maybe it's time to let someone else (have a turn)." I'm big about that, because they aren't getting that anymore like they used to in the classroom, and it's not anybody's fault, the teachers are fabulous, but they run out of time. So as many social things that I can get and social decisions that we can do as a group and how we don't ever leave anybody out, that's a biggie for me. If you see somebody (left out) or if you don't have a partner, come on up here, because sometimes somebody else is wandering around the room. And then you have five groups that say, "You can come with our group," YES, then points for that because we can reward another good choice. They don't always make the best partner choices, but that's a risk you have to take too. And sometimes it's a mentoring thing: I put my lower ability (kids) with higher ability (kids), sometimes my higher ability together and my lower ability can go with me over here, but as many times as I can have them make the choice, I will do that. That seems to be more successful than anything.

I: What teaching skills have you developed that help produce better student learning outcomes?

P: One thing I learned was to give the children responsibilities and allow them to take out as much as possible. And when you first start doing it, it takes so much time, because you're teaching them your expectations of how to do things well. But as much as you can have them do, if you have twenty kids in a class and ten instruments you need to move, they are going to move it way faster than I'm going to move those ten instruments back and forth. So there is that element of, "If you take it out you put it back where you got it from, or this group takes it out and this groups puts it away. As much as I can I give them jobs. "Okay, you're Person 1: you do instruments, Person 2 you get mallets, Person 3 you get the textbooks" and when you start that and you get them into the routine, they know what you're going to say. They know when they get into the room and they better be quiet because you're going to tell them they need these keys off the (Orff instruments). And you'll always have the few kids that are like, "What keys are we taking off today?", but it's those routines and having them do as much as they can (that make things run

smoother). I learned that from a veteran teacher, “Why are you moving that stuff? Let the kids do it.” And it’s a trust issue, you’re talking about a \$1,000 xylophone, but if you teach them and they know that they need to behave and be careful with that instrument they’ll do it. They will rise to the challenge, no matter how naughty they are. They will rise to that expectation; I have yet to see one not. And they like to feel helpful, that they’re contributing something, even if they’re not the most musical kids. “Well at least I know how to move mallets and where the keys go when we’re playing instruments.” And it saves time.

I: How does your understanding of child development impact your music instruction?

P: Absolutely, 100%. And I will be honest with you that it didn’t impact me right away until I had kids. And I hate to say that, because if you don’t have kids it doesn’t mean you don’t understand child development. Because my daughter’s kindergarten teacher didn’t have children and she was a master at development and just knowing simple things like when they can tie a shoe and when they’re ready to be able to do that. But it is so necessary, because I feel like when I was a new teacher I had really high expectations of some pretty little kids. Even if I wouldn’t have had my own children, through the years you start to see patterns of “Oh yeah, this is what kindergarten is like at the beginning of the year, and even when they move on to first grade, they’re still kindergarteners.” And I’ve had veteran first grade teachers say the same thing to me, “We forget, they’re still in kindergarten (at the beginning of the year).” So I think that is probably the hugest, because you have to know where they’re at the age they’re at, because I think we tend to over-expect a lot from those kids. There are places where we under-expect, but it’s just little things like you need to teach them how to read a song in second grade because they’re just brand new at reading, some of them; and just the physical parts of it, the instruments. Yeah, I let my little people play Orff instruments, we’re not supposed to but I do, and do they play it right? No. But it’s that, “Oh, this is cool! I get to play this.” The experimentation, then the skills will come (later). And there just are physical limitations for little kids; like for kindergarten when you do movement, you’re going to have at least three of them fall on the floor. And why? Because they’re little people and they don’t watch where they’re going. We’ll talk about “eyes forward”. We did the frog song, “Keep your froggy eyes forward, I don’t want any froggy crashes.” And they laugh. It’s just that kind of language. Or, “Okay boys and girls, find a lily pad” or “Boys and girls, find your bear cave” and after you do that, instant. Now would I do that with my fifth graders? No, they’d be looking at me like, “Okay woman, you’re nuts.” But again, know what language. Little people do not understand sarcasm; they take everything literally. However you could have a kid like third grade, maybe not a gifted kid but they have a sharp street sense, and you could kind of rib them a little because it makes them feel important and you could use that little bit of sarcasm with them. Like when you say, “Little Jimmy, what is the answer?” and little Joey answers it. “Okay, the other little Jimmy in the room!” or something along those lines. But it’s real important to know what you can say and what will not register, because if it goes (over their head) then you’ve lost them. So I think that’s vital.

And in our position you are not secluded to one development level through the day. And you, with Pre-K through 5, there’s a whole different game in there at Pre-K than there is in kindergarten, just like there is in kindergarten and first grade. When you get to second, third, and fourth, yeah there’s a little (variation), but not like between the littles and the olders. A year is a difference! And you probably see this in kindergarten with your 4K’s, with your kids who just turned five August 31st and your kids who turned six September 3rd, there’s a whole year between them. Oh boy, is that a difference! And eventually it’s not, but in kindergarten it’s huge! It’s the difference between this kid just got over taking a nap a month ago and this one’s been over a nap for a year. So I believe it’s huge! Others can disagree. You have got to know where they’re at. If you’re going to get to their level and teach at their level, you have to know where they’re at. And it changes from class to class or year to year or ‘what was in the water that year’. There’s always a year, and for us we have to follow them for six, while (classroom teachers) get them for a year and then send them on. But it’s all right!

I: What strategies and attitudes have you found helpful to improve yourself professionally as a music teacher and to make instructional preparation and delivery more effective?

P: One of them is to embrace change no matter what. That’s always going to happen. And when I was moved from down here (Marshall Elementary) that was very hard, after seven years, and we were a close staff, and there were four of us that got transferred that year. It was very hard; I mean, the children cried. But change is inevitable. And I live in the neighborhood and would see kids, “Oh, we don’t like the new music teacher! We miss you!” And I would say, “No, she’s wonderful! You just miss the way I did things because you were used to it. You’ll get used to this too.” But embrace that change and know that it’s going to happen and you’ve got to find some positive to go with it. I learned that a lot in the last three years is to embrace change.

I take notes every day, every single class. And I’ve gotten more efficient at it because you’ll have a parent at the end of the day that says, “Little Jimmy got into trouble in your class today. What happened?” Okay, I saw

little Jimmy at 8:30 this morning. I've seen three hundred kids since little Jimmy; I don't remember. So it's just that being able to reflect back, or just remembering where the kids are, because when I get in front of them and I teach them something that I've already taught, which happens because of our schedule, or I'm a whole lesson ahead with them because I thought I had taught it to them, I feel like I'm inept. And I don't want to come across that way; I'm supposed to be the expert. So I do take notes in every class, because I don't want to forget one little detail or make one promise to a kid, "Yeah, I'll make you a copy of this" and then forget. Someone told me once, "If you tell them you're going to do it, you better darn well do it, because they'll remember." And it doesn't matter how busy you are; they don't care how busy you are. So I keep a notebook with me all the time. I used to call it 'my handy dandy notebook' or now 'my handy dandy clipboard.' And I keep a daily log, and I learned this from Henry Saint-Maurice at UW-Stevens Point. He said, "You need to keep a log, and you need to do it so you know what you were thinking at the time you were thinking it." And so as lessons evolve, you see that pattern. I do it for the things like, "Oh my gosh, I tried this (in the lesson) and this did not work. Epic fail! I did this, this, and this, but sequencing was wrong." But just to be able and go back and say, "I've taught it to this class and this class and it didn't work. Today I'm going to Hewitt-Texas and I know what I'm doing."

Any time you can find something good to say to anyone, a coworker, the janitor, anything, (say it), because the positive will go way farther than the negative. As far as if you need things, cause we have to be pests and ask the janitor and the secretaries for things. And just be a good person and to enjoy the quirks of coworkers. Any time, anything positive you can find about a kid, especially a kid who is struggling, anything they're doing right (tell them)! I have kids who can be atrocious in my room, and I have to give them these zeros, but I'll see them in the hallway and say, "I had a great day today!" "Great, you got all twos today? Great!" Because they need that, and that's not a needy, "I need your attention" kind of grasping thing. They really do need those acknowledgements and those "Ata boys". Dr. Phil says that one "Ata boy" will go farther than ten of "You did it wrong". And always find the silver lining; there has to be (one) or this profession will kill you. It will burn you out faster than anything. Those of us veterans, we've all been to that burnout point. I've been there several times. But when you can do that and you can sit yourself back and say, "Okay, remember why you're doing this. You do make a difference. You don't need somebody to tell you you're making a difference, you have to know it in your heart. Silver lining will get you. Some days it's, "Okay, yeah, somebody brought oatmeal raisin cookies! Guess what I'm having for breakfast?" And humor, it's okay to laugh with the kids when they do something funny. I had a kid one day I was dressed up for something and, "Do you have a meeting today? Are you going on a date?" And the kid next to him said, "No stupid – she's married! She doesn't date!" and I burst out laughing. Or the kid who did the "Uptown Funk"; sometimes you just have to laugh at what they do because they see you human. And sometimes that makes them crazier, but sometimes when they say something funny you just have to laugh. You really do.

I: How did you establish a strong elementary music program?

P: Consistency, structure. Not that there's not the element of flexibility. The first year of my teaching, and this was well before the PI34 stuff, when you (now) have a mentor. When I started, they just 'threw you into the wolves.' But the district I was in strongly believed brand new teachers needed someone, so what they did is they brought in a retired teacher who worked with (us); we had meetings once a month, which was revolutionary, I now find. She always said, "You can always loosen the reigns, but you can't tighten them." And she said, "You set the expectations that high, because you can always bring them down. But if you set them low, you want them to reach for the stars. Chances are that they're going to make it ----- this far, so if you set it --- this far they're only going to go --this far". And so set your expectations high and (have) consistency. Children need to know what to expect and consistency that it's always the same consequence or it's the same, "Oh, I was playing when you (the teacher) were talking; you're going to take a point away." Because it's when they don't know what to expect that they act out. And I have a kid and his mother, it doesn't matter what I do. We always have those mothers. "You better explain it to him because he doesn't understand." Well he kind of uses that, and there was one point where I said, "My expectations are posted around the room. I try to do the same thing the same way every time." Again, there's flexibility, where you come in and it's somebody's birthday, or when somebody brings me a cupcake in the middle of class. But when she taught us that, I think that was the most valuable thing that anybody has ever said, because it's just when they know what to expect they will (misbehave less and achieve more).

I: Okay, and I would assume with your expectations, if this class falls apart in the middle of the year then you have to reteach those expectations?

P: Yep, and that is what PBIS is all about. And even if it doesn't fall apart, you still reteach those expectations, because they really don't know. You're like, "Well, you should just know that!" "No they don't, they're little people! Five years old, they've been on the planet all of sixty months." They do need those reminders. We need

reminders! The first year (of teaching) is hard, it doesn't matter what building you're in. When you're there in that building the first year, it's hard because you're trying to be consistent but it's different. But when you're three years down the line, they've already come to you the first day of school that many times, this is their fourth time. You don't have to spend that time on movement. It's time-consuming at the beginning, but you gain it back in the end, and then when you get new kids who are new to your school, the others will get them acquainted, "Oh, this is how (our teacher) does it." Or I see that just with rhythm, "Oh, this is what she's doing and this is what she's saying." They'll show each other how to do it. It (teaching and re-teaching expectations) saves you time in the long run. If you're going to do it, you've got to do it the same way and they've got to know what's coming. And they do like the element of surprise; I change up prizes and change up the way I do things. But they'll say, "Are you bringing back your envelopes with the numbers on next year? Is the prize box going to be there next year?" "Yes." They like to know that when they come back with a new (classroom) teacher, you're there and they know what's coming.

I: Do you have any suggestions for personalizing learning with music?

P: I would say my best advice would be: you've got to go with the flow because it's not the same every day. And I always say my lesson plan is just that; it's a plan. I can honestly tell you that in twenty years, I've never taught it the way I thought it out in my head, because of whatever. Somebody asks a really intelligent question, which gets us off on a little bit of a tangent, but it is all important stuff. It still all relates. Or like I said, one day in kindergarten the chicks hatched, so now we need to do (chicken) songs. Or last year a classroom teacher came in with a book that had a song in it, and she said, "We read the book and we're studying this book as part of our reading series, and I want the kids to be able to sing this" but she wasn't a singer. So instead of using the "Little Johnny" song, I used the song from the book; it taught the same concepts, but it was something they were using in another class. So it went from (a music activity) to being that we're all in this. It takes a village to raise a child; it takes a village to educate a child, and any way that we can (we should) be consistent with each other but still embrace the day or go with the flow, because it's not going to go the way you planned it. And if you stick with (the lesson plan), if you are like that, and I was for a long time, you drive yourself crazy trying to make it work. And sometimes it works without us controlling it. I think as we get older and more experienced in this profession, we are learning to (let go a bit and) just kind of get laid back. Margaret Jerz retired from Everest and taught (music) for years; she taught our workshop today, and she said you learn to mellow, because sometimes when (the kids) are having those conversations they're not talking about what's they're having for lunch but they're talking about what you're doing. And I find that true when I reflect on that. Yeah, it has to go with what's happening at the time or what's happening with the day, or "Did we have an assembly?" or "Were they on a field trip?" or whatever. Sometimes it just has to be with the moment. And I also strongly believe that you have to be very organized and have a plan. That to me is kind of the best of both worlds, where you have that plan, you have that structure, you know what you're going to do, but because you know what you're going to do you can go with what's happening in the room.

I: Do you have any suggestions for directing student musicals or concerts?

P: Yes! All parts are equal. One of the things, and I was able to embrace this more in the Catholic schools with only 100 kids to put in a program, and everybody always got a part. But every part is important. If you're moving an instrument and I need you to get it from Point A to Point B, that's an important part. Or if you have a speaking part or a playing part, or you're just up there singing, every part is important. That's the first thing whether it's a concert or a musical, especially for musicals, where you might have solos or you might have featured parts and things. "You might be a little duck in the background, but if you're not back there quacking they don't have anybody to watch on the pond." There's always an important part, everybody is important in the program. "We're a team, we work as a team; you cannot all be the quarterback, you can't all be a leader, you can't all be a follower either. And guess what, you have to do the singing. They're not coming to hear me sing for you. You need to do it and be independent."

But a balance of, it is okay to do Christmas songs in your concert when you have Jehovah Witnesses in your school, but it is also okay for you to do snowmen and mittens songs and winter songs. If you can justify it musically, then you're golden. And I don't think my December concerts should be Christmas concerts, because what about my kids who celebrate Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, some of those smaller (holidays). There's always going to be somebody who will complain, but if you have a balance, you can justify it. And this year I really went above and beyond, and I put "I Can" statements in my program from what our district "I Can" statements are and my own. Why did I choose the music that I chose? It may have been, "I can sing a song independently with a piano accompaniment." That's not our district, that's why I chose it. I think they need to sing with a piano and not just recordings. And just movement, "I can move to a song. I can make my body move to a steady beat." Some of them were district, but just having that there, this was the first year in the ten years I've been in the district there was

not one complaint because they couldn't. Here it was spelled out in writing right there. And I'm finding that helps too if you (are) communicating with parents, being as proactive as you can be, and thinking ahead. And I did and I planned for it, and guess what? Nobody complained.

It's got to be balanced. Everybody is important. We are a team. And this (a concert) is not what we teach; this is not the epitome of what we teach. This is 'this much' (small gesture) of what we teach. And yes, with time constraints and things I try to get as much to showcase that they learned from me in that concert. But it's such a small, little bit of what we do. It's so small, and it's so important because they are so visible. And you make them as wonderful and precious for their parents as you can. Was it okay for my kids to sing 'cutesy' songs when they're in K and 1? Yes, because they're in kindergarten and 1st grade, and what do you think you want to see? Cute! When they're in second grade okay we can get a little more academic, but easy songs with, what did I do with the garland this year with the "Deck the Halls" song? Oh my, and they got to take the garland home! Wow! And sometimes easy done well is way better than extravagant done okay. It doesn't have to be extravagant, they just want to feel good about what they're doing, and any way you can tie those academics into it, whether it's pitch matching, posture, song technique, steady beat. I just feel like we can no longer just spend six weeks working on and producing a program. As educators we have to justify that, and so any way you can incorporate everything you're doing. I always say to the kids, "It's a winter concert that includes Christmas music." That way you're safe.

I: How do you meet the musical needs of your special education students?

P: I do (have aids who come to music class) with my special ed. kids, and it's mostly if they are CD or autistic. Right now I have two out of twenty-three different sections. They try to group the kids so that they come with the same, they don't have enough aids to come into their regular classes as scheduled, so if they come into (my) second grade class and then Mrs. Smith has another specialist, they might move the child to the other section so one aid can cover two kids. That happens a lot. When I was down here (at Marshall Elementary) and had EBD kids, I would get aids with the EBD kids. I'm not getting that any more, which is really hard. But with the aids that do come, the kids aren't necessarily problems, it's more that they're autistic and it's to watch those things that I can't see. Like in a class of twenty-four first graders, I have this little gal who's autistic and super sensitive to sound. "So are the loud sounds causing her to react?" Or just keeping them on task, where they can kind of start to wander. Most of the time they just go right along with it, but there are times, especially if they have a sub aid or sub special ed. teacher, when (I think) "Oh boy, what got into you today? Well, he had a sub." So (the aids) do come in the room and most of them are fantastic. They just sit and watch, or sometimes a child does need to be removed because he's running around for whatever reason. They'll take them out. And I discipline them too. There this little one, she's come so far since kindergarten, but one day she was just a howling. I looked at her and said, "Now Maijong, you know that's not okay." "Not okay." The aids usually take care of it but I thought, "No, sometimes it's got to come from me too."

I: What advice would you give to a beginning elementary music teacher?

P: It's hard. Don't expect that this is (going to be easy or always great); and we all did and we all do when we get out of college, we just had this utopia in our brain, and it's like the first time you hear 'the f word' in the classroom (you're in shock). And twenty years into it sometimes I hear things and I'm still shocked by what I hear. It's hard work, and it doesn't happen over night, and it doesn't happen in your first five years. I know classroom teachers that are just phenomenal right away, but I think as elementary music teachers because we have the different age levels, I think we have to be in tune to the kids. That would be one of them: it's hard work. Be prepared to work. Be prepared to go home and cry at night. I don't know if everybody has a heart like mine, but things weigh heavy on me. Last year I had two students whose parents committed suicide. How awful! And then the same year another student whose mother died of cancer, or this year we had the gal at Wausau East who died in a car crash on the way to school. And I had both of her sisters and I have the little brother now. Be prepared for things to weigh heavy on your heart. But if you're a person that those things don't bother, then this is not the profession for you. You should be going home and you should be crying. Not that it overwhelms your life. Sometimes when you're early into it, it does, and even at my age now there are still things that bother me so badly that I don't sleep at night.

Don't be afraid to feel. Don't be afraid to love those kids like they are your own. And I guess for me it was becoming a mom, that when my kids were little I knew how I felt about *my* kids, even when they were a pain in the butt. Every kid that walks into your classroom, their parents feel the same way about them. It doesn't matter how bratty they are in your room; that's mom and dad's "pride and joy", and you better be taking care of it with your life, because that's how important they are. So that's again where the job is hard. It's hard work because you have a lot of emotional, and you're in everything when you're a teacher. You're a mom, you're a nurse, you're an advice specialist, you're a problem solver, you're a referee, you're everything. But every part of the hardship is worth it

somewhere. I have kids who come back to see me, or I'm working with colleagues who are former students. It's worth it in the end, and you have to be 110% dedicated to the profession, because the profession is not going to reward you. The kids will reward you; your job and all of its benefits will reward you! But the profession will not. The public will not. But you find those intrinsic rewards and, like I said, don't go into it thinking, "I'm a teacher; oh, I get three months off during the summer." That's crap. We both know you're doing classes and whatever. It is one of the hardest jobs, but one of the most *wonderful* jobs. You have to be in it because you love it and you have to be 100% dedicated to it. I mean I probably give more attention to my students than I do to my own kids. They'd probably tell you that. But you have to separate your school life and your home life, and that's very hard to do, especially this day and age. You need to take that time for you too. It's okay to have fun and it's okay to laugh. It's okay if some days you don't get the quarter notes learned.

It's okay; it's all okay. Because this is life changing for them, but it's not going to be their whole lives. You're going to drive yourselves crazy. Burnout is pretty high right now among teachers. I know of a lot of teachers who are just taking a year sabbatical to try other things to see if it is a better fit; and these are teachers who've been teaching for years and years, and they're not close to retirement! Me, I don't want to do anything else; I don't care how bad it gets, I'll find a way.

And beg, borrow, and steal any ideas you can! That's a biggy, and that's okay in the teaching profession. Beg, borrow, and steal! For new teachers it's really important to watch other experienced teachers. My student teachers who've been with me, I had them go and watch other classroom teachers just to see different styles. Because you're going to have your own style, but there are always things that you pick up from other classroom teachers. Even still, I like to talk at the end of the day with classroom teachers and see how they do things themselves. "How do they sit down and do circle times?" or anything you can learn from another teacher or learn from the kids; let the kids teach you! You can learn a lot from them!

If you're not in it for the long haul, get out. Because we don't have time with these precious little lives for people who are 'hee-hawing around' around about, "I want to do this, but I don't know if I want to do this." If you know it's not you, *out*, because there's just not time with these precious little ones to have that! And that sounds harsh and cruel; we used to be able to coddle people to stay in (the profession). It's not that kind of world any more; it's too business-like. Does it have to be that way? Yeah. It's a hard position, but if you're 100% dedicated to it (you will make it).

(Always have a Plan B in case technology does not work) or the electricity goes out because the wind is blowing. At Hewitt-Texas that happens, not often but often enough. Or your SmartBoard bulb blows in the middle of class. That happened to me this year; I had to run song sheets. That is where the prepared, organized part helps you to be flexible. You're right; I always have a Plan B. There's always a Plan B for concerts, recordings or whatever, because if you have Plan B you won't need it. It's the one time you don't have a Plan B that you need it. I tell that to all of my student teachers. One of my colleagues, it's her second year teaching, and she said, "I'm seeing that I'm doing it different this year than I did last year." And I said to her, "Twenty years into it, I don't teach the lesson the same way twice ever." And I tried one year, because I saw all these people with file cabinets full of stuff, and they'd just pull these resources out. I tried that; I couldn't do it because each year the kids were different! Especially if you've been there for awhile and they develop with you. You can't have a file cabinet with stuff in it, because every year you have to do it differently. So, it's a growing process forever, I think forever. I don't think I'm ever going to be where I think, "Yep, I know exactly what I'm doing." Sometimes I do. Sometimes we're all doing it by the skin of our teeth. (A recently retired colleague) taught for twenty years out of a textbook and then just embraced the new one and really used it. (With) the changes and the differences with kids and the moves of schools, she just always embraced everything, and she was giddy like this 'til she retired. Now she just subs when she wants to. And that's how I want to be when I retire. I want to retire 'on the top of my game,' not because of the governor or because of Educator Effectiveness or whatever, I want to do it because, "Okay, now it's time for me to move on." That's going to be me.

Name: Lisa

Date: February 13, 2016

Interviewer: How long have you been a music teacher?

Participant: I was a music teacher for twenty years.

I: How long were you at your last position?

P: Fourteen years (in Merrill). For the last twelve years I was able to at least consistently stay more at one district rather than move around. (Prior to that) I was in Wausau at St. Anne's Catholic School and before that I was in Algona, Iowa for one year.

I: Have you always taught at the elementary level, or have you taught at other levels?

P: I also have done middle school. I had middle school in Iowa, I had sixth through eighth grade general music and choir; and a few years in Merrill, maybe seven of my fourteen years, I had one year of sixth and seventh grade general music, and the other six were sixth grade choir.

I: When applying for jobs, was elementary music your first choice, or did you see yourself at a different level?

P: Elementary was my first choice.

I: What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?

P: Probably my middle school music teacher who was also my piano teacher. So I started with him with piano lessons when I was in second grade, and then when I was in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade he was my choir and general music director at the middle school. He was my big influence, seeing the joy that he had for teaching. And he was also our organist at church. He and his wife were choir at church when I was younger and he got me involved in church when I was older, accompanying the younger kids. And I took organ lessons from him and he got me into playing the organ at church. So he was my big influence.

I: What inspired or motivated you to continue teaching at the elementary level?

P: I liked the kids at that age; to me they were inquisitive and just so curious about everything, you know, trying to find out how things work.

I: What are some successes you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: Well, I'd say one of my biggest successes was to come up with my own curriculum that made sense to me and seemed like it flowed from grade level to grade level to prepare the kids for what was coming later, even if that meant preparing them for middle school band or something in high school or even in life after high school, something as a hobby or a general interest or something. That was probably to me my biggest success.

And the other thing I did, curriculum-related, was when I did my Master's degree, my thesis was to write a recorder curriculum, an 'Introduction to Recorder' method book. So I did that because I would purchase method books and programs and they would start out okay but then it wouldn't work, and I had in my mind an idea that would work better. So I put down all my ideas in this thesis and kind of looked at other method books to pick up what was good about them and what wasn't good and developed my own. So whenever I taught recorders, I had my own method book that I used and I felt the students were a lot more successful with. I found them able to do more on recorder than they used to. After B, A, G, (in most method books) the next one would be F, and the students were always getting confused with left hand on top. And I thought, "When you do G you have three (fingers) on the top. Let's get the right hand involved with three on the bottom and do D, which makes more sense (than B, A, G, F) because now you have D, G, A, and B. And then from D, I went up to E, so my pentatonic, and with that you can do so many more things. You can divide the kids into groups; you can have one doing an ostinato. The students who aren't as fluent can play a simple ostinato while the students who are more advanced can play a more difficult melody or a descant part or something. And that way they got their fingers engaged right away. And from there we went down to low C and F and that just seemed to progress a lot faster. It made more sense having that pentatonic scale.

I: What are some challenges you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: Many principals with many ideas. I probably taught under more principals than any other teacher, just when you're at three different buildings and watching the principals rotate in and out. You might be at one building for four years, but in those four years you might have three different principals. That to me was the biggest challenge, every year with a new principal just trying to find out, "Where are they?" as far as supporting music or not. The biggest challenge with the principals not only being new all the time was that most of them did not support me. And then you get involved in things like no classrooms and teaching in unusual places, being 'the prep time,' not feeling like your class has any value to it (her impression from classroom teachers).

I: What are some solutions you've found to your challenges?

P: One thing we did as a district was called 'unwrapping the standards.' When the state standards came out, we as Art, Phy. Ed., and Music were mandated to look at the math, science and social studies standards and show how we covered those standards in a music class. At first we were really upset about having to do all that extra work but it was not a problem because we could easily find how we did that. Just to be able to have that written down and on

paper made me feel like I had something that proved that “You may feel like I’m just ‘prep’, but I do steady beat in my class and steady beat has been researched and shown to improve reading.” So I would go to kindergarten teachers, I can’t think of the lady’s name, Phyllis Weikart, if you look up her research she’s the one that did steady beat and reading research; and she pretty much stated that when you start doing steady beat in your class you can probably guarantee that the students that can’t keep a steady beat are also the lowest readers in your class. So I would observe this when I was working on steady beat, and I would go back to the kindergarten teacher and say, “I’m just guessing on what I observe, are these three students lower level readers?” “Well, yes. How did you know that?” “Because of steady beat, and I’m going to keep working with them on steady beat, and hopefully that will help them improve.” So that was one thing, unwrapping the standards, (then) using what I had to go to the teachers and say, “We’re working on this”, and the third thing I did was one year every month in the school newsletter I would write down little bits of research. Like maybe one month I would write about ‘the Mozart Effect’ or just different things like steady beat and different things that we were doing and how it helped with their other subjects to try to get the word out.

I: My research focuses specifically on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself as having a strong educator identity?

P: I do.

I: Do you feel that your sense of teacher identity grew and strengthened the longer that you taught? If so, how and in what way?

P: Yes, definitely, well just being exposed to the research, I would always try to keep myself open to learning something new, taking advantage of the classes that were offered during the summer and workshops, the MENC magazines, just working as a group with our music people. And I guess that over time you accumulate more (experience) and you don’t have to focus so much on getting your lesson plans done, “What am I doing to survive the day?” and “How am I going to make sure this class behaves?” All those things kind of go in the background because it becomes part of your natural teaching and then you’re able to focus on “What did I learn and how can I use it in class to better what’s going on (with my teaching and the student learning)?”

I: Please share any experiences or challenges that you see as significant to your perceived identity as a teacher.

P: Probably working with the special ed. students did help my identity. When you’re forced to work with those students you’re forced to look at how you do things in a different light. It helps you not get complacent in what you’re doing, that you constantly need to change because every year you have students with different needs, so even though you’re doing the same concepts you have figure out how to do them in a different way. So over time you learn how to teach one concept in many different ways, which I think helps.

Even though being in the same school in the long run helps, I think it also hurts. I think that teachers get used to what you do and how you do things and it’s hard to change a routine, that maybe you realize “Hey, this isn’t working, I’m want to try something different.” It’s more difficult to do that. Where if you’re a new person walking in I think they accept the change more because they have to; they have no other choice. Because there were some things that I could see that the regular teachers got to the point where they kind of expected things from me, like things with the music program, you know music concerts, Christmas concerts, whatever. I started out having time to go and decorate the auditorium and get everything ready, especially when I was at 76%, but then I went back to full time and did not have time. And so, “Who is going to come over and help me (decorate)?” “You always did that.” “Yeah, I always did, but now I don’t have time.” So there is a disadvantage to staying in one place. I don’t know if the advantages out way the disadvantages, I’m not sure yet where I am with that. Even having left Merrill, I’ve been out of teaching for, this is my sixth year (retired), I look back and I see things that if I would go back into teaching music I would do differently. And it would be easier to make the change in a new environment.

I: How do you create and deliver engaging lessons?

P: Well, I try to bring what we’re learning to apply to the kids’ lives. So for example, I did a lot with composers. I wanted them to know certain composers from different time periods and listen to their music and understand their life and their music. So to do that I would always do the lesson on the composer’s birthday to relate it to the kids, because they understand birthdays and how important they are so, “Today we’re celebrating Mozart’s birthday and let’s find out how old he is today.” So just applying it to their lives and then when we talk about a composer’s life trying to tie it in with something like their lives. Things like Bach got in a fist fight with someone, things like that that are like, “Oh, he was just a guy just like us” to try to bring them down to their level. I have done different

things before, like one time I dressed up like a composer, that was around Halloween, so we had an engaging lesson with that. Just trying to, like when you do recorders, just trying to get them see how it relates to their lives and telling them, “When you get to the middle school, those of you who want to play the clarinet, these are the same fingerings and you’re going to have to use your left hand on top. So we’re practicing and preparing for that.” Even doing something like talking to them about later in life they might want to go to a concert, or they might want to go to an opera. I did a couple operas with them and just tried to do fun activities with them to get them interested like, “Concentrate on the storyline. What is the story about?” Bring it down to their level so they can understand it. Really try to find operas with music that they might be familiar with, like Rossini’s *Barber of Seville* with the Bugs Bunny cartoon, those types of things. And it’s interesting to find out that at the end of the opera unit I would say, “Well I have this video we could watch from the opera, but you probably wouldn’t be interested” they’re begging me to watch it. “We want to see it!” Then, “Okay well, we only have 25 minutes today.” “Can we come in at recess?” So just picking things they can relate to in their lives, that to me was the most engaging thing, not just “Why do we have to do this?”

I: What mindsets or attitudes do you have that help you achieve high student engagement and learning?

P: I guess I had the mindset that every student is going to be curious about (the topic), whether they show it or not. There’s something inside every student that even if they put on a front, they really want to know more about it, and I guess not shying away from things, like the opera, because I think they aren’t going to like that or they aren’t going to want to learn that. I think if you have an attitude that you like what you’re going to teach them, they pick up on it and their curiousness will carry them through. So I would try to introduce things like just give them a little bit of it, “Tomorrow we’re going to learn this fancy Italian word ‘fortissimo’! Do you want to learn some Italian?” Try to do something to spark their imagination, spark their curiosity and not think, “Oh, they’ll never want to do that and think ‘that sounds boring’.” Positive mindset!

I: What teaching skills have you developed that help produce better student learning outcomes?

P: One of the things that I learned over the years was that when I started teaching I always felt like I just had to give them the answers. “This is what you need to learn.” And through the years I discovered they are more successful if they learn it on their own. So I learned to give them enough clues and then to let them figure out the rest and make them feel like they discovered it, rather than “This is what I’m teaching you, here’s your information I just taught you.” Let them figure it out on their own. And of course be prepared for anything. Having your plans and not sticking to them. I used to try, “This is my plan, and I have nothing else so we are doing this, even if it’s like pulling teeth.” And you learn over the years, “If this is not working then you punt and you do something else.” And that only comes with time!

I: How does your understanding of child development impact your music instruction?

P: I’d say the biggest thing is introducing concepts at the right time and preparing them ahead of time. So taking a look at, well if you use the standards for example, “What do they need to know by fourth grade, and how do I get them there?” So if they need to know note names by the end of fourth grade, how do I introduce it? I’m not going to wait until fourth grade to introduce it. So at kindergarten, we’re just looking at, “This is a note and this is a staff” and trying to figure out with development, how much they can handle to the next level. Even with things as far as “When do you start recorder?” I know some who start in third grade, but I found that their fingers are too small to cover the holes completely and to do anything more than a B, and “Do they have capability of controlling their breath when they blow in?” So just taking a look at where they are developmentally and seeing how it ties in, and when is that prime time to introduce something to get you to the next step? (Knowledge of child development), I would say yeah it did (help develop my own curriculum). Because especially looking at the end result, “Okay how do I get there?” and making sure that you had a plan (of how) to get there, you didn’t just all the sudden go, “Oh, I’m going to teach them to play recorders but they don’t know how to read notes.” Yeah it did. It helped you look at the whole picture.

I: What was the grade break when you switched from Kodaly’s “ta and ti-ti” to quarter notes and eighth notes?

P: Third grade. I wrote a little rap to help them remember like, “The whole note is round and looks like a donut, for four whole counts now you must hold it.” And I wrote one for half notes, and dotted half and quarter. Again, “How am I going to apply it to their lives? Well, they’re very responsive to raps and rhymes so we’re going to learn it that way.”

I: Can you identify when in your career that you stopped focusing on yourself and started focusing more on the students' needs?

P: (It was) probably around my seventh year of teaching, right after I completed the coursework at UWSP for learning disabilities. Plus that was the point in time when I switched jobs, so it was a whole open new world to begin anew and to try new things.

I: What strategies and attitudes have you found helpful to improve yourself professionally as a music teacher and to make instructional preparation and delivery more effective?

P: I'd say just going to the professional workshops, the music conventions, subscribing to the magazines like from MENC and reading them, going to whatever local workshops I could get my hands on, and just going to other professionals and continuing to learn new things. To me that's the biggest thing, always learn something new, to get it from somebody else, or if I had the opportunity I'd go observe another music teacher and pick up new ideas from them. To always make sure I went beyond where I was at to learn something new. And just having an attitude that, "I don't know everything, I'm not at the end, there's always room for improvement." Sometimes I would go to a workshop and they would say, "Don't ever do this!" "Well, I've been doing that for ten years! Okay." Always knowing that I haven't ruined anyone's life and just being willing to make changes.

I wrote my (lesson) plans and did them the same every year, except there was always a difference in the way I delivered them or how we expanded on them. So I guess the plans were always the same, 'the plans' meaning "I'm going to teach this concept today." The way I taught it, how far I went with it, how detailed I went, that always changed. But I always had a specific plan. So doing lesson plans in my later years was just simply copying what I had written from one year to the next, but you know, "Steady beat: do Phyllis Weikart, then teach this song and do this movement activity." That always stayed the same, but how I did it changed. That was the stuff that happened in the class, not necessarily always preparing for it but getting the kids there and seeing where they're at. Every year you have got a new group to work with. And all the sudden you realize, "This is not working. Okay Now I've got to fix it," whether that meant, "Oh, let's go back and try this first and try it again next time I see them, or (something else)." So yeah, the concepts were always, I was teaching the same thing but at different degrees.

(When challenges arose with different classes of students) that's where I think, going back to where we talked about being able to do the discipline and the routine stuff in the back of your mind so you can focus on, "Wow, this isn't working. What do I need to do to fix it?" and figure all of that out in two seconds and go. To me that's when I started feeling more comfortable. I wasn't like "This is my plan, I have to get through it no matter how bad it is." You could kind of get rid of that and scrap it or figure out a different way to present it on the fly.

I: How did you establish a strong elementary music program?

P: I was able to kind of go to the band teachers and choir teachers at the middle school, because when we'd get together for department meetings they'd be complaining, "Sixth grade band, oh these kids don't know their note names." And I'd say, "Wait a minute! I want you to find out who doesn't know their note names and what school they came from, because if they came from my school I want to know about it! And they'd always say, "Oh, your kids at Jefferson know what they're doing." So I could kind of get an evaluation from them, and I knew to go to them to say, "Now look, we've been studying this stuff and we've been doing this on recorders. How are they doing? Are they retaining that?"

I: Was developing a solid general music teacher identity helpful to this process?

P: Yes.

I: Do you have any suggestions for teaching from a cart?

P: Teaching on a cart: I hated it because I could not do what I wanted to do. There were parts of my teaching and my curriculum I could physically not do, which I thought was a big disservice to the students. For example, I like to use the Orff instruments, but you can't haul them around. I mean you're lucky if you can throw the keyboard on the top (of the cart) to wheel into the room. So I really felt like I was doing a disservice to the students. They were not learning the things that they could have. You learn to be very creative. There was a year I was on the cart and my stuff was all in the portables (classrooms not attached to the main school building) so I had to cart it from outside into the building, and that was quite a challenge. You learn to rely on the students to help solve problems, and you say, "I'd like us to make a circle. How are we going to do this with all of these desks?" And they'll say, "Oh, we can do this!" and they'll shove their desks off to the side and get them back in order, but if I would have tried to say "I need to you move your desk there" it would have been a disaster. But if I let them figure it out by themselves they just do it like there is no problem.

Get the kids to help you (set up). When I shared a room with Art, I would be coming from another school, and I wanted all the tables and chairs pushed off to the side so we had open space, and I didn't have enough time to do that. So if the kids were outside at recess after lunch I would say, "At the end of recess I'm going to come get some kids to help me, and there were always volunteers to help get the room set up." So there'd be always volunteers if you really wanted those Orff instruments to say, "At lunch time I'm going to be looking for four kids to take these instruments and get them in your classroom in a safe way." The hardest part is the mental planning, and then it's harder to put that routine stuff in the back of your mind and do what you need to do. It's more, "Okay, did I bring that or didn't I bring that? What am I going to do?" It's very mentally exhausting. But it's doable, just be prepared; get lots of sleep. I'd much rather teach in the gym than from a cart, which I did at Maple Grove (Elementary); you've got space to move and you can get everything out.

I: Do you have any suggestions for directing student musicals and concerts?

P: Get as many other adults involved as you can; get the teachers involved. When I was at St. Anne's I had a classroom teacher who was the only person who worked with kids with speaking parts because she loved to do it and she wanted to; and she took her lunch hour to do that, and I didn't have to worry about it at all. I would just come in once in awhile and see how it was going. Find out who likes to do that and put it out there, "I'm looking for someone who might like to make costumes, or do this or do whatever." When you start asking you'd be surprised at the kinds talents you might come up with. Or if a parent would say, "I used to do this when I was in high school," well get them involved. "Can you come in during the school day?" To me that was the biggest thing: don't do it all yourself.

I: How do you meet the musical needs and expectations of your school and community?

P: The biggest thing as far as with the community is making sure that you listen after the concert to how the parents are responding. If they're responding positively you know you're on track. If they're saying, "Oh, I wish we could have..." (then you can make some changes). At Maple Grove (Elementary), I don't know how many years I taught there; finally a parent said to me, "You know, we used to sing "Silent Night" all together at the end of concerts." But I didn't know that because nobody told me. And so we started to do that, which led into "Oh, we used to do more than "Silent Night"." So I think when you listen to that (you can) provide the stuff for the community. I did at the middle school, that last week before Christmas Vacation, after our concert was over, we learned just some regular Christmas carols and we walked over to the assisted living home close by and we went over to County Market and sang. So do those kinds of things and to let the parents know that we're doing this. Just kind of listen, the parents will tell you what they're looking for.

Sometimes if you go to the PTO meetings, you hear them talk. They talk a lot at PTO meetings; it might not pertain to you. But if you show up once in the beginning of the year and just say, "I'm here if you have any questions, comments, or whatever. Here's my phone number, here's my email." Put it out there and then they know they can come to you. And in the newsletter you can just kind of say, "I'm available if you have any comments or suggestions."

I: How do you meet the musical needs of your special education students?

P: I had one year between St. Anne's and (Merrill) that I took a sabbatical and I did classes at UWSP for an add-on certificate in Learning Disabilities. I did (coursework for the certificate) because I was finding that all these special education students were maybe not mainstreamed in a regular classroom, but were always in my class. And I had all these students that I did not know what to do with them. I didn't really have a lot of training with a regular music ed. degree, so I wanted to do that to help myself out with students who came in my class. And it was good timing when I got that, because then when I got my job in Merrill, I was at Jefferson (Elementary) and that's where all the EBD students were housed, so I had all of them and I really didn't have a lot of experience with them before that. So even though I studied learning disabilities, I also was exposed to, well they were just ED at the time, and LD and CD, cognitively disabled. So I had an exposure to all of that even though my program was specifically 'learning disabilities'.

I: What teaching resources have you found valuable for teaching elementary music?

P: I had little bits (of training in Orff and Kodaly) in college and then I took a summer (Orff) course from Judy Bond. So I was familiar with it. I have more of an eclectic approach, little bits from everything. To be honest, I did my own thing more than I used the textbook. I mean I used songs within the textbook, but I found my own curriculum to be more successful. Same thing with recorders, I found my own to be more successful. Just taking all

of the Dalcroze, Orff, Kodaly, the MIE, the whatever, all those different methods, and pulling out the best parts of it and putting it together in an eclectic approach. To me that was more successful than any individual resource.

I: What advice would you give to a beginning elementary music teacher?

P: Don't fret over your first years. You're going to look back at them and say, "I can't believe I did that." You'll feel like a horrible teacher, looking back to the beginning, and you just have to go with it and you have to learn as you go. It's sad to say, but you really do. Get as much mentoring as you can from ANYBODY who has more (teaching) experience and take advantage of them. And don't be afraid to ask for suggestions or resources. "I'm having this problem, what do I do?" You'll do better going with another music teacher than you will getting help from a principal or general ed. teacher. Reach out to those people, kind of like you're doing.

I: Is there anything else that you would like other elementary music educators to know?

P: Your profession is more important than people will ever give you credit for. No one will ever give you credit for what it is that you do and what it is that you instill in the students. Chances are you will always be looked at as a 'fun' class or a 'prep', and you have to be strong enough to realize you are making a difference in these students' lives whether anybody else thinks it or not.

I: Even if they don't ever come back and say it.

P: Right. It is a surprise. I went to the high school musical one year and I'm looking at the program and looking at the name of one student and thinking, "You've got to be kidding me." Because when I had him he came in third grade; he was bipolar and schizophrenic, he spent a lot of time in the empty room next to the office, kicking and screaming. I never thought he'd make anything of himself and here he was on stage during that musical! And after the musical when I was in the lobby, he was so excited to see me. All those years in between had passed and you don't even think about it, but he said, "I loved your music class! I'm going to this music camp this summer and I'm doing this." You may never know, because how many of those kids does that happen to that you never see again? So you have to take the attitude that you are making a difference and you may never know it.

Name: James

Date: March 5, 2016

Interviewer: How long have you been a music teacher?

Participant: I started teaching in 1985, so thirty years. But it's been interrupted. So every time I went to school I went to school full-time, and I wasn't teaching during those years. And there are several years that I was teaching at the university lab school. I guess I was still involved in music teaching in one form or another, except for the two years I was working on my Masters.

I: How long have you been in your current position?

P: Seventeen and a half years.

I: Have you always taught at the elementary level, or have you taught other levels?

P: I have taught other levels. Elementary is where I have chosen, but I've taught at middle school and I taught high school for a bit. It wasn't for me. I'm working a lot with other adults in a church choir, but it isn't really an educational institution exactly. And university, I taught methods courses at (the University of) Illinois for two or three years.

I: When applying for jobs, was elementary music your first choice, or did you see yourself at a different level?

P: In the beginning, in my very first interview they asked me, it was a fourth and fifth grade building, they asked me where I saw myself in five years, I said, "Not at this job." I was still hired, but I think earlier on I had visions of myself doing something that was more, from what I perceived at the time, more prestigious or valuable. I saw broader pastures, but over time, especially after the performance degree business, I decided if I'm going to be devoting myself to education I want to be where I can do the most good, and the gate is the widest at the elementary level. And I'm not saying the other levels aren't important, but by the time kids get into middle school they've already tracked into band, orchestra, choir, or 'none of the above.' I still hope the kids sign up for those ensembles, but I just felt I wanted to be, "It isn't about me, it's about kids," and I wanted to be where I could potentially have the most impact. Of course everybody (names from) their high school experience a teacher who had the most impact, but they're only impacting the people who already elected to be there.

I: What impacted your decision to be a music teacher?

P: I guess music has just always been such a part of the fabric of my life and my family's life that I just couldn't imagine what (else) I'd be doing. I guess there was one year I wasn't teaching; I worked for the Milwaukee Symphony. I was their educational curriculum writer with the ACE Program, Arts in Community Education. I don't know if you've ever heard of it. I did that as a consultant for a few years, but that was sitting in an office at a desk, and I didn't like that.

I: What inspires or motivates you to continue teaching at the elementary level?

P: I'm excited by the intellectual challenge of it, doing things in ways that, I don't want to say I'm experimenting on the kids, but just seeing how I can serve more of a scaffold and get myself out of the way to get them to do stuff. And I love doing research, and I don't mean educational research, (rather) researching topics and finding content areas that I can pull in so I'm learning about things that I didn't know about, so I can be more informed to be better for them. I like that part of it the most.

As an example this past January I decided to teach a South African freedom song, which I'd (done before) but I'd never really done the homework about the value of what freedom songs were to the South Africans during the apartheid years. I had a vague whitewashed understanding of that, but I didn't really know Nelson Mandela's story. And digging into that, and I can't say I could do a dissertation (from that), but the things I'm able to draw from when the questions come up, I feel fulfilled when I am able to answer their questions or address their curiosity because I know a lot about it, and that's fun for me. And to see them interested as well.

I: What are some successes you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: The things that I consider a success are not necessarily things that a lot of people consider successful. Like I've never made it a high priority in my life to present at state conferences or do a lot of self-promotion. I think that's what a lot of people consider being a successful music educator is. Right from the get-go, that's not where I am; my value system is not in those kinds of things. So the things I consider to be a success are the things that happen in my classroom. Over time I've discovered, and I don't want to give myself the credit as much as giving my kids the credit for the collaboration, from the mentorship that I've had from great people to come up with lessons and activities that are not ordinary. A couple of examples, I don't use a recorder book. Fourth graders start playing recorders about January 26th or so, that's their first exposure to recorder, and at this point (a month and a half later) they have a nine-note range, from low C up to high D, and they're composing their own pieces that use that range. It's a rather unconventional approach; I would say it's pretty musically satisfying, and they get to what they need to know through kind of the back door.

Some of it is rooted in the philosophical approach, and I'm trying to be direct. I believe the kids will learn what needs to be learned when there is a reason that they want to learn it. So an example with this recorder business, we've been playing. Yeah they know all the notes on the staff and they know all the stuff they're supposed to know, and we do staff reading and note names, all that normal stuff, but a larger emphasis is "Can it be usable?" So they learn to play musically some songs that would be way beyond their ability to learn by themselves. I kind of teach some of the pieces in the aural tradition, and I always contrast the aural tradition with the written tradition, and both of these are important. But I expand their musicality by kind of teaching them through "master (and) apprentice" and I tie it heavily to the Native American tradition, because that's part of their Social Studies. So we play some Native American songs by rote, aurally. Now they're composing their own Native American-style pieces using the range of notes they know, so they're now needing to use those pitch names and all of that to notate their ideas down. So the purpose in reading is to make music or is to record their music, rather than being "I'm going to teach you to how to read notes so you can make music." It's more a matter of "Which comes first?" The musicianship and wanting to express yourself and record yourself, that becomes the motivation for doing the theoretical pieces. And they'll figure out their own way to notate it, and I don't mean a free for all, but they find meaningful ways to notate, and then they may take that notation and translate to standard notation. So they get their ideas down in a way that they can. And there are some kids that go right to standard notation because they take piano or whatever, and there are other kids that it'll be like pulling eyeteeth and then they make really good music, and then they're excited because they want to make it real now. It is just kind of through the back door. So I would say successes are things like that.

I've experimented and discovered ways, like I don't teach counting; counting comes when they get to about fourth or fifth grade, when the band directors want the "1 and 2 and" and that whole thing. I don't teach it but the kids all know how to do it, because of some of the strategies that are embedded in playing tone chimes and other things they do. So I kind of developed my own method or strategy of doing that, and that's been intellectually satisfying for me. And I suppose on one hand people tell me I should do something with it, but just am not

motivated to do that. I don't do it for self; I just do it because I'm doing it. Fifth graders right now are on what could be a whole semester project. We start out in January looking at how film is impacted by music, and it's a standard thing that there are some curricular materials written for. But the ultimate goal is that they (understand and appreciate the connection between/importance of music in film). I have clips from *Wallace and Gromit* movies where all of the music is stripped out and only the dialog (remains) and none of the sound effects, closing doors and all that, none of that is there, only the speech. I have four clips and they get in small groups and their job is to score it, the film clip, and then look at how to create the sound effects. So we talk about music scoring and Foley artists, & what Foley artists do, the people that make all the doors slam and punching of fists and all that, and add that in. So we kind of start out at the basic, kind of look at the use of music and film and the impact of it.

"Now you are going to score your own films, but in order for us to do that I need to give you lots of tools so that you can be able to do that." So the first lessons we did were how to create variations on a melody, so if you have something a little benign like "Hot Cross Buns", and how can you distort "Hot Cross Buns" so it doesn't even sound like "Hot Cross Buns"? Play it in retrograde, play it in inversion, play it down a parallel fourth, diminution and augmentation, all these compositional techniques. And so I show them all these things and they do that to "Hot Cross Buns" or "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" or whatever. "So you can create music that's new from something that already exists, and if you find an idea in another piece of music you like, you can borrow it. Composers do it all the time." We talk about *Star Wars* and how (similar it is to) some of the Holst *Planets* and how composers beg, borrow, and steal all the time, but then they put their own twist on it. So they have that melodic tool. Then we move on, "That's one way to make your music expressive. The next step is to change harmony." And so that leads us to playing "Hot Cross Buns" in all sorts of harmonic distortions, and that's where the chord tool comes in. "I'm showing you how to use chords so you can take melodies and put chords to them, and suddenly the song has a whole different feeling to it. And they've sung harmony, they've done 3-part singing, they know all those things, but it's not really until they have manipulated it that there's definitely a lot of 'aha moments.' "Oh, that is what that is! Oh." "And the next step of what we're going to do is figuring out how melody and harmony move together," and then the next step is looking at these film clips and they have to storyboard them out and write in cues for Foley and music cues and what they imagine it to be. And then they can compose using the tools that they've learned to create music for their film score. And there are probably seven or eight groups per class, and they're all doing this.

They have laptops when we watch the movie clips, and they do it all on paper. Some kids write it down how they did in third grade or fourth grade; they can write it down in whatever form that can make sense to get their ideas down, and then they can bring in their band instruments. So then those kids discover, when they're playing their trumpet, what transposing is. "Oh, on the alto sax I really can't play the Ab because it's sounding as a C or A or whatever." So then I end up typing it into *Finale*, and then the hope is that when they come back later to read the score (they understand), "Now I have to know and change my note in relation to what is happening up there (on the film screen)." There are a lot of 'a ha moments'. I don't see that in probably half the general music experiences that I've experienced or I've seen others do, and I'm not saying it's better, it's just different. I've had a long time to figure that out. I guess those are what I would call my successes.

When I started teaching nobody was talking about composition at all, so for me over a career this has kind of been self-discovery and it really didn't probably start happening until ten years in when I studied with Eunice and some really brilliant minds who pushed me to go beyond "what is music teacher?" When I went into doctoral studies I had done two summers (of coursework) and then I did two years of residency. And at that point, still being a student, I was teaching at the lab school, so I was able to try out lots of things while they were right there. I had great minds to bounce (teaching ideas) off of. And (so) I taught at the lab school and then I managed the lab school. But that was four or five years of kind of immersion. So we would share ideas and say, "Where else can I go with this?"

I: What are some challenges you have had as an elementary general music teacher?

P: Scheduling and changes since Act 10; it's changed the profession, and I've been in it long enough to see how things have changed. I now teach fifty-five (30-minute) sections a week. So that's been a challenge in recent years to maintain what I would call really robust teaching, really investing myself creatively in the ways that I previously mentioned that were the reason I started teaching in the first place. It's now implementation-based. Fortunately I had the years where I could have the privilege and the luxury, if you want to call it that, the necessity of being able to plan and organize and think and develop stuff. Because if I had to do that in my current climate, none of the things I'm most proud of in my teaching would have ever happened. So I was hoping to continue that whole investigative work until the end of my career, and I still do that but it's in small doses because of the energy and the time to devote to that work.

Other challenges are, you know I'm in a great school and a great school district, and I've been there long enough that I've developed a lot of community support. All the right formulas are in place and I have a great job compared to lots of places, and I know that. But I say the challenge, especially early in my career, was in finding my voice, finding my place, establishing myself in a community that didn't know much about me, developing community and student trust in me and what I'm trying to do. Nobody questions me anymore, and that's very different then it had been, especially when you get to new jobs and you have to almost prove yourself the first three, four, or five years at a place. Sometimes, I think back about those years I was in an urban environment that was largely African American in the late '80s in the area where I was teaching, and many corporations moved out and the mayor at that time was trying to push all the people out and into Chicago housing projects and just trying to clean things up which led to (chaos). So I was teaching children that were pretty hard, and lived a far different life than I could have ever imagined, and they brought with them a lot of stuff. So I think back to my third year and I suppose they toughened me up in some ways, but teaching in those environments was highly challenging. And my theory, philosophy, the way that I chose or I guess still choose to (approach my job), is 'manners before music' and "If you don't have good manners there's no point in teaching you music. Music education isn't going to help you nearly as much as good manners. I would love to get to the music part because that's the fun part, but I can only (do my part when you do yours)." So I'm not saying you should entice kids with music to get what you intend, but there's a certain amount of that 'bait and switch.' But some time in those environments having to deal with as much manners teaching as music teaching, I think that helps the kids a lot more, but as a music teacher that's not how you want to use your time.

I: What are some solutions you've found to your challenges?

P: I would say with kids, winning them over is letting them, somehow building a sense of trust and that you deserve their respect. And yes you're going to earn it, but there is also an expectation that you're going to need to function in life and no matter what capacity that is, whether you're on a sports team, whether you want a job, whether you want to be a rap star or whatever, you have to learn to play the game to get where you're going. So teaching or communicating in very direct ways, you're revealing the secret to success, which is sort of an enticement to their intrinsic motivation, as opposed to "This is me, I'm in charge, I'm your teacher, and this is what I expect. I deserve respect." But "I have been successful and I would like to share that with you. Here's how the people get ahead; here's how you do it. And it first has to start with manners, or a door will be slammed in your face every time and there may not be someone there teaching that to you." That kind of gets back to what I was saying about 'manners before music.' "I want you to be successful, and yes I'd love for you to be musically successful, but I'm more interested in helping you be a successful person and learning how to play the game and learning how to do things that may not seem natural to you but that's what's going to make a difference in your life. And I hope to model some of that for you, but I'm going to be real direct, and I'm not going to (accept) any more negative behavior, because I care about you being successful. You are never going to learn the skills you need to know (otherwise)." I have a really challenging group of third graders right now, they're a nightmare for everybody, and I said to them, "Most of you are never going to be professional musicians, and I'm not trying to turn you into professional musicians. What I am trying to do through music is to help you develop the life skills of focus and discipline that you're going to need to be successful at whatever you do. Now we will have (activities) to help you learn the music along the way, and we will have fun and you will make any number of memorable experiences, but if you think my job or my goal is to make you a musician like me, it's not. But through what I do you can learn those things that can help you be successful, as long as you believe that I know (what I'm doing); so you're going to have to work with me."

I: That puts a lot more of the responsibility on them. That's good.

P: Yeah, where it's not about me, it's about them. "And you may dislike me and that's okay, but then you learn that there will be people in life that you don't like that you have to work with. I'm going to try to work with you but I'm not going to put up with (problems). I'll give you my best if you give me yours, but I'll call you out if I don't think you're doing your best." So I'd say discipline is probably the perpetual challenge. It was there when I was in (my first schools) and it's there where I am now, and I'm at a great place. It follows you everywhere, even though the motivations and behaviors change, they might be linked to poverty or stem from a sense of being entitled. But the reality is I think trying to be as human as you can in making that clear in terms of wanting them to succeed. It doesn't make the problems go away but at least you have a plan.

The other (challenge) is scheduling. At least I have grade blocks, so I have a fifth grade block and I don't go from K to 5 to 2 to 5. And my principal understands the burden; I was the full-time music teacher when our building had 200 and now I'm the full-time teacher with 400. When they rebuilt, they've added on two times, and

there's still one music teacher. But scheduling-wise, there are some real practical solutions that I've done. Survival techniques: I can't engage in as many creative activities with grade levels simultaneously, because they take up too much energy and some of those open-ended things require a lot of mental presence to manage, and I can't have too many of those going on at the same time. So I will have activities going on with some grade levels that are more canned, while I'm doing more creative things with another grade level. So I kind of adjusted my own teaching schedule within what I have to kind of balance myself out. I have resorted to, and that's how I feel about it although I'm not ashamed about it, I've resorted to, "There will be a video that will go for two class periods periodically through the year for different grade levels at different times. The kids are learning something, probably not as much as they would if they were actively doing the kinds of creative experiences that I feel are important, but I have to survive." And the patronizing answer I get from my administration from superintendent on down is, "Just realize that what you're giving those kids is probably better than they would get someplace else." "Thanks." So that kind of thing is frustrating, but given those parameters you have to do what you can to personally survive. So I've had some of those types of things. For two years I attempted to teach double classes, two classes at the same time, not with all classes but for a grade level, and for me it was more of an experiment. I would see them for two music periods per a week; one of those would be a doubled-up time. So I would do whole group instruction (double class) on Day A, and then on Day B it would be individual so it could be more of the exploratory things of things that I presented in the "Here's how we make music. Let's do it together. This is a teacher-directed lesson" and then "Now this is going to be kid process." That was good for a while, but I didn't stick with it because I realized that it was probably sending the wrong signal that teaching two classes at the same time was feasible and that perhaps a money-saving possibility for the future. And so I terminated that this year, but the reason that I had done it was so that by doubling up I could have that half hour. So I was trying to create spaces in my day where I wouldn't have ten or eleven (classes) in a day, six in the morning and four in the afternoon, so that I would have a little bit of breathing room, to maybe reflect and do innovative teaching again. And actually I didn't mind the doubling up and I thought it was a good personal solution. But I also became kind of wary that I was perhaps providing a solution that the administration should be providing, and once they learned and it was ingrained, "Oh, he can take two classes" that I had done myself a disservice from what I had originally intended it to be. So that's the political side of it.

I: My research focuses specifically on the development of teacher identity over time in experienced elementary music teachers. Do you see yourself as having a strong educator identity?

P: I do.

I: Do you feel that your sense of teacher identity grew and strengthened the longer that you taught? If so, how and in what way?

P: Yes, it did. It has changed and the identity has improved over time. That's a complex question with so many facets to it. I mean I think, one's sense of identity naturally, I guess this is the first facet and probably the easiest one, is that one's identity towards anything that you do for a period of time becomes more established and you secure what you know with a box of tricks to help you. So that's a give-in in any profession. But I think the other facet of how things change over time, in my personal experience had everything to do with the people I surrounded myself by. And I think that I had seven years of teaching before I went on to do that, and I was pretty successful and I was well-liked by community standards and administrative standards. But those early years of trying not only to figure yourself out, what you're doing, but also trying to earn the approval of other people, and in those early years, the first eight or ten years I think that I was tossed about, not by fads, but I would see somebody doing something and look successful, and by comparison I felt like a failure because I wasn't doing it like that. And so then I would try to emulate that and then I would see some things were going on at another place that somebody else was doing. "Oh, that looks really cool, oh I wish I could be like that and do that." So then I would try to be like that. There was always a level of discomfort internally at some point in trying to be, I'm going to say being another person or trying to implement ideas that other people had had more practice at and had developed maybe a strain or a practice in, and I either couldn't get that result or I'd find another solution in what that really was all about. And maybe that's the adolescence of teaching: trying to find yourself.

Fortunately I had the opportunity, certainly not the foresight on my part, maybe from God or whatever, to be able to be put in a place with people who could really provide a grounding. And for me singularly that put me with Eunice Boardman. And yes, she'd written all this stuff, but she was a fabulous person at slicing whatever was going on down to its core essence, "What's really happening here?" and challenging thought in all of her students. She's the one that taught me how to think and to reason in educational ways, to ask the really big questions, the important essential questions, which now it's a buzzword and I hate it because now it doesn't mean anything, but the essential questions of "What's happening here?" so that you can make evaluations about fads, about methodologies,

about strategies, about the short-term effects versus the long-term effects of doing a particular thing. I don't know what I would have done if I had not been exposed to and surrounded by people who encouraged me to think that way. For me that was truly transformational and I probably would have been fine and happy and made a living, but I doubt that I ever would have found the fulfillment that what I was doing was important. Something, because we're all (thinking), "What is teaching music?" and there's all these other things. Now you're marginalized as a music teacher in academic environments, because you're never (equal), you're "just the special" and you're called a specialist. "No, I'm not special, I'm important. I'm just as essential as you are." But I realize the world doesn't think that way. But being able to hold your own when you as an elementary music teacher are essentially an island and classroom teachers, whenever they implement a new plan or start a new district initiative or whatever, they have the support of colleagues and teammates to do that and to question and bounce ideas off of each other. We don't have that, and one has to find fortitude and know how to answer those questions that are thrown at you and find try your purpose and sense of being within a school setting. And I wish everyone had that experience; I think that's the facet that changed me. I don't think most people have that opportunity, so I don't know what it would have been like had I not had that. But my experience is, yes, I did get to come into my own. I don't know if I would have (otherwise); maybe I would have gotten out of education.

I: Please share any experiences or challenges that you see as significant to your perceived identity as a teacher.

P: (Working) with Eunice Boardman, and I also worked with Mary Hoffman. You may have heard of her name, but she was the queen of Silver Burdett, the textbooks. She is the one I was hired to replace at the University of Illinois.

I: I suppose at the university setting you had your whole other identity to discover.

P: Because you know I was a student, and then all the sudden I wasn't anymore and was trying to navigate through that. Eunice sat across the hall from Mary Hoffman. So I was trying to be a student and be a servant to both, learn as much as you could and not piss anyone off.

I: How do you create and deliver engaging lessons?

P: I kind of go back to I guess a foundational platitude that's kind of at the bottom of everything for me, which is looking at, "*How can I get students to know what they need to know so that they want to know it?*" So I kind of operate from that premise. In developing or designing lessons, I don't want to talk about my dissertation but I think it's relevant, it was basically: "How can you co-design curriculum with students so that they are in control about making decisions about how they will learn what needs to be learned?" So that puts the teacher in a different role then instead of being, yes you are the designer, you are ultimately in charge, but "How can you put the students in the position of being in charge?" Kids don't know what they need to know, so how can you design lessons so that there's something that they want to do or that they find desirable for them? And it might be a musical event, a desirable thing, and (You say) "Well, in order to do that these are the skills you need to have in to be able to do that." And so then my role as teacher becomes more of customizing lessons that I would already teach or content that needs to be delivered, but finding ways to plug that into a larger purpose that is student-driven.

That is where (I got) this whole business of creating recorder compositions or doing recorder things like being able to play the "World Symphony" on recorder or doing very complex musical things that probably mentally wouldn't have happened. But we attempted it because they wanted to do it, not because I decided, "This is the goal." Well I do, but it's psyching them out. "Well, we can do it, but I've never taken kids here before," and usually that's the honest truth. So looking at those film scores and that whole project of needing to add Foley effects and learning what a Foley artist does and how to score a film, all of those pieces so they're recording a Foley track and a soundtrack and those two things get technologically laid into a film score. And then they watch and evaluate it and make decisions about whether that was musical. We've already seen with John Williams and George Lucas for *Star Wars* saying, "Well, I really didn't like what you did with the scene changing." So it's okay to come up with something isn't successful or doesn't meet the criteria. So all of that drives the whole spring semester of learning. So it's finding the things like that, and I have to find smaller things for the younger kids because they can't sustain (something) for that period of time. But with younger kids it might be like a young children's book or "I just went to the circus and saw this elephant act. I wonder how they train elephants to do that?" or whatever. It's just finding that thing that may be the reason to teach about Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals* or maybe the Stravinsky *Circus Elephants*. It's finding a way to appeal to the kids and then sneak in the learning, rather than starting with "I know what I want to teach". That's the difference with subjecting them to (music learning).

I: What mindsets or attitudes do you have that help you achieve high student engagement and learning?

P: There is nothing that is certain. I say that because of one thing, and I will elaborate on what I mean by that. You have to be flexible and you have to change. Learning can be a game, not a strategy for implementing your techniques, and I find myself at odds with a central chunk of music education because many music teachers don't see that as their role. They want certainty and "If I do this, then I know my kids can achieve. I have a measure that I can measure and it's very concrete, and I will know they can achieve blah, blah, blah." That mindset frustrates me to no end because I feel the view is very behavioristic and it may be effective, but that doesn't mean it's educationally sound. And I think that the bulk of our education, certainly in the season of testing, is really that way. "So you scored high on the achievement test. Are you smart now? Do you have any desire to learn or go on?" So I'm frustrated a lot by education, regular and music education both, because I don't feel it immediately addresses what motivates us as individuals to do anything in life, and that motivation is "I want to do that." I learned how to do tiling and plumbing; I had no interest in that until I bought a house and I couldn't afford the fabulous bathrooms (I saw at Kohler). But I wanted one like that. So I think that kind of intrinsic motivation (to learn) is foundational to all humans and a lot of education does a disservice to that. And so we get short-term gains getting them to achieve what we want them to do, because they're trying to please us or get a good score or they're to get into college or whatever, but ultimately it's an external drive. So it's a very different approach and a very different way of thinking about education than many music educators. I feel that a healthy chunk of music education is so behavioristic, it's all B.F. Skinner, "I do; you do. This is what to do; copy me." Yes, modeling has to happen, but it is driven from and by the teacher. "I know what you need to know, I know everything. And I can also evaluate whether you have it. I have developed, or someone in the profession has developed, a scale to tell you how efficient you are," and they have nothing to do with.

I: How does your understanding of child development impact your music instruction?

P: Well, I think it informs it. Given the premise of the kind of approach I take for teaching, I consider the skills and their ability to hang with me, the size of a project, the open-endedness of a project, how you have to frame things so that it's manageable, how tightly do you need to control this? Or do you as a teacher need to be in charge of things? And child-developmentally that's also a question of what the class is like, what you're able to do and not do, and how they will manage. I suspect that people's sense of curiosity diminishes the older they get, because they want to do what's right, so the goal of curiosity ends up being replaced with (following rules). On the outset it sounds contradictory to what I said, "If you want to be successful in life you have to play the game." All of those things are important, but the role of arts education in school I think becomes more important as students get older in those elementary years because a lot of the things they do, they see as play and discovery up through K, 1, and 2, and then things get harder when they cross that track into third grade, and that's when I find kids will ask, "Am I doing this right?" I had one third-grader say, "I'm not very creative." How can you (think that about yourself as a child)? The fact that he articulated this meant he had to believe it to some degree in order to formulate that kind of response, which I just find so sad because of the need to be doing the right thing. There's so much self-questioning going on, and that's definitely what we don't need in education. Like the book, *Right Brainers Rule the World*, and the premise of that book is in a world and culture that's affluent where people have choices, it used to be people made choices for their utilitarian value, but now that people are affluent and prosperous enough, in Western societies at least, now buying a functional tea kettle isn't the goal. It's "Which one has the best design?" Well they all boil water. But which one has the best aesthetic appeal, so it uses that analogy for the 21st century, that STEM academics or STEM achievement isn't sufficient enough because India and people in other parts of the world are excelling and even beating us in those areas if you want to talk in terms of economics. It's the right brainers who have created a dimension of beauty. Like Apple (products have) functionality and appeal. (Those companies) driven by that aesthetic component to put that into whatever their STEM fields are are the ones who are going to attract not only the brightest minds, but financially attract them, all of that. So at the very time when we need more of that arts education, the need to be right has become more important. That's why the arts are more valuable, in my opinion, because (students) are not getting that from other places, that it's okay to experiment and fail. Or "What would make this more beautiful or more interesting?"

I: What strategies and attitudes have you found helpful to improve yourself professionally as a music teacher and to make instructional preparation and delivery more effective?

P: (Talk with other music teachers and) bounce things around. I know for me that has been an important piece of the (process), people just questioning and you being able to question.

I: How did you establish a strong elementary music program?

P: Well, I was lucky. At the school I'm at now I kind of inherited it. I was working for the Milwaukee Symphony, and there are twenty-six schools in the metropolitan area, and one of them lost their music teacher mid-year, and we had all these National Endowment of the Arts grants that we had to fill by students' projects. So I went to the school mid-year to finish out the teaching year so that the school that I'm currently at could produce the Culminating Experience projects that we needed for funding. So I went in in February and taught until May of the year, and then I stayed. So I kind of inherited a place that was already pretty 'happening', and I'm lucky in that regard.

I: At some of your previous schools, did you feel like you had established a strong program there?

P: Yeah. I developed interpersonal relationships with colleagues and administration and parents and children themselves. Children are the best ambassadors. Developing a human relationship with them that you're not just a music teacher, you're a whole person and you care about the whole being, and "Yeah (I'm) here to teach music and we're going to have fun doing that, but if push comes to shove, I care more about you than I do about the music." And I've seen a lot of music teachers who get themselves into the trap of being perceived as 'the elitist' or 'the artist' to people because things aren't going their way. "I need this gym set up for me!" Yeah, we all have those feelings, but a public school is not the place to be the 'prima donna'. It's about what can we do, (pleading) "I really need this to work for us, for the kids, and I don't know what to do!" rather than it being, "I'm going to throw a prissy fit here." So I think first of all being a person that's perceived as being something that people want to be on your team is a prerequisite and sometimes the most overlooked thing among teachers because they want to make a musical mark and they want to be an 'artist'. And being 'an artist' will only get you accolades from some, but it sort of becomes an impediment to really become 'an artist' because you don't get people playing on your team.

I: Do you have any suggestions for teaching from a cart?

P: If I could get the classroom teacher on board with what I was doing, it really helped a lot, and that usually would involve me extending myself in their direction a whole lot more than them extending themselves in my direction. You kind of go in and observe what's happening in a room, what topics, and you find ways to reinforce the content (in music class), and then in subtle ways drop hints or try to tie it in, getting kids to be ambassadors of how, "Oh I saw you were doing...", (and) look at ways to integrate. It's best looking for conceptual integration, so looking at how a concept in math might relate with a concept in music and trying to use common language, and quite honestly I think that's easy to do when you are on a cart and seeing what's happening. And when you're in your own room you have to make time to go into peoples' rooms and ask and figure it out. Tie into things like in our school they have a way of conceptualizing about paragraph writing. The table has four legs to support it, and the topic sentence, and I can't remember all the pieces of that. But then relate that to music, in that music has a theme, which is like a topic sentence that comes back, and then the development is like the paragraphs with all the details that get spun out of that. Try to make as many correlations between the common language of the classroom and the common language to a musical concept. I'm not particularly hung up on whether kids get the right music words. I will introduce them (music vocabulary) and the way I will refer to it is, "That's the theme. That's like your topic sentence, and yes I'll use the word 'theme'. The theme is kind of like the topic sentence." I really don't care if kids walk away knowing theme, development, exposition, or whatever music word, as long as they have the concept connection because if they're interested enough, if they understand how it's put together, the name for it will come as their interest and exploring the connection comes.

So using classroom language as much (as possible) to teach music as (music language) I think is an asset. Other tools I had, some days if I could get myself organized to know what was coming up around the bend then I'd say (to the kids), "I'm going to be bringing in all the drums or all the blah, blah, blah. And I'm going to need help (setting up). We're going to be singing a song from Africa and I'm going to teach it to you because next week (we're adding drums to the song). If you were in my classroom we could just walk over and get stuff, but since I don't (have a room) I have to be a bit strategic on how I'm going to get things moved around. I'm going to teach you this as a preview into what's going to happen, and next week we're going to make music and I'm going to have you carry all the drums." Just finding ways like that rather than, "Today we're going to play drums and you're going to go get them." But having a preview, "Next time I come, I'm going to need your help," it just provides that whole (continuity and sense of student ownership); it becomes less chaotic because everybody's mindset is (focused).

A lot of education is, "Guess what I'm thinking and I'll tell you if you're right." The real power of education is giving (students) the tools to know what's going on, that the teacher doesn't hold the secret to all the power, that you elicit kids' help. You get them on board with you because they know what's going to happen. That's what I do in public performances all the time. Every time we get ready for one, "This is my vision, this is what I would like to see, but I can't get there by myself, and so now with third, fourth, and fifth grade most of the

time I will teach songs that I know are worthwhile, but they have to come up with a theme to unify them. So then we'll at one point look at the lyrics or "What's the message of this piece of music? What's the message here? Can you find any threads to weave together? What do you think would be a good order to put them in?" Just go through subtle kinds of things, which is usually compartmented to 'teacher stuff' because, "I'm in control." But give that back to them, it's interesting how much ownership and creativity, but it requires throwing away a little bit of your power and taking risks. It is (worth it) and you kind of learn how to shape it, where you can get them thinking what you really want them to think without them knowing it. But the point is I've gotten a lot of my best ideas (from them).

I: What advice would you give to a beginning elementary music teacher or music teachers in general?

P: Don't be too hard on yourself, but always keep questioning and avoid the plague of certainty. I think there's a tendency in humans, and especially in education, to develop that presence of, "I am the authority. I know about these things." I think it appeals to one's sense of ego in very natural ways in some aspects. Ultimately there is not a definitive right way; there are many right ways, and there are many paths to the same ends. But it's natural and comfortable for humans to be reassured they're doing things the right way; then they know for certain that they're doing the right thing. And I think that certainty is the plague of education, I think it's a plague of lies. It gets in the way of people being truly creative, being truly responsive, being truly human, and certainty about things, there's a rigidity that I'm implying that I think is a very unhealthy thing. That's more of a life philosophy I suppose than anything else. Young teachers and experienced teachers, I think there is a natural tendency to want to belong and to want to be certain about things, and wanting self-affirmation, and sometimes that's not the best way to lead other people. That doesn't mean (to abandon) one's personal convictions, but when you're trying to lead people to think and act like you there really needs to be an opportunity for creativity and divergence. And as arts educators that's what we should be fostering, and that's what's sad today about music education. There's so much prescription and not enough listening, and I think from all the other things I said, you know why.